



BARZANI IS GAMBLING SO THAT HE MAY LOSE ANKARA

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The Iraq Kurdish Regional Government has decided to go to the referendum for independence on September 25 and does not step back albeit the reactions. We will talk about possible consequences and aspects regarding Turkey, but I would like to start with the question that how does it come to the present?

The process has started with the end of the 1800s. It was the first time that the Kurds have stirred up a revolt. With the beginning of the 1900s, after the First World War and the declining period of the Ottoman Empire, the Kurds, leaving the Ottoman Empire, are starting to mobilize. The Iraqi State was established on the lands separated from the Ottoman Empire in 1921 and this period is also the times when the Republic of Turkey was founded.

When we discuss Iraqi Kurdishness, it can be said that: as of the Sykes-Picot era, the Kurds have made preparations to have a piece of land. After Sykes-Picot and Sevres Agreement, this ambition was strengthening. At that time, there was support from the outside for the Kurdish uprisings in the region. One of them is the Sheikh Said Rebellion and this should not be considered by separation from

the independence movement in Iraq. It should be reminded that Kurdish movements in both Iraq and other regions are very much related to each other at that time. We see that the states have become more dissociated structures from the beginning. While they were in a collective mobilization in the common land, these movements were beginning to break down when the newly established states begin to set their own existence.

None of the nation states wants that Kurdish population within its borders will be a part of a cross-border political movement and they try to restrain it. Is that so?

As a result of this, the Iraqi Kurds stirred up an action in Iraq. In the 1924 Constitution, there is a clause that "Iraq consists of Arabs and Kurds". At that time, there was an effort to integrate the Kurds into the Iraqi state structure to satisfy Kurds' feelings even if just a little, because the independence statements given with the Sevres agreement were not undertaken. However, the Iraqi Kurds continued their separatist movements, taking a negative attitude towards government. In the 1930s, they started to take anti-government actions and climbed the mountains. This

movement was transformed as a concrete move with the foundation of the KDP later on 1946. Besides, there was a serious sense of problems in internal government in Iraq at that time. Mustafa Barzani was especially benefiting from these troubles. During this period, the Kurdish movement developed strong relations with Israel, the USSR and the United States. It was gaining increasing popularity. They were finding guns, and they were trying to gain political rights.

As a matter of fact, in 1958, there was a Republican revolution in Iraq and Kurds started to think that they will get political rights from their side with this revolution. However, the coups of 1960-63, 68 were taken place in Iraq in the following years and the Kurds were continuously in the struggle to be able to control and to gain dominance within their territory. Together with the coups, the Kurds began to armed struggle and maintained the political process. The negotiations with Baghdad resulted with the autonomous agreement in 1970. Currently, it is claimed that the autonomy will be provided for the Kurds within the region including Erbil-Sulaymaniyah-Duhok. However, it was not implemented. In 1975, the Kurdish movement was divided into two as KDP

and PUK. The PUK emerged as a more socialist and secular structure than the KDP and continued to the same struggle, but the regions are different. Language differences also emerged.

Then, this two-headed structure began to struggle between themselves. They struggled with the Saddam Hussein regime until the 1990s. In 1990, when no-fly-zones were created after Saddam's invasion of Kuwait, the Kurds also got an autonomous region in the north of Iraq. They made elections in 1992, and established a bipartisan government and opened their parliament. The most important reason for having not the holistic progress of Iraqi Kurdish movement is the disagreement between the two parties which resulted in a serious war, a full civil war, lasting from 1994 to 1996. Thousands of people from both sides lost their lives. The Washington Agreement was signed in 1996 and it is seen that the UN was involved in this issue. Turkey also had one of the most influential periods in the north of Iraq in the post-1990 period. The responsibility of establishing peace-monitoring-forces was given to Turkey. It consists of about two thousand people including 1600 Turkmens and 400 Assyrian Christians. With the expression of the

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Iraqi constitution, the communities living within the border of Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government included in this peace and reconciliation process.

