

An Alternative Approach to Preventing Ethnic
Conflict: the Role of the Gülen's Schools in
strengthening the delicate relations between
Turkey and the Iraqi Kurds with particular
reference to the 'Kirkuk Crisis'

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ABSTRACT

It is an undeniable fact that ethnic conflict in the post cold war era is one of the most influential destabilizing forces. Following the further postponement of a referendum in Kirkuk, referred to in Article 140 of the 2005 Iraqi Constitution, many commentators and academics have described the political and ethnic tension in Northern Iraq as a 'powder keg'.¹ The Turkish government has been refusing to recognize, up until very recently, the Federal Iraqi Kurdish administration by denying that they exist. Turkish Chief of General Staff, General Yasar Buyukanit, even considered launching a military operation against the Iraqi Kurds in response to their alleged support for the PKK.² The Kurds of Iraq have always been suspicious about the true intentions of Turkey's foreign policy towards Northern Iraq. In response to the Turkish discussions, the President of Kurdistan, Mr. Barzani, stated that he would view the Turkish government's policy and the potential consequences of any military incursion into Kurdish territory as a declaration of war.³ Within the framework of this fragile ethnic tension, this paper will argue that the lack of mechanisms for communication between conflicting parties, which would help to

deescalate ethnic tension and establish conditions of confidence building measurements towards peaceful solutions, are the major impediment in preventing the ethnic conflict. There is no doubt that an increasing focus on the role of non-governmental organizations in preventing ethnic conflict and supporting the peace building process has been vital. This paper will consider the role which Turkish schools in the Kurdistan region of Iraq have played in building trusting cross-ethnic relationships. It goes on to compare them with interventions such as governmental policies to improve economic relations. It attempts to draw conclusions about the role and effect each has played in preventing trans-national ethnic conflict. It strongly emphasizes that the importance of social, cultural aspects of ethnic conflicts. The main argument of this paper is the claim that Turkish schools inspired by Fethullah Gülen, a non-governmental organization, have prepared and set up the preconditions for understanding each others' needs and that in so doing they are able to build confidence between antagonistic parties. In that sense they can serve as mediators between the nation-state Turkey and the semi-autonomous Iraqi Kurdish federal region. They are well placed to open channels of communication and to specify the needs of the Kurdish community in Iraq. In order to investigate the role of Gülen-Turkish schools in Northern Iraq, this paper will deconstruct the Kurdish political movement back to the 1992, which marks the beginning of a self-rule era, with particular reference to the Gülen-Turkish schools which started their educational life in 1994.

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INTRODUCTION

Without any doubt ethno nationalism as a movement and ideology has played a crucial role in world politics since the French revolution. For some, it has been the only legitimizing source for exercising power over nation and for others, it is an evil ideology causing the most human catastrophes of the world politics (Ross, M. Howard and Rothman Jay 1999:1). Dissolution of the great em-

pires at the beginning of the 20th century, decolonization and significant increase on number of new states in Africa and Asia gave an incredible momentum to national movements. A natural consequence of this political development was the sudden proliferation of social enquires about the nature and development of the theory of nation, ethnicity and ethnic conflict. (Wimmer, A., Goldstone, J.R., Horowitz, L.D., Joras, U., Shetter, C. 2004:10).

In line with this political development social scientists have not shown a great deal of interest in studies of ethnicity and ethno-nationalism until the world has witnessed a new wave of ethnic conflicts and cleansing from Ruanda to Bosnia after the collapse of communism. In the cold war era conventional ethnic conflict prevention approaches can be summarised in four groups as: (Hamburg, A. David and Cyrus, R 1997: XXI)

- *Early warning and early response*
- *Preventive diplomacy*
- *Economic measures such as sanctions and inducements*
- *The use of force*

Despite some variations, they are all mainly based on the concept of state centric notions of sovereignty which can only be claimed by national states. In other words these measurements are simple reflection of the post Westphalian state system. The issue of sovereignty is causing a complicated predicament in the uneasy relationship between Turkey and the KRG. On the one hand the KRG claims that they are legal representatives of the Iraqi Kurds and should be recognised as a partner of Turkey, on the other hand, in the Turkish government's view there is a dilemma; While there is a de facto recognition of the KRG⁴, officially Turkey denies the KRG's existence and strongly reaffirms Baghdad's authority over the regional affairs. More over, Turkish officials claim that there is a political vacuum in the north of Iraq and this problem should be solved by Iraqis.⁵ The Turkish governments' relationship with the KRG should be considered within Turkey's own security concerns. Official policy states that:

‘Our firm stance on the security issue does not necessarily lead us to compromise on diplomatic flexibility. Recent visit of President Celal Talabani to Turkey, upon the invitation extended by our President is a very clear indication in this regard. We have an ongoing communication with the local administration in the north of Iraq. Representatives of Northern Iraqi groups visit Turkey and contact the relevant Turkish authorities. Not only KDP and PUK but also KIU have long since established liaison offices in Turkey.’⁶

From this statement it is very obvious that, the Turkish government prefers a foreign policy and ethnic conflict resolution operating at the level of national states, therefore, conventional ethnic conflict prevention approaches are not the most effective tools for any improvements. There is certainly strong need of a second generation preventative approach which is going to fill this gap between the conflicting parties.

In the post cold war era almost every ethnic conflict has international, political, economic, ideological and human right dimensions and these different dimensions are investigated in detail from many different view points. However, as this article is bound with strict limitations, the paper will only focus on a single concept that is: contact and its most basic principle that the ‘more contact, between ethnic groups, under the right conditions, even if it increases ethnic consciousness, need not increase conflict’ (Forbes, H.D 1997:2). This single concept will be comprehensively investigated in reference to the conventional ethnic conflict prevention approaches.

