

It's Complicated:

What are the obstacles to thawing Turkey-Iraq ties?

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Relations between Iraq and Turkey are seen to be improving following the recent visit by Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi to Ankara. Ties between the two countries have been fluctuating for decades. However, despite several minor fallouts between Baghdad and Ankara, the two neighbours have managed to avoid a major crisis in relations. At the same time, attempts to strengthen bilateral ties have been interrupted due to several factors. This policy outlook seeks to analyse the main points of contention between Turkey and Iraq in a bid to assess if the differences can be addressed and resolved in the foreseeable future.

Introduction

Ties between Turkey and Iraq have been fluctuating for decades. However, despite several minor fallout between Baghdad and Ankara, the two neighbours have managed to avoid a major crisis in relations. At the same time, attempts to strengthen bilateral ties have been interrupted due to several factors, which this policy outlook seeks to address.

Turkey has long complained that Iraq is [not preventing](#) militants belonging to, or affiliated with, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) from operating inside Iraqi territory to carry out terrorist attacks against Turkey. Iraqi officials maintain that they oppose PKK actions but are unable to stop the militants, primarily because they are beyond the reach of security forces. At the same time, however, Baghdad brands Turkish incursions into Iraq to target the bases of PKK militants as "a breach of Iraqi sovereignty" without offering a solution to the terror threat.

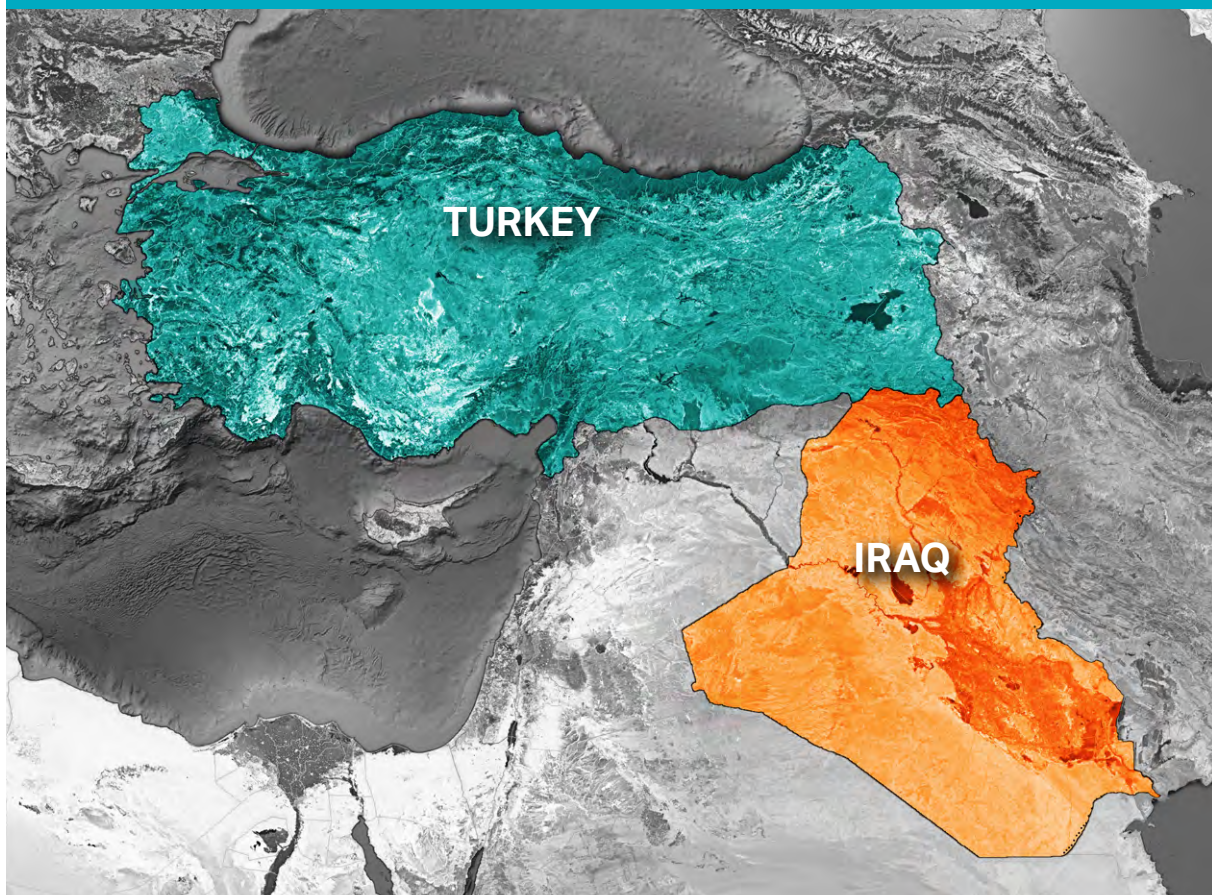
Another disagreement between the two countries is over the flow of water, particularly in the Tigris river, from Turkey to Iraq. Baghdad partly blames Ankara for Iraq's water shortages, pointing the finger at Turkey's dams. Turkey has