Naturally, the War of 2003 was a turning point for Iraqi Kurds. When the United States entered Iraq, she allied with the oppositions which were mainly Kurds and Shiites against the Sunni regime. The Iraqi Kurds gained great favor from this. Today, gaining dominance not only in Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government but also beyond borders was allowed by America's entry into Iraq. The region of Kirkuk, mainly, and some parts of Mosul, Diyala, and Salahaddin that Tuz Khurmatu is one of the greatest points of conflict were given the status of disputed territories.

The Legal Recognition of Kurds gained after 2003 was registered by the constitution of 2005 as a federal govern-

ment. In May 2003, Kurds have had the opportunity to place peshmerga beyond their borders in accordance with the agreement they have made with the United States, thus, the disputed territories in Iraq were formed. When we return to the 1990s, it is very important that the no-fly-zones in Iraq were formed in line with the 36th and 32nd parallels, however, the Kurdish region was drawn by taken this parallel a little further crossed. The forbidden zone emerged only as the region where Kurdish people live in. By world public opinion, this was regarded as a concrete appearance in the 1990s of support given to Kurds since the end of the 1800s. After 2003, this support was transformed into the legal structure.

The influence of the United States in the legal presence of northern Iraq can be seen clearly. So, can we say

that the biggest encouraging factor in the referendum proclamation process is the US?

It is not possible to think about this process excluding from US. Actually, the main founder of the process in Syria is the American administration. US has started the construction process in Iraq since the 1990s. When the constitution was enacted in 2003, a single federal region was emerged in Iraq. This was the Kurdistan Regional Government and this region was emerged with the help of the laws legislated by the American authorities therein as of the US entering into Iraq. We can say that Iraqi Kurds owe their present situation to US. I think one of the most important determinants of where the next process will evolve will be again the US' attitude towards the region.

What does the US say about the referendum?

US Vice President Joe Biden has a clear statement in 2015; "We will see that Kurds will establish their state." The US has done the same in Iraq and Syria, trying to direct the process after the actual situation has occurred. Today, they say "We are against the referendum", however, US is opposing the timing, not the referendum itself.

Why?

Firstly, there is no stability in Syria yet. Secondly, the struggle and political process still continues in Iraq. Thirdly, there is still no harmony and reconciliation with Turkey. On the other hand, North Korea creates a serious problem. There is also Iran as another factor. Russia's intervention in the Middle East is greater than ever. It is unlikely that the US will be able to dominate all elements in the case of power gap which may be arisen in such a process.

Could the US be spoken bilaterally?

It is the United States, which started the process and created the conjuncture. US laid all the stones to fulfill the promise of the English. US mixed the cards accordingly, but now, she says do not do it by pretending as rightful. Can Barzani make such a decision despite the US that he owes everything to them?

I do not think Barzani has taken a step on the contrary of America. Let's remember the period of Condoleezza Rice as secretary of state. The Barzani administration was signing deals for oil with the third countries. Condoleezza Rice said "Do not do it, these agreements are wrong, you are opposed to the central government", however, US sent

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the largest oil company Exxon Mobil to Mosul field and they drilled oil outside the Kurdish region jointly with Barzani. If you remember the money of oil sold by Kurds, there was a struggle for depositing this money on depositing whether Halk Bank and Turkish banks or American banks, it had been gotten to the level of crisis.

That's why I want to repeat what I said from the beginning. An actual situation is currently being created. America will try to direct the actual situation. For that reason, I do not think the independence referendum will be made on the contrary to the US even though the US has raised its objections. There may be an invisible support. Foreign policy concerns not only what the states say, but what they do under the table. Travels from the Kurdish region to the US and the frequency of going the delegations from the US to the region can be tracked even on the social media. An infrastructure process is currently being built. Although America seems to be not coordinating the current situation, she will be the main executor under the new arising circumstances.

After Barzani recently told Turkey that "You can safely lean your back on us", He addressed to his own

public, or likely to the all Kurdish public that " We have already had the opportunities before, however, we did not evaluate them. Now, we should do the necessary, because we do not know whether the history will offer such an opportunity or not." What kind of an opportunity are we talking about?