PROBLEMATIZATION

Underlying whole range of theories of ethnic conflict prevention are predominantly rely on to different ‘*problematization*’⁷ of the initial dispute which is main cause of potential ethnic conflict. Campbell argues that ‘a problematization is something that has made possible to think in terms of problems and solutions (Campbell, David 1998: x). It is about how different parties perceive or interpret the conflict

for their imaginary resolution. In other words, with Foucauldian term it is about the 'problematization of a present' by the actors' point of view. It is a kind of narrative that they think it is the only representation of truth, therefore ethnic conflict is not always a direct 'cause and effect' relation for conflicting parties. Sometimes this misinterpretation or misperception over the cause of conflict itself might be the potential conflict (Ross, M. Howard and Rothman Jay 1999:4). So instead of the clashing interests of the actors there are conflicting problematizations of present history which define and determine criteria for any success or failure of the ethnic conflict resolution. Problematization defines the nature and characterisation of a conflict whether it is going to be an economical, political or ideological conflict. It is the creation of possibilities which makes particular ethnic conflict and potential solutions sustainable.

As it has been noted above for the Turkish government there are three main pillars to its foreign policy: unity and sovereignty of the Iraqi government and the prevention of any potential political development which will lead the KRG to full independence and the PKK problem.⁸ On the other hand while, the KRG administration admits that there is a security issue and an ethnic terror problem, the administration claims that these problems can only be solved through a political process recognizing the KRG and its legitimate power.⁹ Further more, Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani gave a statement in November 2007 making it clear that;

'For us, there is no alternative to dialogue and discussion. We believe there is an opportunity for a political solution and we urge the distinguished group of Foreign Ministers to work with us to find that solution.'¹⁰ He implicitly demands to be recognized as a political actor which will stabilize and strength the KRG's position in both national and international politics. In addition to this concerns the KRG administration also needs to unite its deeply fragmented political structure for its strategic aims to make sure that there will be no more tragic '*Halabja*' for Kurds . We can draw our immediate conclusion from these statements. There are two very

different conflicting problematizations of a protracted ethnic problem. Both parties do not trust each other and there is an important fear factor and misinterpretation of the others intentions on both sides. For Turkey, there is always a risk of an independent Kurdish state which might potentially lead to a 'Great Kurdistan' separating eastern part of Turkey. For the KRG, Turkey is always posing potential threat for their hard fought gains and improvements. They are also feared on Turkey's strong claim on Kirkuk and Mosul where considerable amount of Turkmen population live.¹¹ Further to this fear there is a strong believe among Kurdish authorities that Iraqi Turkmen Front is a puppet organization which has got strong links with Turkish government and is funded by Turkish secret services.¹² I will offer an alternative problematization of the protracted ethnic tension between Turkey and Iraqi Kurds based on neither material sources such as oil or security nor psychological sources such as recognition. At the grass roots of this ethnic conflict there is essentially lack of understanding each others needs, accommodating different social, political and religious differences, perhaps in wider and deeper sense it is about lack of strong democratic culture. More importantly at the core of this ethnic conundrum there is a fear of otherness which eventually turns this unwanted other into an imaginary enemy. Yavuz points out this as: 'for instance, Turkey's own Kurdish problem shapes its policy toward Iraqi Kurds. Thus, Turkey has no Iraq policy, but rather an 'anti Kurdish policy' that is guided by fear of being portioned.' (Yavuz 2005:164) Deviating from main stream scholars such as Yavuz and others who make same claim for Turkey I will incrementally claim that this is a valid argument for all parties in Iraq. Fear of otherness is lying at the very foundation of this protracted ethnic problem.

Despite all difficulties presented by different problematization the main question is that would it be possible to develop a strategy which will enable us to claim a sustainable resolution and preventing potential conflict in future. This paper argues that if the conditions of possibilities would be created then it would be possible to

reach a common understanding towards a sustainable and peaceful ethnic conflict resolution. In order to create such conditionality there is need of strong and effective contact between these conflicting groups. Regardless of which discipline and problematization have been considered to prevent an ethnic conflict the first and most important condition is to establish some form of contact or communication between the conflicting parties. In so doing, all conflicting parties will be able to reach a common understanding of the roots of the ethnic conflict and will start the negotiation processes which presupposes recognition, respect, and understanding which the others need. As Ross and Rothman point out 'They [Non Governmental Organizations] are far more likely to focus on creating the preconditions which might move the parties to the table where more formal negotiations can take place or encourage acceptance and implementation of an existing agreement and achieving reconciliation among disputants. Such work may emphasize intense contact between small groups of people, cooperative projects of joint interest, building channels of communication' (Ross and Rothman 1999:2).

Even though there is a strong emphasize on the importance of strong cooperation and common interest there is no clear indication as to what kind of NGO activities might provide preconditions for a sustainable conflict resolution. It might be argued that there is no general rule to be applicable to all conflicts. Therefore each and every conflict is a unique case because of their historical and political specificities. As social researchers it is our duty to find that historical and political specificity between Turkey and Iraqi Kurds.

Indeed, in order to bring the antagonistic parties to a more constructive stage in ethnic conflict, contact is an essential part of any conflict prevention policy. During the whole cold war period this task was carried out through formal contact made by official state diplomacy through recognized national or international institutions. In addition to these state centric mechanisms in the post cold war environment there are increasing numbers of NGO activ-

ities to prevent ethnic conflicts. Although there are some critics about nature and definition of NGOs¹³ the importance and role of NGOs in preventing ethnic conflict is an undeniable fact.¹⁴ In terms of ethnic conflict prevention point of view educational institutions are considered as powerful functional mechanisms which have some clear advantages in comparison to the other mechanisms. According to Hamburg and Cyrus 'much of what schools can accomplish is similar to what parents can do- employ positive discipline practices, teach the capacity for responsible decision making, foster cooperative learning procedures and guide children prosaically behaviour outside the school as well as in them. They can convey the fascination of other cultures, making understanding and a respect a core attribute of their outlook on the world – including to capacity to interact effectively in the emerging global economy, a potentially powerful motivation in the world of the next century. They can use this knowledge to foster sympathetic interest across cultures, recognition of shared and valued goals, as well as a mutual aid ethic.'¹⁵ (Hamburg and Cyrus 1999:120)