been working on its dam projects for decades while Iraq's water infrastructure was hit with the impact of sanctions and wars during the same period. In the absence of an internationally-binding water-sharing agreement between the two neighbours and expected drier times to come in the region thanks to climate change, the problem is likely to emerge whenever Iraq suffers from a lack of rainfall.

The aforementioned issues have been causing varying degrees of discord between the two countries [since the 1990s](#). However, a third problem has escalated between Turkey and Iraq's federal government in particular over the past five years: the export of Iraq's oil to Turkey via the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). Ankara has found itself in the middle of an internal Iraqi dispute between the federal government in Baghdad and the regional government in Erbil over oil, budget, and constitutional issues. The dispute between Baghdad and Erbil over the KRG's exporting of Iraqi oil to Turkey has yet to be resolved.

A visit by Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi to Ankara on December 17 where he met Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was hailed as a positive step by state media in both countries, amid reports and official statements suggesting that Turkey and Iraq are not only in the pro-

Map showing Turkey and Iraq



(TRT World Research Centre)

cess of resolving many of their differences, but that the two sides are also taking steps to strengthen economic, political, and cultural ties.

This policy outlook seeks to analyse the main points of contention between Turkey and Iraq in a bid to assess if the differences can be addressed and resolved in the foreseeable future.

PKK terrorism

The PKK is recognised as a terrorist organisation not only by Turkey but also by the United States, the European Union, and several other countries worldwide. The separatist group launched an insurgency against Turkey in 1984. Since then, the conflict resulting from its militancy has claimed the lives of more than 40,000 people. In addition to targeting members of the Turkish army, the militant group and its affiliates have also carried out terrorist attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure. It has also been implicated in the [abduction of children](#) and recruiting them to become [child soldiers](#), as well as the persecution and murder of Kurds who are opposed to the [PKK's ideology](#).

The threat of PKK terror does not only [impact lives](#) but also livelihoods in Turkey, as the country relies on its reputation as a safe attraction for investment and [tourism](#). The Turkish [public's sentiments](#) towards the PKK makes dealing with the group's terror threat a priority for any government in Turkey.

The recent [abduction and killing](#) of 13 Turkish [security personnel and civilians](#) by the PKK in Iraq's northern Gara region, will only strengthen Turkey's resolve [to continue](#) targeting the terror group.

Over the past few years, Turkey [has intensified](#) its anti-PKK military operations inside Iraq, using jets and drones, as well as [intelligence provided](#) by the Iraqi KRG – seeking to keep the fight against the PKK on the Iraqi side of the border. As neither the Iraqi Army [nor KRG](#) forces have been able to clear the group from their bases inside Iraq, Baghdad's vocal protests against Turkish incursions were viewed by observers as “face-saving” measures.

There were cases, however, of [genuine anger](#) in Baghdad, the most notable of which was last August when a Turkish anti-PKK drone strike killed two Iraqi senior border guard officials. Turkey's regional foes, most notably the UAE and Egypt, jumped on the occasion to condemn Ankara and express solidarity with Baghdad.

Tensions between Iraq and Turkey gradually eased, and by December, Ankara had expressed [its support](#) for a Baghdad-Erbil deal that would entail actively removing militias affiliated with the PKK from the Iraqi town of Sinjar, on the border with Syria, where another PKK offshoot, the People's Protection Units (YPG), roams free.