At first, there is a great power gap in Iraq. This is the most important opportunity for the Kurds. The power gap in Iraq is gap allowing Kurds to come to the forefront. Particularly, in the post-ISIS period, the most advantageous group in Iraq was the Kurds, and they were able to expand their borders and dominance areas. Secondly, there is serious power gap and problem in the region. The Syrian question has not been solved and all eyes are focused on Syria. There are also other crises in the region; we can add the Qatar crisis and the Yemen crisis. We can add the influence of Iran to the region. The regional struggle has been reached to a very high level. KRG think that she would find the support from either US or Russia with the help of the struggle between them. Though Turkey and Iran oppose it, they think that they can get support from Israel. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu openly said his support

for the referendum of the Kurds. Therefore, the region is dominated by uncertainty and I think that Mesut Barzani wants to take advantage of this uncertainty.

The account that if the US does not support, Russia would support remind me the competition between US and Russia on taking advantage of PKK. The functionality of Iraqi Kurds is obvious, however, they experienced leaving in the lurch by the US for many times. Is risk still possible?

There is always this risk. As I said, America is proving the actual situation in the region and supporting the actual situation. Currently, there is a referendum process, and they protect this process insistently. However, if an opposite process emerges, I think America will return from this issue. Well, there are already Iraqi elections ahead. The Iraqi election will have important implications for both the future of Iraq and the region.

How can it affect?

It's actually a deep issue. We see the rising role of Iran in the post-ISIS period. Iran has increased its radius of action against not only the US but also Israel. The Hezbol-

lah-Israeli conflict has been re-expressed. We did not have a clear picture of Trump's American foreign policy. Trump gave us three points during the election. One of them is supporting Israel. His saying that "Wait for us Israel" is not even forgotten.

There are also his intention that Jerusalem will become a capital city.

Yes. Second of them is anti-Iranism. Third of them is the support given to Kurds. In fact, they have shown the signs of where American politics in the region will evolve in the next period. The embargo imposed by Saudi Arabia on Qatar, the weapon deal between the US and Saudi Arabia and the US' support on Saudi Arabia clearly reveals the business associations in the region. The process also creates a new trend in Iraq. This trend is a process unveiling both Arab nationalism, liberal politics and more secular politics. Thus, the president of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq Ammar al-Hakim, who is said to have been very influential on Iran before, left his party of father and grandfather and set up a new party. Muqtada al-Sadr visited Saudi Arabia and there were such rhetorics unveiling Arabism, nationalism, and liberal politics in the region on the basis of all of them.

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For that reason, we can now face a period in which the US will try to play a more active role over Baghdad in the coming period. Baghdad may be a choice for the United States again. Abadi received the most support from US and the US will try to find a closer actor to her and a management chain in order to break the influence of Iran in the region in the coming period.

Why Barzani would not be this actor; all in all, US has invested there since the early 90's?

Not enough. This will not be enough to advance American policies into the region. Because Barzani is not as effective in Syria as Iran, if the US wants to break the influence of Iran, she will have to eliminate Iran, not within the one fourth of Iraq but three fourth of Iraq. Besides, there is the Syrian side of this issue. We see how Iran is effective in Syria. That's why, the actors in the region are being reshaped, and among these actors, Barzani is obviously small. The classic saying is, "If you try to play big games with small actors, you lose." For that reason, we see that the US is now keeping its position in this direction, the attitude towards Barzani is related to this, but the achievements in the region are also not overlooked. At the end, a resource was transferred there,

a process started in the Kurdish region and the advantages provided here - that the Kurds should think about it - should not come back. At least, if it can be kept as stable, it can be revitalized and differentiated in the next ten years or decades. I see that because we are faced with a process in which the balances in the region are reshaped, the United States is not very enthusiastic in the process of independence. If such a mistake is made within these balances, it seems to me that there will be no return in terms of America or regional politics.

There is also the reality of Turkey and Turkey is clearly against the referendum. Barzani understands this risk but he is taking steps despite Turkey's attitude and the possibility that the US may leave him in the lurch again. Is US support still risky in terms of KRG?