In this article we will accept the definition of an NGO as a voluntary union which is legally constituted by private persons or organizations with no participation or representation of any government. In this sense the Fezalar Educational institutions (FEI) which operate in Northern Iraq, fit into the definition of NGO. FEI has been operating in Iraq, particularly in the northern Iraq, since 1993. The General Director of FEI Talip Kucuk points out an increasing demand for Turkish schools over the years in the region.¹⁵ There are currently, 10 Turkish schools from ranging from nursey to university level in Iraq. Eight of these schools are in the Suleymaniye (3), Arbil (5) and Kirkuk (2). There will also be a university called Ishik University which will be opened this September and has 4 faculties and 6 departments. In total there have been around 3000 students studying in these schools and this year FEI targeting to accomadate 3500 students. General Director Talip Kucuk emphasizes the fact that there was no school fee untill 2001. They were funded by volunteers and businessman. Currently the

school fee is around between \$1500 and \$1950. Like many other Turkish schools around world, the admission selection process is highly competitive. In order to apply for any of these schools' admission tests students first should have 85% overall mark from their local schools. Approximately 500 students enroll for the first stage selection then according to the test results the first 90 students have to take another test consisting of logic and mathematics; only 60 of those students are then accepted into each school. At the end of the selection tests schools are offering scholarships ranging from full funding to a 25% discount for the first 100 students. There are 210 teachers are employed in total at these schools, 120 of them are Turkish citizens and 19 of those teachers are the graduates of Fezalar schools.¹⁶ Beside its educational and cultural activities the FEI is acting as a financial investment advisor for those companies who want to invest in the region. The FEI provides the best local and financial information for companies and direct them in to right sectors. Therefore Fethullah Gulen's schools known and called as 'Turkish Schools' by the locals have got multidimensional structure functioning in every aspect of possible contact methods. The FEI's long term educational activities in northern Iraq which has been a war torn region for many years are extremely significant for creating culture of non violent conflict resolution at a grass roots level.

COMMERCIAL GROWTH AND ETHNIC CONFLICT

It is a very popular argument that we now live in a global village, with mass communication technologies, immigration, and global commerce.¹⁷ All of these have increased or changes enormously in the past century, and continue to grow, bringing different cultures and groups of people into more complicated networks of exchange. Borders have become less visible among the nations and ethnic groups. Contact among different peoples or ethnic groups are increasing. Forbes claims that "Economic development, it is often thought, should undermine narrow ethnic loyalties and thus ultimately reduce ethnic conflict and increase respect for individual

rights. After all, the growth of commerce brings previously isolated groups into closer contact and gives them incentives to cooperate with each other in new ways' (Forbes 1997:4). But can we draw a conclusion that this huge growth of commerce and intense contact between different ethnic groups will help us to prevent ethnic conflicts on the globe? Is there a real correlation between these variables? If there is to what extent the growth of commerce can affect ethnic conflict? Forbes attempts to answer these questions by saying that: 'more contact between individuals belonging to antagonistic social groups tends to undermine negative stereotypes and thus to reduce prejudice and improve intergroup relations. In relations between groups, familiarity can breed friendliness and appreciation. Commercial exchange, to the extent that it promotes personal acquaintance, should cure destructive prejudices.' (Forbes 1997:7) There is no doubt that familiarity of language, culture and religion between antagonistic groups plays a strategic role in prevention of ethnic conflict. Indeed, Turkish and Kurdish cultures have so many common social practices such as having kinship, a common history and a common religion; Islam. For more than a thousand years Turkish and Kurdish communities lived in peace and harmony. Although he does not explain that to what extent precisely commerce can be a useful tool and under what conditions Forbes offers commerce as another preventative element.

Due to the UN economic sanction in 1990, following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, trade volume between Turkey and Iraq has been in a long stagnation period. As Olson points: 'during the 1990s around 500 to 1500 trucks a day used the border port of Habur/Ibrahim al-Khalil, After the US invasion of Iraq in March 2003, the truck traffic rose to some 2000 trucks a day (Olson 2005:25). Furthermore, the Turkish government is targeting to increase trade to \$20 billion in the next two years compared with just under \$4 billion in 2007 9Ibid. 2005:25). He also claims that this enormous growth of commerce will restrain the aspirations of Kurdish hard line nationalists and eventually establish strong cooperation towards regional peace and stabil-

ity. However, he is missing some important points about the true nature of this commercial growth. First, this trade is between Turkish capitalists and Kurdish party elites.¹⁸ It is really hard to claim that it will improve individuals' negative stereotypes about each other. Secondly, it is a well known fact that vast majority of those trucks mentioned in the quote are carrying logistic goods and materials for the US military personnel not for the Iraqi Kurds.¹⁹ Thirdly, according to Milliyet newspaper some Turkish business man was held in prison without being officially charged. In many cases their contracts were terminated without negotiation or consent.²⁰ Finally, whenever an ethnic tension rises between Turkey and Iraq whether this is due to PKK's terrorist activities or Kirkuk, the very first foreign policy is to close the border for trade and punish Kurdish politicians for their actions. For instance, in October 2007 PKK terrorists attacked a Turkish military point and killed 12 soldiers. After this attack both in parliament and on the street the first reaction was to close the Khalil border crossing. This has been evidenced many times in the past.²¹ Evidently, it seems that the reliability and sustainability of commercial improvements in the long term are big issue for a way of achieving ethnic harmony, because this policy can easily be turned into a strategic weapon for imposing one's term on to another. Therefore instead of jumping to a very quick conclusion and establishing a direct correlation between growth of commerce, contact, and ethnic conflicts we should focus on the nature and quality of contact and possible effects on ethnic conflict resolutions. Perhaps, we should treat every individual case as *sui generis* and attempt to explain its historical and political specificities.

KURDS AND BACKGROUND OF KIRKUK CRISIS

WHO ARE THE KURDS?