It is unclear, however, how sustainable the Baghdad-Erbil deal will be. The agreement aims to help thousands of internally-displaced Yazidis return to their homes in Sinjar after they suffered unimaginable atrocities, including rape and enslavement, at the hands of Daesh in 2014. Many residents of Sinjar have not forgiven the Peshmerga forces loyal to the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), the dominant political party of the KRG, for fleeing when Daesh attacked the town.

In addition, there are [reports](#) that fighters loyal to the PKK, known as Sinjar Resistance Units (YBS), which receive payments from Iran-backed Iraqi militia group Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF), will remain in the town but under an official PMF uniform.

The Baghdad-Erbil agreement does not include the presence of the PMF in Sinjar, but the Iran-backed militias are, in practice, beyond the control of the Iraqi government. Both the PKK and the PMF have used the pretext of fighting Daesh to further their own agendas, not only in Iraq but also in neighbouring Syria. Instability in Sinjar gives oxygen to anti-Turkey groups in both Iraq and Syria.

During his visit to Turkey, the Iraqi prime minister [reassured Ankara](#) that “Iraq has a clear stance in condemning any action threatening Turkey or using the Iraqi territory to threaten Turkey's national security.”

Turkey's Defence Minister Hulusi Akar and Chief of General Staff General Yasar Guler [visited Iraq](#) on January 18 to discuss joint efforts to combat terrorism and military co-operation between the two countries. On January 26, Turkey sent a team of military consultants to support the Iraqi Army as part of “[NATO Mission Iraq](#)”.

Turkey's Ambassador to Iraq, Fatih Yildiz, told TRT World Research Centre that Ankara has suggested that Turkey and Iraq work jointly to eradicate the PKK bases from Iraqi territories. However, the Turkish ambassador noted that there is a fundamental difference in how the PKK is viewed by both countries. “Iraqi officials refer to them as the ‘illegal presence of PKK’ but what does that mean? The right definition is terrorists,” said Yildiz.

Omer Ozkizilcik, a Turkish analyst at the SETA Foundation, a think-tank based in Ankara, told TRT World Research Centre that Turkey's position vis-à-vis the PKK today is much better than in the past.

“The PKK has been using the mountains in northern Iraq for decades to train recruits and infiltrate into Turkey. As long as the PKK presence remains there, the terror group will continue to be a threat to Turkey. In contrast to the past, the battle is now not being fought on the Turkish side of the border, but on the Iraqi side. The numbers of the PKK vary a lot as the terror group transfers fighters between the triangle of Syria-Iraq-Turkey,” said Ozkizilcik.



Iraqi oil facilities are seen in Kirkuk province, Iraq, on October 18, 2017. . (Ali Mukarrem Garip - Anadolu Agency)

Oil and the KRG

Trade between energy-hungry Turkey and oil-rich Iraq is mutually beneficial. Turkey needs Iraqi oil because it is of high-quality, geographically proximate, and helps Ankara [diversify](#) its energy sources. Following US sanctions on Tehran imposed by the Trump administration, Turkey had stopped importing [Iranian oil](#) in 2019 and sought alternative crude supplies from Iraq, among other countries. Nevertheless, energy supply has remained [an issue](#) for Turkey and is therefore seeking to increase its import of Iraqi oil.

Iraq also stands to benefit from having a neighbour that would be a consistent source of energy demand. Iraq, which has been heavily influenced by Iran since 2003, also needs to “diversify” its relationship with its neighbours. Iraq has three heavy-weight neighbours which are influential in the region: Iran, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia. Baghdad’s unhealthy closeness to Tehran is [among the key reasons](#) that led to the recent Iraqi protest movement. The protesters object to Iranian influence on two fronts: for its role in helping corrupt Iraqi politicians and for empowering powerful Shia militias. Therefore, having a balanced relationship with all its neighbours is not just a sound foreign policy approach for Iraq but also potentially beneficial internally.