Very much. Barzani said that the KRG is a safe haven in terms of Turkey. However, for that, you should trust the management in the safe haven. We know that Masoud Barzani and the Barzani administration have very good connections with Turkey. Also, we know Turkey's contribution to part of the development of the region. In the concept of Turkish foreign policy,

liberal policies are ahead; in this sense, Turkey has followed an economy-based policy with the KRG. Although it is tried to show that there should be a preference between Erbil and Baghdad, it is expressed that Erbil and Baghdad are complementary to each other in terms of Turkey. Turkey did not choose one of the two. Turkey has supported the democratic process in Iraq even though it knows that the process after 2003 has been harmful to itself. Turkey supported the elections and the constitution, provided the integration of Sunnis into the political process, and gave support to the development and improvement in Iraq. For example, Turkey was the only country which has diplomatic representation in Mosul. It can be expressed as the most important support given to Iraq. For that reason, Turkey supported the process in Iraq. As there is a federal region constitutionally, the Turkish firms also have the economic impact in the region. There were 1700-1800 Turkish companies in the region and they had very serious problems. The government has solved the problems by developing relations with the Kurdish regional government. However, there was a limit to this support: 'Protecting the territorial integrity of Iraq'. Turkey has never given up on this rhetoric. Turkey still chooses this

and Barzani is putting this at risk now.

How reliable is Barzani's administration for Ankara?

Barzani should provide confidence to Turkey to be a safe haven. As ORSAM, we participated in the election campaigns of KDP, that is Barzani, in 2013 elections. Their official election songs states 'Masud Barzani, the president of four parts' in Kurdish. If Rudaw TV close to Barzani who use these words in the official election songs, put its weather report for Kurdistan into Diyarbakir, it is the question how the trust will be secured. Newly, when Turkey conducts air operations to PKK, some peshmerga lost their life, as there are 50-70 meters between the control point of peshmerga and the PKK bases. If you want to provide confidence to Turkey, you have to eliminate the threat to Turkey in the region, at least, you should make an agreement with Turkey. However, there is a "no conflict" agreement between the KDP and the PKK in Sinjar.

Well, the threats to Turkey should be eliminated in this region in order to make Turkey a safe place. Or, let's look at Turkmen. How much share do Turkmen take from the Kurdish region? How much autonomy do they have? How

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are the Turkmen regions, Turkmen people, Turkmen houses or Turkmen education rights? How well-established is it? There are problems with all of them. That's why we have also criticized Turkish foreign policy from time to time, however, I think that Turkey's opposition to the referendum is principled like its objection against the game played in Kirkuk.

Is there any connection between Barzani's statements that "this is an opportunity we should not miss" albeit the US, and the physical presence of PKK in Syria with the help of cooperation with US and PYD in the last period? The rivalry between the PKK and Barzani is also known. Is there being in a rush regarding the referendum decision? Does it aim to prevent PKK gain a priority as expressed in the election song "the leadership of four parts"?

Actually, you've come to a very important point. I think Barzani regards this point when he takes a step. Initially, Barzanis are worried about being abandoned again. Barzani's dream is not to move the Kurdish movement in Iraq to somewhere but to lead the Kurdish movement in the Middle East. For this reason,

there is a struggle between the Barzanists and the Ocalanists regarding become the leader of the Kurds in the region. For that reason, as you say, the rise of PYD is both similar and different to the process of the emergence of the KDP and afterwards. KDP was a structure glorified by the US but it has a conservative structure which is much more closed than PYD and trapped in its own domain. However, PYD does not like KDP, it is regarded as more liberal, so called democratic, and secular. It has a structure appealing the foreign fighters from both the Kurdish population in the region and the Europeans from the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany. I think Barzani is worried about this a little bit. Of course, the only thing Barzani worries is not the PYD-PKK. On the other hand, he is also troubled by the rise of the PUK or the Goran movement, that is, the intra-regional opposition to it. The fact that the PUK and Goran opposition have much better relations with the PKK-PYD also make Barzani worry. Barzani is much more lonely regarding this issue. Therefore, he started with an important rhetoric and an important movement in terms of the whole Kurdish political movement in the region. The Barzani's statement of "This is a life-and-death struggle, either we will be or not" can be re-

garded in terms of not only the Iraqi Kurdish Movement but also his own political action.

Is it really so? Or, does he get himself into a jam out of the blue? Or, does the course of events make him necessary to do that?