The Kurds are one of the largest and the oldest ethnic groups in the Middle East. Total population of the Iraqi Kurdistan is around 4 million including some Arabs, Turkmen, Yezidi, Armenian and Chaldean

minorities.²² But, who are the Kurds and what makes one Kurdish? If we do not count Ahmad-i Khan's poet called *Mem-u Zin*. It is difficult to find any ancient information (in the sense of literature) about the Kurds. Although, it is an undeniable fact that their existence in the region can be traced back to the ancient times, their existence is first recorded during Turkish Seljuk prince Saandjar's period in the twelfth century. (Yildiz. 2004: 7-8, McDowall 1996:7)

Unlike, many other Ottoman subjects the Kurds acquired their political sense of identity, at the beginning of the twentieth century. One possible reason for this delayed national awareness is that they constituted an extremely divided and fragmented ethnic group. They are not a homogenous unified ethnic group in the sense of modern concept of nation. For instance;

Firstly, there is no one unified standard Kurdish language in the sense of modern linguistic theory. Instead, there are many dialects such as Sorani, Kurmanji, Zaza, Leki, Kermanshahi, and Gurani. (Yildiz. 2004:8, Bruinessen. 1992:21-22, McDowall. 1996:11, Kreyenbroek and Sperl 1992:11) For a Kurdish speaker these different dialects cause serious difficulties in understanding one other²³ and even in some extreme cases make it impossible.

Secondly, the majority (around 80%) of the Kurds are Sunni Muslim. However, there are some other Kurdish groups belong to the other monotheistic religions such as 'Christianity' or 'Judaism' or 'Yazidi's. There are also some 'Alavi' or 'Ehl-i Haqq' Kurds who belong to the unorthodox branches of Islam. (McDowall. 1996:11, Bruinessen. 1992:23)

Thirdly, the Kurd's natural habitat is land which is surrounded by high mountains and plateaus. Therefore, except for the plains, the vast majority of the Kurdish tribes are nomads or semi nomads (seasonal) and as a direct result of this type of lifestyle they mainly make a living from agriculture, breeding stock and small trades. (Bruinessen. 1992:16-20) If we exclude oil revenues Iraqi Kurdish economy has no real industry or economy based on production rather than '*rentier economy*'.²⁴

SINCE THE SECOND GULF WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH:

The main characteristic of the Kurdish national movement in the 1990's was its dual structure and endless antagonisms between these tribal confederations. At this time, former *Jash* commanders and small tribes were shifting their allegiance in according to their best interests. After the formation of the first government, each party tried to expand their influence over the small non affiliated Kurdish tribes. There were several reasons for this ferocious civil war. One of the main reasons of the civil war took place between early 1993 and 1998 was the change of allegiance of a section of the *Harki* tribe from the KDP to the PUK. The tribe had offered his service to the KDP because in return they expected that the KDP would help them to settle a land dispute in its favour, in fact the KDP failed to help the tribe in its claim. As a result, the '*Harki*' tribe then switched its allegiance to the PUK and seized the land they had claimed. This seemingly simple land dispute, between a tribe and a non tribal family, turned into a fierce brutal civil war in Iraqi Kurdistan (Stansfield 2003:96-97) and cost several thousand Kurdish lives.

Another important factor in the 93/8 civil war was the rise of Islamic Movement of Kurdistan (IMK) led by Mulla Uthman Abd al Aziz of Halabja. With the strong support of Iran, the IMK gained a considerable amount of support in Halabja, Panjwin and Khurmal. McDowall explains that; 'the ground in Kurdistan is ready for an Islamic revival. They see the mistakes and corruption of the KDP and PUK very clearly and Iran supports these groups with food and weapons.' (McDowall 1996:386)

Growing international and regional countries²⁵ concerns led the two parties to sign a peace agreement in Washington in 1998. Some of the articles in this agreement however, could not take a place because the parties applied different interpretations to them; for example, the reunification of the KNA (Kurdistan National Assembly) could only and ostensibly be managed in 2006; moreover, the issue of the PKK remains unsolved between these parties. As a

result of these outcomes, the Turkish government has organised more than 20 military incursions into the Northern Iraq to eliminate the PKK and accused the KRG administration of harbouring this terrorist organization.

There is undeniably real politics which imposes the impossibility of an independent Kurdistan neither in Turkey nor Iraq. There are no neighbouring countries around Iraq which will welcome the emergence of an independent Iraqi Kurdish Government. As Farid Asasard, director of the Kurdish Strategic Centre, states; ‘What the Kurdish street does not understand is that there is a big difference between declaring and sustaining a state; they [young people] would like such a state, but no one would recognize or back up such a state.’ (Olson 2005:42) In addition to this externally hostile environment, the internal structure of Iraqi Kurdistan makes nationalistic discourse very problematic. Even if, for the sake of argument, we accept the homogeneity of the Kurds in Iraq, there are some other significant ethnic and religious communities who share same geography.²⁶ Hence alongside with important regional and international dimensions of the Kurdish issue there is now internal political dimension which is based on the rights of ethno religious minorities in Northern Iraq. In this sense Saddam’s removal from Iraqi politics opened the ‘*Pandora’s box*’. The main dilemma of the Kurdish national discourse is that, while the KRG puts Kurdish people as the others of the Iraq and claims their political, cultural and economic demands, the administration does not show the same respect to their internal ‘others.’²⁷

THE KURDS IN POST-SADDAM IRAQ

Although there were some difficulties in implementing the Washington agreement, it was the main source of stabilization between rival Kurdish parties until the invasion of Iraq in 2003. At the beginning of March 2003 the KDP and PUK constituted a “*joint higher leadership*” in the Kurdish-held north, under the chairman-

ship of the two party leaders, Massoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani. The joint effort to gain prominence in Iraqi politics was partly a direct consequence of the February bombing in Erbil that killed several senior politicians in both parties. One of the immediate results of this bombing was the sudden growth of popular Kurdish nationalism demanding full independence and complete unification of the KDP and PUK. By the end of 2005 1.9 million (almost %98.5 percent of the whole vote) Kurdish people had voted 'yes' on the referendum for independence. (Olson 2205:220, Asa 2007:107)