Relations between Ankara and Baghdad [witnessed deterioration](#) during the reign of former Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, who is viewed by many Iraqis as being sectarian and loyal to Iran. During Maliki’s second term (2010-2014), which became increasingly sectarian nationally and hostile towards Turkey, Ankara began improving its [ties with Erbil](#) at the expense of Baghdad. Turkey’s ties with the KRG were further strengthened after Daesh took over territories from the control of Iraq’s central government in 2014. As much of the oil-rich Kirkuk province was under the control of the KRG for three years (2014-2017), Ankara had to deal with Erbil instead of Baghdad.

From Ankara’s perspective, it was dealing with a regional government recognised by the Iraqi constitution. Baghdad argues that the KRG is not authorised to sell Iraqi oil and therefore Turkey’s energy purchases from the regional

government in Erbil [were illegal](#). The KRG has constitutional disputes with Baghdad over the budget and claims that its independent oil exports [are legitimate](#) because previous budget laws passed by the parliament had required the KRG to pay a contribution from its oil export earnings.

In response to importing oil from the KRG, Iraq is suing Turkey at the International Chamber of Commerce’s International Court of Arbitration (ICA) in Paris, seeking \$26 billion in damages. Iraq’s Oil Minister, Ihsan Ismaael, has reportedly set [an April deadline](#) to resolve the legal dispute with Turkey.

Iraq argues that the Iraq-Turkey Pipeline (ITP) agreement, in its 2010 extension update, specifies the “Iraqi side” to be Iraq’s Ministry of Oil, which falls under the authority of the central government in Baghdad and not the KRG in Erbil.

According to Sarkawt Shams, a member of Iraq’s Kurdistan parliament, a regional legislative body for the semi-autonomous region based in Erbil, the KRG is not worried about Baghdad’s arbitration against Turkey at the ICA.

“Regarding Iraq-Turkey oil arbitration in Paris, KRG tells my colleagues that the arbitration is not so serious and has no impact on KRG’s oil. Hope Alliance is determined to embrace third option; allowing governors of KRG to reach a deal with Baghdad over oil-Budget,” [tweeted Shams](#), who is a member of the Hope Alliance, a Kurdish opposition bloc in Iraq’s parliament.

A map of Kirkuk-Ceyhan oil pipeline between Iraq and Turkey



With regards to the dispute over oil import via the KRG, Turkey's Ambassador to Iraq noted: "We have invested a lot of money in the pipeline that comes from the border of Iraq to the Turkish port of Ceyhan. That pipeline was built for the purpose of pumping oil, which we seek to import. The federal Iraqi government is gauging the amount of oil that comes to Ceyhan. Which side inside Iraq – Baghdad or Erbil – that is authorised to export the oil is an internal Iraqi dispute that they need to agree on themselves."

"There is so much stress on the arbitration case but frankly there is something that is overlooked: there is already a case in Iraq's constitutional court between the KRG and Baghdad on the very specific matter of how to share the income that comes out from the oil exported by KRG," he added.

Water wars?

Although the headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers are located in Turkey, downstream countries Iraq and Syria had no problems with their neighbour over the flow of water for most of the twentieth century. As the populations of the three countries began to increase along with their respective water needs, demand for water began to rise too.

The three countries all interpret international law as being on their side with regards to water sharing but the fact remains that there is no conclusive, legally-binding mechanism which can arbitrate disputes between the three nations. Turkey sees itself as having sovereign rights over the waters because both rivers originate within its territories, while Iraq sees it has rights over the volume of water that it receives.

Iraq made a complaint to Turkey following the filling of the Turkish Atatürk Dam in 1990, going as far as threatening to bomb the dam. Sporadic disputes [over water](#) have continued between the two countries but the issue has not become the focal point of Turkish-Iraqi relations. Iraq has two other upstream neighbours, [Syria and Iran](#), both of which have reduced the flow of water to Iraq in the past as per their own needs assessments. It is safe to assume that Iraq will not be going to war with any of its neighbours over water.

It is worthy to note that water shortages in Iraq are also due to poor Iraqi [water management](#), which has led to significant waste. Wars, sanctions, corruption, and lack of planning have affected most infrastructure projects in Iraq, including water. That is why Turkey, knowing that its own need for water will not be reduced in the drought-prone future of the region, has opted to help Iraq better manage its water resources instead.