Right now, he took a risk and he is gambling. If he can initiate the independence process and substitute the system in spite of everything, he will win a lot. However, if this process evolves on the contrary, Barzani may face his collapsing process. This is because Barzani has a structure that became increasingly isolated in the region in terms of the Kurdish movement in the region. It is possible to say that he is in a much more difficult situation especially when we look at local issues. For example, the Kirkuk issue. Kirkuk is not only a field of struggle that is valuable for Turkmen or oil in the region. The steps taken by the PUK in Kirkuk have begun to throw Barzani back into the region some more. Kirkuk is regarded as the heart of Kurdistan for the Kurds, and the Jerusalem of Kurdistan among the Kurds.

However, Kirkuk is a Turkmen city?

Of course, it is. Kirkuk is a Turkmen city

How a Turkish city could be the “heart of Kurdistan”?

It was changed, it was a rhetoric. The population in Kirkuk was doubled after 2003 and this population was entirely Kurds. That's why, such a rhetoric is accepted. Do you know why it's called as the heart? It is said that Kirkuk's oil is the only chance that a Kurdish state to be established in the Kurdistan region can survive. The Kurds know that the oil they obtain from the regions they control will not be enough in their thirty-year plan. They need a source like Kirkuk. There is a classic saying in Kirkuk: If you dig with your feet, oil comes out. In the world, the oil extraction average is 6 to 7 dollars, and in Kirkuk it is 1.5-2 dollars. If you think that you will have 1 million barrels of oil per day, the difference will be an income of 5 million dollars per day by making oil in Kirkuk. They have a very valuable oil source, so they express it as a heart. Since 2015, you know that there is a non-progressing political process in the Kurdish region. There are serious problems with Barzani's presidency and PUK was a bit backward in domestic politics, especially with the rise of Goran. PUK wants to show its power and consolidate its position. Therefore, it's an opportunity for Barzani, and also, on the other and, it's a matter of life and death.

There is a classic saying in Kirkuk: If you dig with your feet, oil comes out. In the world, the oil extraction average is 6 to 7 dollars, and in Kirkuk it is 1.5-2 dollars. If you think that you will have 1 million barrels of oil per day, the difference will be an income of 5 million dollars per day by making oil in Kirkuk.

Is there any possibility of non-being a referendum in Kirkuk?

Of course, there is. In this regard, Turkey is making necessary diplomatic negotiations and taking political steps. On the other side, the UN has a serious opposition. The Iraqi central government is in opposition. We know that the states of the region are also opposed. The US also stated that she did not want a referendum in Kirkuk. We see that the people of the region, Arabs and Turkmens, have strongly opposed the referendum. Therefore, if there is a referendum in Kirkuk, there would be serious conflict risks. The Kurds are committed but there are many risks of conflicts. Do they take this risk? A very difficult question. However, the Kurds in Kirkuk officially launched the referendum process. The governor is also preparing. We know that he brought people affiliated with PKK from Sulaymaniyah region to Kirkuk airport. These are dangerous steps. It can raise the risk of conflict in the region and re-open area for terrorist organizations like PKK, ISIS or al-Qaeda.

Is Barzani taking a war risk to include the Turkish city of Kirkuk into their dream of the Kurdish state?

I mean, I do not know

whether they would run the risk of the fighting all the peoples, the elements and the states there or not. I do not know, either, whether they want to reverse the advantage they have achieved so far or not. If there would be a war in the region, this will not only be limited to Kirkuk. The war would spread to both Erbil and Sulaymaniyah. Although the peshmerga say that they protect their borders, a war in the region will be a war that the Kurds will also fight and it will not be confined to those battlefields alone. Let's remember that ISIS was only 20 km away from Erbil when its first entrance and American and Iranian war planes shot ISIS' convoys. There are multi-dynamics of conflicts. On the one hand, there are Turkmen, Kurds and Arabs, and, on the other, Baghdad, Erbil. There is an administrative conflict between the two administrations. Turkey has a serious objection. UN intervention may be the issue. US soldiers are there. Iran provides a serious dynamic of conflict.

However, Barzani is looking for a way that it's now or never?