Despite some hard fought rights, the political situation in Iraq is still volatile and can at any time turn into an open conflict between communities. For example, Massoud Barzani ordered the Iraqi national flag be replaced with the Kurdish one in government buildings, but Iraq's Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki strongly protested that and said: "*The Iraqi flag is the only flag that should be raised over any square inch of Iraq.*" (Olson 2005:43)

The postponement of the Kirkuk referendum²⁸, status and funding of 'Peshmerge' forces and the strong opposition on the oil search contract made with international companies without central government's approval raised serious concerns amongst Kurdish nationalists. These particular demands are vital points not only for the Kurdish national discourse but also for peace and stability of the region as Turkish government had declared Kirkuk as one of its red lines in Iraqi. (Olson 2005:120)

According to the Human Rights Watch report Kurds reversed Saddam's 'arabisation' in Northern Iraq by using forced expulsion and intimidation policies against the internal 'others' (Turkmen, Arabs, Assyrians and Keldanis) (Human Rights Watch report vol.16 no:4). The issues of the future status of the city of oil rich Kirkuk, Peshmerga and the oil industry are extremely important demands which sustain the national unity. Any compromise will quiet likely break this unity into pieces and trigger extreme violence amongst other ethnic communities in Iraq.

KIRKUK

Kirkuk is a multi ethnic city constituting of mainly Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen and Assyrians. The ethnic mix of the population in Kirkuk is one of it's most contested issues in relation particularly to which group has the majority in the city and therefore has right to be the dominant group in politics. According to the U.N special representative Staffan de Mistura, Kirkuk is "the mother of all crises" in Iraq (Tosh,C and Ahmed Z. 2008). Each ethnic group has its own narrative with regard to the true number of population. Because Saddam's '*Arabisation*' policies included the ethnic cleansing and the deportation of the non-Arab elements of Kirkuk, this is an extremely difficult question to clarify. However, there is a general consensus on the relative reliability of 1957 Iraqi census which was carried out in the last year of monarchy and before the beginning of the official Arabisation policy of subsequent Iraqi governments. According to the 1957 census the population of Kirkuk city was 'Turkmens (45,306), Kurds (40,047), and (27,127) Arabs. In Kirkuk governorate overall, the Kurds were the largest group (187,593), with Arabs second (109,620) and Turkmens third (83,371)' (International Crisis Group 2006:2).

Prior to the invasion of Iraq greater Kirkuk's total population was around 800,000.²⁹ Despite the fact that there is still no accurate data on population, the current population of Kirkuk is estimated to be around 1.3 million. (Ferris, E. and Stoltz, K. 2008:11). The majority of these new comers are Kurdish and they claim that they are originally from Kirkuk and were deported during Saddam's Arabisation period (International Crisis Group. 2006:12). After the Iraqi invasion in 2003, the Kurds have achieved the majority of their aims; for instance the official recognition of Kurdish language,³⁰ and the autonomy and legislative power of the KRG (Kurdistan Regional Government)³¹ in 3 governorates (Dohuk, Arbil and Sulaymaniye) in Northern Iraq. However, some of the Kurdish demands such the claim that Kirkuk is a natural, historical

and political part of Kurdistan, have not been met directly by the constitution. Instead, the constitution has established a special political system in Kirkuk based on the provisional council elections in 2005. According to these election results the membership of Kirkuk city council was divided amongst ethnic groups as follows: 26 Kurdish, 9 Turkmen, 6 Arab and 6 Christian Assyrians.³² This distribution unambiguously shows that there is Kurdish dominance in the city council and means that the Kurds hold the key political position in the city controlling security forces and civil services (International Crisis Group's report 2007:15)

Although each one of the ethnic groups recognizes the multi ethnic composition of the city of Kirkuk, they each provide different narratives and claims on the future status of Kirkuk. For instance, Dr. Nouri Talabani, who is an independent member of the KRG administration and a Kurdish scholar, writes extensively on the issue and claims that; 'Kirkuk is not a Kurdish town but it is a part of Kurdistan. The boundaries of Kurdistan are very clear: it is the original vilayet [name of the Ottoman administration unit] Shahrzour of Ottoman times. It always had minorities but it was always known as a Kurdish vilayet.' (International Crisis Group. 2006:3)

The Kurds are also claiming that they constitute majority of the population (referring 1957 census results in the Kirkuk governorate overall) in Kirkuk. Their narratives are not based only historical and geographical reasons but also on some sentimental elements. The prime minister of the KRG, Nechirvan Barzani states that 'Kirkuk is important to some people because it has oil and natural resources. For us this is not the case. For us Kirkuk is symbol of oppression, the denial of rights and injustices have been committed against our people there.'(International Crisis Group 2006:3) Further more, Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, a Kurd, even calls it "*our Jerusalem.*"(Ibid.2006:3) But, at the same time, for the Assyrians, Arabs and the Turkmen, (International Crisis Group. 2006:.3) Kirkuk is and has been through out history, essential to their national awareness and identity.