"We discussed the issue of water and we stressed the need to use water economically...we proposed joint work plans in this field. We in Turkey stress that water will not be an issue of difference between us, but it should be an area of



cooperation," Erdogan said during [a press conference](#) with Kadhim.

In his interview with TRT World Research Centre, Turkey's Ambassador to Iraq gave his comprehensive assessment of the dispute:

"Iraq defines the water problem as emanating from the fact that they are a downstream country and therefore they're not receiving enough water from Turkey. From our side, we have underscored the fact that it is not a matter of quantity, but rather an issue of quality -- how you manage the water. In Turkey, we have come a long way when it comes to managing our own water resources. Building dams, building reservoirs, and working on irrigation projects were all part of the Turkish experience. Nevertheless, we are not a water-rich country. We have less water than we need, and by 2030 we are going to have even less water. So even we need to make better use of our water resources and we are working on that. We fully understand Iraq's water issues, given the country's lack of the needed infrastructure, and that's why Turkey is very much actively working on addressing the root causes of the problem. For example, there were stark differences in terms of Iraq's water problems in two consecutive years: scarcity in 2018 and flooding in 2019. Turkey was readying to put the Ilisu dam into service in 2018 but when the Iraqis requested that we postpone that because they had a dry year, Turkey swiftly obliged following instructions from the Turkish president. The next year, Iraq had a rainy season that it was not ready for, causing floods in Mosul in March 2019, that led to the tragic death of many people after their boat capsized. Turkey had sent out search and rescue teams which faced high levels of water for days. Dams (like the one in Mosul, among others) are supposed to hold water after a rainy season. That is why we told our Iraqi counterparts that we will work with them to resolve these issues. Turkey intends to send its water management experts and officials to work on Iraq's water problems. These issues are of a very technical nature. We already started holding joint working group meetings and we will launch a centre for research and implementation of water issues (made up of Turkish and Iraqi researchers). In the future, it will not be politicians who are talking about water matters, but it will be experts who will talk, work, and come up with joint solutions."



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (L) welcomes Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi (R) at the Presidential Complex with an official ceremony in Ankara, Turkey on December 17, 2020. (Murat Kula - Anadolu Agency)

A new page in Turkey-Iraq ties?

Relations between Turkey and Iraq have certainly come a long way since Maliki's premiership when Ankara sought to foster better ties with Iraq's Kurds and Sunni Arabs amid disputes with the Shia-led government. Political relations between Ankara and Baghdad appear to have witnessed an improvement after Turkey sided with Iraq's central government against an independence referendum held by the KRG in 2017.

A senior Iraqi diplomat told TRT World Research Centre on condition of anonymity that ties between Turkey and Iraq are undergoing significant changes for the better after Kadhimi's visit to Ankara.

"Relations between Ankara and Baghdad had witnessed in the past lukewarm periods as well as the occasional escalation of rhetoric regarding several political, economic and security files. The main points of differences were regarding water issues and security questions, most notably the Turkish military involvement in northern Iraq. After the visit of Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, however, we are witnessing radical changes taking place between Iraq and Turkey," the Iraqi diplomat said.

The diplomat noted that the two sides are working to lift the current [visa restrictions](#) that would allow Iraqis easier access to Turkey, as was the case in 2009 before it was suspended for security reasons following the rise of Daesh in 2014. He also noted that the two sides are discussing economic agreements based on Turkey's pledge of \$5 billion for Iraq's reconstruction, made in Kuwait in 2018.

"The Iraqi-Turkish rapprochement has many positive indications, including stability in the Middle East region, as Turkey will have a good relationship in the coming period with the Gulf countries," said the Iraqi diplomat.

"Iraq is an important economic centre and most of the neighbouring countries are racing towards building distinguished relations with it in the coming period. Iraq will witness more security and stability, which makes it a suitable environment for investment," he added.

According to Iraq's Ambassador in Ankara, Hassan al-Janaobi, some 1.3 million Iraqis visit Turkey annually. Tens of thousands of Iraqi students study in Turkey and more than 750 Turkish companies are working with Iraqi partners in Iraq, [he noted](#).