The Barzani's saying that "This is the last opportunity for us." should also be interpreted regarding that. In the future, there will be elections

in the Kurdish region; presidential elections, local elections and parliamentary elections. I give little chance that the KDP will get a majority of votes or Barzani will be elected as a president. In the region, there is a serious opposition to the Barzani administration for 1.5-2 years. Barzani administration can only pay officials one fourth of their salary. There is a reaction to the administration in the region.

Do you think the Goran Movement is partly organizing that?

At first, it appeared a little organized, but people have no strength to stand. There is no money, the parliament does not work. There is a political crisis, the war is ongoing. The deaths of peshmerga continue and many peshmerga are dropping their weapons because they are not getting paid. This is also a threat for the Barzani administration. Peshmerga have not been able to protect their ability to fight much. The people of the region are troubled. We are in the region every two to three months. You can hear that from everybody regardless of belonging a party or not. There is a dual administration; two separate peshmerga ministries, two ministries of finance. There are party-based public order forces and intelligence units. There is no exact

state structure. As a matter of fact, one of the biggest problems in the Kurdish region is that the institutionalization of the state could not be fulfilled. The people of the region are integrated with outside and provided to communicate with outside. So, they have not been satisfied with the rhetoric of the party leaders and the leaders of big tribes as before.

Does the Iraqi Constitution of 2005 offer KRG the right to go referendum and to declare independence?

As a matter of fact, there is no constitutional basis of the referendum legally. The Barzani administration claims that they have the right to make a referendum in accordance with the right of self-determination derived by the international law.

Is there any article related to this in the Iraqi Constitution of 2005?

There is no article. By claiming that we have our parliament and our own elections so that we would hold a referendum, they started the process. In the Iraqi Constitution, there is no such a right included in the rights given to the regions. They take advantage of the legal gap in some way. The Iraqi Constitution does not state whether the re-

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gional referendum would be made or not.

The referendum decision in the Kurdish region is also not legal in terms of domestic law. At first, the parliament in the Iraqi Kurdish region still does not work, which is a serious problem. On the other hand, an election law has to be drawn from the Iraqi Parliament regardless of whether in the Kurdish region or in Iraq in order to call a referendum or an election.

Had not that law been taken?

No. Thirdly, because Barzani's presidency was due in August 2015, he still has legitimacy problems. If Barzani were to be elected president again, the procedure had to be fulfilled. Or, if a new president were to be elected or a new election were to be made, the election had to be made. In 2013, the election was held. However, they could establish the government within 8 months. The legal basis the government relies on is that "First, the constitution will be written, then, the new president will be elected in 2015". However, the two processes are not complete. So, you are trying to be a state, but you have no constitution. You do not have a constitution prepared by the approved parliament. Some articles of the

Constitution were written, the commissions were assembled, but the commissions have become non-functional because there is no legitimacy even within them. However, you're talking about a legitimate referendum. A reconciliation between the parties could not be reached. You can look at the Kurdish Parliament; there are five big parties and minority quotas. The two of the five major parties are opposing the referendum. One of them is Goran Movement which is placed as a second party in the last election. The other is Komala Islami.

Are there any objections among the public?

They oppose to a referendum will be made with the current state structure. Otherwise, no one opposes the independent state. With the current problems with the management system, economy and institutions, they believe that the referendum will bring more harm than benefit to the Kurdish region. At this point, the Kurdish region is not stable and the process could not be performed well.

Of course, there are economic reasons, on the other. A considerable amount should be allocated for the referendum. People are complaining that, "If you have money, pay the salaries you did not pay be-

fore". Last year, schools started almost four months later due to the lack of money. They are afraid that the same problems will also be faced in this year. How successful would be a referendum without overcoming these problems?

Turkey has developed good relations with the Erbil administration, but defended the territorial integrity of Iraq, and did not support the referendum. It maintain its negotiations and suggestions regarding the referendum decision. If they do not step back and declare independence, what will be Turkey's attitude? What should it be?