For the Turkmen, ‘vilayet Mosul [including Kirkuk] was a Turkoman, not a Kurdish, Arab or mixed region. They consider Kirkuk and other towns in the mixed population belt as originally Turkoman towns that also house other communities.’(International Crisis 2006:5) The Turkmen population in Kirkuk have strongly opposed the arrival of the displaced Kurds and accused Kurdish politicians of seizing Turkmen properties and excluding them from governmental posts. In order to protest against Kurdish dominance and oppression in Kirkuk, Arab and Turkmen members of the council have been boycotting council meetings since November 2006. At the time of writing this proposal members of both ethnic groups have taken a decision to come back to council meetings in order to prevent further injustices in the oncoming local election during November 2008.(International Crisis 2006:5)

The native Arab and ‘*wafedeen*’ (new comers, came to the city as a result of Arabisation policy, they are mainly poor Shiites from the South) narrative, sharing many similarities with the Turkmen narrative, perceives Kirkuk as a multi ethnic city and accuses the Kurds governance of being responsible for the recent Kurdish influx in to Kirkuk and not as a result of the returning of displaced people. According to an international crisis interview with Arab officials of the Iraqi Organisation for Human Rights and Civil Society; ‘The regime had expelled a total of 12,000 Kurds, mostly in the 1990’s, and that today there are 354,000 Kurds claiming to be from Kirkuk.’(International Crisis 2006:6)

Last but not least the Christian Assyrians see themselves as the true people of Kirkuk ‘dating back to pre-Christian Assyrian Empire’. (International Crisis 2006:7). Despite a long history of settlement in Kirkuk, the Assyrians constitute the smallest group and do not have very ambitious claims. The main concern of the Assyrian community is to protect their cultural, political and religious rights in Kirkuk (International Crisis 2006:7). The Turkmen support a semi-independent special status for Kirkuk Province

while Arabs back the idea of the central government remaining in control.

More over, Kurds are accused of emulating Saddam Hussein with a process of 'Kurdifying' shipping in Kurdish families who have never lived in Kirkuk and forcing out non-Kurdish families who have lived in city for generations. According to the International Crisis Group's reports (2007:2-3) the PUK and the KDP have encouraged displaced Kurds in the northern governorates to move to Kirkuk regardless of their original place of residence, endeavouring to increase the Kurdish population ahead of a census, elections and a referendum. It is stated that the Kurds, who won 59 percent of the votes in the January 30, 2005 elections to the regional assembly, engineered their victory by bringing in a flood of Kurdish voters from the north. Because of these concerns the Turkmen and Arab members of the Kirkuk city council have walked out to protest against the Kurds discriminatory and injustice policies towards ethnic minorities. (International Crisis Group 2006:19, Ferris and Stoltz, 2008:6-7)

GÜLEN'S IDEAS ON THE CONCEPT OF 'OTHERNESS' AND FEZALAR EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN NORTHERN IRAQ

The Carnegie report, as an ethnic conflict prevention method, claims that 'Education is a force for reducing intergroup conflict by enlarging our social group identification beyond parochial ones in light of common human characteristics and super ordinate goals – highly valued aspirations can only be achieved by intergroup cooperation' (David A. Hamburg, Cyrus R. 1997:120). Gülen as an Islamic scholar and activist is a well known personality for his thoughts on interfaith dialogue, democracy, pluralism and tolerance.³³ He advocates the peaceful coexistence and dialogue between different ethno religious groups to promote better understanding towards reconciliation. While he strongly rejects the concept of the 'clash of civilization' he believes in communal peace which 'lies in

respecting all differences, considering these differences to be part of our nature and in ensuring that people appreciate these differences. Otherwise, it is unavoidable that the world will devour itself in a web of conflicts, disputes, fights and the bloodiest of wars, thus preparing the way for its own end.’ (Mihai 2007:425) It is very clear that Gulen accepts social, cultural and political differences as a natural part of human existence and instead of erasing those difficulties and forcing them in more homogeny structures. Gulen strongly emphasizes the importance of collective, cooperative and intellectual effort to create more constructive approaches to social and political issues.

In order to form this collective and common understanding it is really important to, as he says, ‘be a human being among other human beings.’ (Gulen 2005:76) He suggests that we should acknowledge others as others without changing or forcing them to conform with our standards. He believes that cooperation and collectiveness should be based on non discriminatory forms of inclusiveness and further points out that ‘The Islamic social system seeks to form a virtuous society and thereby gain God’s approval. It recognizes right, not force, as the foundation of social life. Hostility is unacceptable. Relationships must be based on belief, love, mutual respect, assistance, and understanding instead of conflict and realization of personal interest.’ (Yilmaz 2003:230) Therefore his understanding of dialogue serves only introduction of these different cultures to each other. This is not imposing one culture on to another or simply the assimilation of a minor group within a dominant community. It is a kind of unconditional admittance and recognition of the other as different from us without having any judgement. For instance, Kalyoncu states this inclusiveness as ‘Mr. Gulen, the Head of the Midyat Assyrian Foundation, stressed that “Gulen’s tears have been a shield for us here” referring to Fethullah Gulen’s highly emotional public addresses which were marked by his own tears and calls for accepting people of different religions... Several other Assyrians in Mardin also told me that the renowned

Muslim scholar has initiated a process which cultivated new mutual understanding between the Muslims and non-Muslims in this corner of Turkey.³⁴

This is a really difficult task particularly when considering isolated antagonistic groups which have strong prejudices about their own minorities.³⁵ In fact many writers emphasize that there are growing number of young people in Iraqi Kurdistan who are not able to speak Arabic. The lack of a common language in Northern Iraq is one of the serious challenges for an effective dialogue process. Olson states that ‘many Kurds under 20 did not speak Arabic, although some acknowledged they would have to learn it’ (Olson 2005:42). Unlike the standard Kurdish schools in all FEI schools all students have to study four languages, Turkish, Arabic, Kurdish and English, in the first year, thus improving the opportunities for effective dialogue. This policy clearly demonstrates how Gülen’s inclusiveness and how his movement works within fragmented societies by valuing each group and by constructing the desired society model in their schools. Schools are the best places to transform individuals into members of a more tolerant and peaceful society. There is no doubt that Gülen schools fill an extremely important gap in terms of creating the space through which all ethno religious groups can present culture and communicate with each other. By including all regional languages in their curriculum, they are not only valuing the academic significance of each language in proper communication but also, providing a channel for solution focussed political activity or a truly public form of diplomacy by which to create a cohesive, cooperative community.