Iraq's Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein announced that trade between Turkey and Iraq had increased last year, despite problems resulting from the impact of Covid-19. "Trade volume of the two countries did not decline but increased. In 2019, the bilateral trade volume was \$15.8 billion, while [in 2020] it is nearly \$17 billion," [he noted](#).

According to Turkish figures, Iraqis are the biggest community among foreigners who have purchased [properties in Turkey](#) over the past five years.

Iraqi critics of Turkey, however, dispute the optimistic picture presented by Kadhimi. "I do not think Turkish-Iraqi relations will improve in the foreseeable future. The Iraqi prime minister's recent visit to Ankara was of a protocol character," Sadeq al-Taai, an Iraqi writer and researcher based in London, told TRT World Research Centre. "Kadhimi's statements (regarding Turkish loans) may be merely for media consumption as part of his electioneering". From Taai's perspective, Ankara was using the water and PKK problems as "pressure cards" to secure cheap oil from Iraq.

With regards to the \$5 billion pledge of credit made by Turkey to Iraq at the [donors' conference](#) that was held in Kuwait in 2018, Turkey's Ambassador to Iraq explained that there are hurdles: "Turkey looks forward to receiving detailed project proposals from Iraq, which need to be

included in the Iraqi budget. The implementation of the credit pledges also requires certain conditions and guarantees. The interruptions in government have not helped: the conference was held when Iraq's prime minister was Haider al-Abadi. Then came the elections, the delayed appointment of former prime minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi, the resignation of Abdul-Mahdi, the naming Mustafa al-Kadhimi as prime minister and now there is talk of another election soon. That's three governments in three years."

The way forward

There is more that needs to be done to boost bilateral ties, according to SETA's analyst, Ozkizilcik. "The Iraqi side still cannot deliver on Turkey's request to open a direct border crossing from Turkey to the territories of the Iraqi central government," he noted, in reference to a second border crossing, most likely at the Ovakoy-Faysh Khabur line, in addition to the existing Ibrahim Khalil gate.

Nadeem Al-Abdalla, Manager of the London-based Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre, told TRT World Research Centre that a number of issues need to be addressed in order to improve Iraqi-Turkish relations. "Iraq and Turkey should recognise the sovereignty of each nation on its own territory. This means only dealing with the official armed forces of each nation, as this would create a policy of not allowing the existence of any armed group, whatever its name or ideology, in their territories," he said.

"Regarding the issue of the relationship between Turkey on one side, and Iraq's central government in Baghdad and the KRG in Erbil, issues of sovereignty between the two nations such as defence, military co-operation and oil and gas exports should be conducted transparently between the two central governments and not by Turkey and the KRG, as this issue is now one of great frustration for most Iraqi people, including those living in northern Iraq under the KRG administration. Turkey should look at the issue of oil exports from the KRG not only as an opportunity for economic gain but as an issue which damages Iraq's sovereignty and leads to a lack of transparency and the abuse of the fortune of Iraq by politicians," he added.

Sajad Jiyad, an Iraqi analyst and a fellow at the Century Foundation, a progressive think tank based in New York, told the TRT World Research Centre that "Iraq's ties with Turkey are generally good and the recent visit by prime minister Kadhimi reiterated that. However, there are several issues that cause strains in relations and prevent them from developing further. First is the issue of Turkish military bases in the Kurdistan region, which Baghdad says are illegal and wants to see all Turkish troops withdrawn from Iraq and no further violations of airspace, territory or sovereignty through Turkish military incursions in Iraq, including airstrikes and assassinations against PKK-linked elements. Second is the issue of water provision, which has seen flow rates decrease dramatically over the years as Turkey has built up dams and reduced downstream flows



Iraqis carry their national and ethnic Turkmen flags to celebrate the presence of Iraq's army in Kirkuk, which retook control of the city from Kurdish peshmerga forces, on October 18, 2017. (Yunus Keleş - Anadolu Agency)

into Iraq. Third is the nature of Turkish economic relations with the Kurdistan region, especially with the KDP, the deal over oil exports and the KRG pipeline, customs and border controls which Baghdad sees as illegal and opaque, undermining the state's authority. All of these are solvable and there is much mutual benefit that both countries can gain from a deal that covers all these aspects, but it does require Turkey to be more flexible with Iraq and avoid overuse of its leverage."