In fact, Turkey has the very strong medium of sanctions. These have not been used. I think they may be imposed after the referendum. Turkey takes its diplomatic and political attempts quickly. Delegations are constantly going from Turkey to the region; our Foreign Minister was there recently. There's a two-week period. If they do not step back, as mentioned by the spokesman of our President Mr. Ibrahim Kalın, we could wait some attempts to be taken within two weeks.

What are those steps?

One would be closing the

Habur Border Gate. What are Turkish companies going to do if it closes? Turkish companies can carry with airplanes. Turkey can give incentives for products carried by airplanes to Baghdad or other regions. Turkey is a powerful state, but when it comes to the Kurdish region, the closure of Habur means the closing of the most important pitfalls. The Barzani administration is earning \$ 400 million for a year. When operations began in the southeastern part of Turkey two years ago, the border gate was closed for 22 days so that a bottle of water had risen from 250 dinars to 1000 dinars, in just 22 days. Even this is a serious source of distress for the Kurdish region.

Secondly, the Kurdish region is still selling oil over Turkey. It provides its income from the oil selling through Turkey. If Turkey closes the valve in Ceyhan, the Kurdish region will experience very serious income problems. Turkey will also make political moves. For example, the representative of the PUK in Turkey was deported in the past weeks. The issue is completely different, but the KDP has a representative in Turkey, which can be deported from Turkey. Turkey's airspace can be closed for airplanes to land in Erbil.

Thirdly, I think that Turkey will have closer relations with

Turkey is a powerful state, but when it comes to the Kurdish region, the closure of Habur means the closing of the most important pitfalls. The Barzani administration is earning \$ 400 million for a year. When operations began in the southeastern part of Turkey two years ago, the border gate was closed for 22 days so that a bottle of water had risen from 250 dinars to 1000 dinars, in just 22 days.

Baghdad. In the coming period, Abadi may come to Turkey. Abadi will come to Turkey and Turkey may develop closer relations with Baghdad. For example, military cooperation between Iran and Turkey may increase, perhaps joint operations. Why should not a Sinjar operation be considered? Turkey is in the same line with Baghdad regarding the Kirkuk issue. It could also be for the Sinjar issue. The mediums of Turkey are not limited to them and I think it can be deterrent, as the Kurdish region has no other way than Turkey.

If independence is declared despite of everything, Kurdistan could be another Israel. An introverted, foreign dependent Israel which does not have any relations with its neighbors?

I think the chance of this option is low. This is always said for those who are antipathy to Israel or Israel, but geographies are not the same, the point is not the same. Israel does not have a border with Turkey. See, Turkey may not take such determined and clear actions against any issue before. This is the primary security and national interest problem in terms of Turkey's point of view. If, like Osman Baydemir's speech, they continue to add fuel to the flame in the Kurdish region,

Turkey would not allow that and would take its measures. Our President used fairly clear statements; Turkey has the capacity and determination to take concrete steps in Iraq like it did in Syria. Euphrates Shield operation showed everything. That's why 'second Israel' discourses seems unlikely. Of course, the role of the US and provided protection by them, will be highly different. However, the truth is if this type of structure is built, Israel will gain for that.

Israel already the only openly supporting country?

The Jewish origin of Barzani, the existence of large numbers of Kurdish rooted Jewish people in the Israeli parliament makes situation more obvious.

What will Baghdad do If referendum is resulted with 'yes' and the independence is declared?

There are two opinions in Baghdad. Some politicians we met in Baghdad says Kurds become headache, let's get rid of them. However, others says these are the territories of Iraq, why should we abandon our resources? The territories demanded by Kurds not only consist of the territories declared in Erbil, Sulaymaniyah

and Dohuk. The main problem is other demanded controversial regions like Mosul, Kirkuk and Salahaddin. There are Arabs, Turkmens and other minorities which live in those regions and have sympathies for Baghdad. We should particularly highlight the clamor of the Turkmens, they expect sanctions from the Baghdad government. Because of a serious Hashd al-Shaabi settlement in the region, the process is no longer similar to previous times. Hashd al-Shaabi declares their disapproval of the independence of Kurdish region in their press statement. This situation may cause to a conflict out of Baghdad's control.

What Baghdad can do against that?