In addition to constructing the conditions for possibilities on site, the Gülen schools each year organize a series of school trips which involve activities in Turkish cities and Turkish schools in order to introduce the Turkish culture to students and to enable Turkish people to experience Kurdish culture through first hand experience.³⁶ The Gülen movement takes every opportunity to expand and foster its core ideas of tolerance, dialogue, and collective, coop-

eration, in the hope of upward social movements; for instance, during the last 'feast of sacrifice Eid' the Gülen movement distributed meat to around 60,000 socially deprived Kurdish families and organised free health checks throughout the south eastern Anatolia including Northern Iraq. Some have criticised this as an act of '*steal the mind leave the body*'.³⁷ However, I strongly believe that this is one of the clearest examples of the Gülen movement in creating intercultural dialogue and a more peaceful and tolerant civil society.

Fethullah Gülen sees education is the best instrument to achieve this goal in a practical sense. In his interview in '*Foreign Policy*' he explains; 'We must acknowledge that we are all human beings. It is not our choice to belong to a particular race or family. We should be freed from fear of the other and enjoy diversity within democracy. I believe that dialogue and education are the most effective means to surpass our differences.'³⁸ In his understanding schools constitute mini prototype of his vision about the values he is advocating for. Those schools which were inspired by Fethullah Gülen are considered as living sample of a pluralistic society where all moral values such as tolerance exercised at every stage of the process from administration level to teaching. In other words, Gülen schools are not only proof of academic success but also at the same time they are reducing, if not eliminating, the fear of other and sustaining the hope that there is possibility for peaceful coexistence and democracy in multi ethnic societies.

Unlike conventional preventive methods such as diplomacy, educational institutions focused primarily on individuals. From the individual to the all the parts of the community it is a project targeting a slow but stable and strong change of values, perception, and understanding, and in conclusion it is a project of constructing a democratic, tolerant and morally strong society which will enjoy its pluralist enrichment. The FEI declares its mission as: 'our aim is to bring into people together from which belief, thought and nationality, people respecting each other loving, living together into peace without any fight and conflict.'³⁹ Because of high academic

success and this humanitarian aims, as the final report by the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflicts stated, FEI “often have legitimacy and operational access that do not raise concerns about sovereignty, as government activities sometimes do.” (David A. Hamburg, Cyrus, R 1997:120) Indeed, very recently Iraqi Kurdish Regional government has granted a licence to FEI to open a new University. It is extremely significant that there was a serious military confrontation risk at that time as Turkish army crossed the border into Iraqi territory fighting against PKK forces. Further the general secretariat of the KDP (Kurdistan Democrat Party) Fazil Mirani says that; ‘there is nothing left to solve with violence. In order to improve our friendship and cooperation we should increase the number of these schools. We are having success in the scientific Olympiads, Our children are learning Turkish and Turkey there can not be anything better than this.’⁴⁰ In response to the last military operation, the leader of the main opposition party Republican People’s, Deniz Baykal, stated that “The Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) problem cannot be solved by a cross-border operation alone. We should also educate Kurdish students in Turkey and establish TV and radio stations that will broadcast in Kurdish for northern Iraq.”⁴¹ Evidently, it becomes very clear that both parties in this ethnic tension agree on the role and efficiency of educational institutions and multi dimensional social interactions which will eventually change all negative perceptions of misunderstandings, prejudices and fear.

As it has been argued above that, at present time, the application of conventional ethnic conflict prevention tools are not an effective instrument in prevention of an ethnic conflict between Turkey and Iraqi Kurdish administration. However, one fact relating to the real politics of the region, is that neither of the conflicting parties are able operate their own policies without other’s cooperation. In the current situation it is almost impossible for Turkish Government to engage with the PKK issue by itself and vice versa it is also impossible for the KRG administration to sustain a strong and stable political

administration without Turkey's active support and cooperation. In the words of the governor of Arbil, Nevzat Hadi; 'We do not think of any strategic move which does not involve Turkey's concern.'⁴² There is a strong consensus among state elites including the chief of general staff, political parties and intellectuals that the PKK issue, or in a wider perspective Kurdish issue, can not be solved by only military activities. We need more comprehensive approaches including socio cultural and political elements.⁴³

The concept of a mutual understanding of this real politics point of view is vital for the potential of the FEI activities, which will eventually lead each party to an active cooperation. To underline this point, in Baykal's statement, there is a strong emphasize on developing strong communication and cooperation with Northern Iraq. He particularly mentions opening schools, Universities and broadcasting TV. In contrast, Arbil University rector prof. Sadik complains that, 'We have higher education agreements with more than 70 universities all around the world but we do not have any educational agreement with Turkish universities.'⁴⁴ These basic statements show that there is a need for strong cooperation and officially acknowledged agreement not only in education but every aspects of the social and political life. On this point I believe that the FEI schools are creating a possibility of conditions which overcome the fear of otherness and more importantly reduce the risk of an ethnic confrontation by increasing strong ties between Turkey and the KRG. By opening a university and transferring academics and resources from Turkey to Iraq the FEI makes itself an alternative organisation which is building confidence and cooperation between the conflicting parties. Gulen inspired the Turkish schools by creating de facto conditions providing unique opportunities for both parties to improve their relationship.

These schools are creating facts on the grounds which are crucial in developing the foundations for the possibility of communication and cooperation by providing a channel of communication for both conflicting parties. The KRG administration has already

responded to this opportunity, when ethnic tension was at a peak level at the end of 2007, by granting permission to build Ishik University in Arbil. Even during the civil war, (1994-1998,) the FEI school extended its branches in both the KDP and the PUK controlled areas; Nilufer private college for girls was opened in 1996 in Arbil, which was in the control of the KDP and Salahaddin Ayyubi college was opened in 1997 in Suleymaniye, which predominantly was controlled by the PUK administration.