Other observers, however, pointed to the elephant in the room with regards to Turkey-Iraq ties – namely the influence of Iran.

"Iran sees Turkey as its main rival in Iraq as Turkey does enjoy good relations with Sunni and Shia Arabs alike as well as the Kurds. The Turkish approach questions Iranian sectarianism in its essence. Also economically, Turkey dominates the Iraqi market and Iran wants to prevent Turkish products from entering the market to encourage [the purchase of] its own products," said Ozkizilcik.

Ali Bakir, Assistant Professor at Qatar University's Ibn Khaldon Center, told TRT World Research Centre that "there is a strong will to improve Turkish-Iraqi relation from both sides given that they have a lot of potential to invest in to achieve their mutual interests by a win-win situation. Whether they can do this or not will depend on a set of variables that might not be related directly to them given that Iraq is under the heavy influence of Iran and the US."

"Both have the will to move forward and deepen their co-operation. However, Kadhim's hands might prove to be tied by the Shia militias and Iran. The Iranian and American influence in Iraq may hinder the mutual desire of Baghdad and Ankara to carry their relations to the next level. Both Tehran and Washington have contrasting agendas vis-à-vis Turkey. The Shia militias will be a great obstacle for the Iraqi Prime Minister. Iran considers Iraq as its backyard. Furthermore, it sees Turkey as a competitor in Iraq and the region in general. Tehran has worked restlessly through its Iraqi politicians and Shia militias to block Ankara's efforts to expand its political and economic role in Baghdad and the southern part of Iraq. With US President Joe Biden coming to power, and Brett McGurk appointed in this administration, Iran might regain its position in Iraq. This might create problems for the Iraqi government and fuel the competition between Iran and Turkey," he added.

According to Nadeem Al-Abdalla of the Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre, Iraq needs electoral reform in order to control Tehran's influence on Baghdad. "Regarding Iran's influence in Iraqi politics, efforts should be made by all Iraqis to make it clear, without fear, that Iranian influence in Iraq is rejected and to establish fair and transparent electoral laws governed by international observers, as this would prevent military groups from hijacking the outcome of these elections and would lead to a better representation of the Iraqi people. This would be reflected in a parliament and gov-

ernment looking for the national interest rather than the interests of other nations," he said.

The Turkish ambassador dismissed claims, often made by media outlets hostile towards Ankara, that Turkey has territorial ambitions inside Iraq, most notably in [Kirkuk and Mosul](#). "Turkey is for the unity of Iraq. We do not make exceptions when it comes to the territorial integrity and unity of countries. That is our position regarding the whole region, not just Iraq." He stressed Turkey's historical links to Iraq's Turkmen population could help, not hinder, relations between the two countries.

Turkey had been vocal in the past about the rights of Iraq's [Turkmen minority](#), which has faced discrimination from Arabs in the central government prior to 2003 and persecution by Kurds after that. Shia members of the Turkmen minority were targeted by Daesh in 2014 while Sunni members of the community suffered abuse at the hands of PMF. Conditions for Turkmen in Kirkuk improved when Iraq's central government retook control of the city from Kurdish Peshmerga forces in 2017. The plight of Turkmen is not considered today amongst the main points of contention between Turkey and Iraq.

Conclusion

The differences between Iraq and Turkey appear unlikely to be resolved in the near future, despite the apparent recent upsurge in efforts to improve ties. These problems require compromises from both sides if long-term solutions are to be reached. Nevertheless, we have witnessed that political differences do not always translate into an absence of trade. Until comprehensive settlements are found, both sides are likely to continue managing the crises between them as both countries do not want an uncontrollable escalation.

An Iraq that has its house in order, will be in a stronger bargaining position to negotiate deals with its neighbours. A strong and united Iraq is also beneficial for Turkey: first and foremost, it means Iraqi territories will cease to be a launching pad for terrorist attacks against Turkey.

As it seeks to diversify its sources of energy, Turkey will continue to look to Iraqi oil supplies, whether from the central government in Baghdad (the preferable option) or via the KRG in Erbil. Iraq also needs to diversify its imports as well as to garner political support from neighbours other than Iran. Turkey and other neighbours (like Saudi Arabia and Jordan) offer that balance.