Baghdad has some sanctions. The most important sanction is cutting budget. They still do not send budget to Kurdish region. A cooperation in the favor of Turkey could be developed. From Baghdad's point of view, there could make a small presentation in Talafar region by Turkey's closing border gate from the very moment collaboration between Turkey and Iraq starts. Through this type of corridor, Turkey's connection with region can be reconstructed, Kurdish region could be bypassed and weak-

ened economically. Military measures are also on the table. Of course, there are some measures Baghdad could take. Baghdad may collaborate with Iran.

All of these based on the assumption that Baghdad is a powerful state and has a will in that way. However, there is not any powerful country in the region except Iran and Turkey. If the US gives a different promise to Barzani, they may pressure on Abadi government. They already want to restrict Iran and presses Turkey.

You're right, however, it is seen that the US does not support the current process so far. Americans spent highly serious effort for KRG. They say the same thing for PYD members 'They're our children, we're raising them'. They also raised the Iraqi Kurdish settlement and I do not think that they will want their baby to die. They will just prevent the abrupt decisions of this baby like trying to run before learning to walk.

In one of his speech, Barzani says 'We could be pretty good neighbors with Iraq'. He thinks Baghdad may behave like no problem exists. Even though Barzanis

US does not support the current process so far. Americans spent highly serious effort for KRG. They say the same thing for PYD members 'They're our children, we're raising them'.

have a 100 years' experience and accomplished to survive in a chaotic region like Middle East, he uses this type of statement. Is this a disconnection from reality or imprudence?

Surviving as a political and military movement is one thing, showing up and surviving as a newly established state is another. Both of them are completely different. If the idea of 'This is Iraq, why we should give up our territories' comes into prominence, in a period identity consciousness of being Iraqi prevails being Arab, Kurds may encounter with further challenges. Kurds are not only live in Kurdish region. They may face with Iraqi army in those regions.

What Iran says and does about this issue? If independence is declared, what will it do?

Iran is extremely opponent for this independence discursively. However, in terms actions we could not figure out the position of Iran. While Iran differentiates the process in Syria, plays a different role in Iraq. Of course, the biggest fear of Iran is encountering with this threat. For Iran's point of view, the issue is not the foundation of a Kurdistan state in Iraq. The issue is keeping this threat away from its borders. If conflict starts, risk

increases and clashes grow in the region by the declaration of independence a further space may open for terrorist organizations. Different conflict dynamics may emerge. Reflections of all those factors worries Iran. They share same concerns with Turkey. They are aware about the consequences of variation, differentiation and increase in the conflict dynamics. Iran has an intention to take position beyond its own borders. They struggle to protect its borders from beyond its borders. They oppose because of this reason. Their concern is not about Kurdish settlement inside Iran or partition of Iran. That's why we could say that the Iranian approach is more security oriented.

What will be the result of the referendum? What would be the rate of going to the election?

Because we do not know where they will do it and whether they will do in disputed territories or not, it's not possible to predict from now. It will definitely affect participation. There is still a serious political opposition. We are talking about the opposition of Goran and Komala Islami, it is not certain that their supporters will join. We do not know whether all the voters of the PUK and KDP will participate or not. In the negoti-

ations we had with the region, we saw a serious prediction that the current state of affairs would not become a state. However, if you ask for independence, of course, this is the dream of all Kurds. Above 90 percent of the participants to the referendum will say yes. However, this will be limited with the participants.

Can the emotional threshold be overcome otherwise? There is a dream of independence for a century, as there is a pressure because of the fragmentation and the suppression, but there is a huge pit full of blood between dreams and facts.

Actually, the politicians have this psychology. When we look at Kurdish people in Iraq, we can say that they ap-

proach more realistic than the politicians. There is a structure like a small state. Why should we lose our advantages? Why should we face with the Turkmen and Arabs? Why should we go into conflict with the government of Baghdad? Why should we take Turkey to oppose us when we establish relations with Turkey? Why should we make Iran feeling antipathy to us? These are the question the people of Kurds raised. They also say that the making Iranians feeling antipathy to us can bring about intervention. We heard these views from most of the people. There is a fear. The people are looking more realistic. For that reason, although the people of the region want independence, they do not believe in an independent state from now.

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