Gülen inspired Turkish schools are spreading the concept of tolerance, dialogue, democracy, and pluralism in Kurdish community. They are promoting non-violent conflict resolutions by showing how to approach to social problems through collective cooperation. Expansion of FEI educational activities open up a political and social space for an alternative approach to the prevention of ethnic conflict. More importantly they present an alternative way of thinking about ethnic conflict resolutions based on an increasing level of social, cultural and trade contacts between conflicting parties. Another example of this is the Gülen inspired organization called 'Abant Platform', which, by gathering diverse groups of intellectuals, academics and representatives of the civil society organisations, organized a meeting to predominantly engage with the question of Kurdish issue. In the declaration statement for the meeting they stated that 'The aim is to have sound and dynamic channels of communication in order to put an end to the lack of dialogue rather than trying to convince the parties to come to terms around a solution program. As a chief principle, we defend the free expression and discussion of any sort of ideas unless they contain open calls for violence, and expect respect from everyone for the right all people and groups to express their various thoughts and ideas. ...Kurds, alongside all groups in Iraq, are our brothers. We see it a compulsory move to develop friendly ties with the federal Kurdish administration. Sustaining the democratization process in Turkey is also compulsory for solving the Kurdish problem.'⁴⁵ On this issue the FEI stands out as the only strong and well organized

civil society group which has the potential to establish stronger social, cultural and economic ties between Turkey and Iraqi Kurds.

Despite all of the above claims, many still argue that the FEI educational activities will need a longer period of time to demonstrate their full effect in helping to resolve the conflict. I believe in providing a viable strong and alternative approach to other conventional conflict mechanisms, through the opening of 10 schools and a university, in the last 15 years, in the war torn country in Northern Iraq, it has been proved that these schools have the potential to play a vital role in understanding the different parties in this ethnic conflict. I believe that as the Director of the FEI schools Mr. Buyuk claims 'We do not need to wait for 20-30 years to see the results of our educational investments in Northern Iraq.'⁴⁶ More importantly as it has been stated the whole purpose of the NGO's in ethnic conflict prevention process is not to solve conflict but prepare the conditions of possibility for more constructive negotiations between conflicting parties. By creating social and political facts on the ground and expanding political space Gulen inspired Turkish education institutions perform perfectly in this particular task.

CONCLUSION

In this study I attempted to challenge common view on preventing potential ethnic conflict that can be summarised as: more contact, particularly the growth of commerce, between antagonistic parties is likely to increase the confidence and good relation which lead to a successful conflict management. I analyzed the nature of contact and showed that how different it could be perceived or misinterpreted by actors. In comparison to the conventional ethnic conflict mechanisms; diplomacy, economic measures and use of force, I offered NGOs as an alternative mechanism. I claimed that within historical and political specificities of the relationship between Turkey and Iraqi Kurds, Fezalar Education Institutions have got more potential to reduce ethnic conflict and establish healthy communica-

tion channels between communities than the conventional methods. In the long term they can be more successful and constructive instruments for regional peace and stability. In conclusion, the pointiest testimony to making a success of ethnic conflict is that in direct opposition to prevailing political trend whilst since 1993 Iraqi Kurdistan have had significant difficulties in implementing functional institutional democracy. However, Fezalar Education institutions have managed to establish 10 successful schools and a university where ethnic differences are valued and celebrated. Therefore, I believe the way forward in the region will be through educating masses so that they understand the needs of the other.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. FEI : Fezalar Educational Institutions
2. INC : Iraqi National Congress
3. ITF : Iraqi Turkmen Front
4. KDP : Kurdistan Democratic Party
5. KRG : Kurdistan Regional Government
6. PUK : Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
7. PKK : Kurdistan Workers Party
8. TAL : Transitional Administrational Law

NOTES

- 1 Human Rights Watch, 'Claims in Conflict Reversing Ethnic Cleansing in Northern Iraq', vol.16, No.4 August 2004. International Crisis Group's report, 'Iraq and the Kurds: The Brewing Battle over Kirkuk', Middle East Report, no.56, 18 July 2006. Brookings Institution Report, 'The Future of Kirkuk: The Referendum and Its Potential Impact on Displacement', 3 March 2008.
- 2 He responded a question and stated that "We have told this both to Turkey and the world on April 12th. The military forces are ready. Political authorities will assess the targets. Shall we deal with only PKK or shall we do something about Barzani? What will be the target? At an international symposium at the General Staff HQ in Istanbul on "New Dimensions of Security & International Organizations". http://www.tsk.mil.tr/10_ARSIV/10_1_Basin_Yayin_Faaliyetleri/10_1_7_Konusmalar/2007/konusma_scmpozyum31052007.htm 31.07.2007
- 3 <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/iraq/article2759732.ecc> 29.10.07

- 4 David McDowal states that ‘Ankara withheld de jure recognition of the Kurdish government, its reliance on Iraqi Kurds implied de facto acceptance of realities’ (McDowall 2004:384)
- 5 According to one Turkish official; ‘we don’t recognize them as political partners. There is nothing political about them [...] they are the elements at the moment filling the power vacuum and with whom we have to cooperate in the fight against PKK.’ (Lundgren 2007:87)
- 6 <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkish-foreign-policy-on-iraq.en.mfa> accessed at 26.08.2008
- 7 The term originally used by Foucault and he defines this particular terms as: ‘the proper task of a history of thought...[is] to define the conditions in which human beings ‘problematize what they are, what they do, and the world in which they live.’
- 8 Official Turkish Foreign policy states that ‘Iraq’s preservation of its territorial integrity and national unity is of paramount importance for peace, stability and prosperity in the Middle East. These are the priorities of our policy.’ From <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkish-foreign-policy-on-iraq.en.mfa> accessed 25.08.2008
- 9 Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani states as: ‘We understand Turkey’s frustration with the actions of the PKK and we share the grief and sadness over the loss of life that has taken place. We believe that the only solution to this long-running problem is to be found in negotiations and compromise, not further violence... We are willingly a part of Iraq, and we intend to remain so. The people of Turkey should not fear our progress along the road toward freedom and prosperity. We want to be a safe and responsible neighbour to Turkey. We threaten no one, not today, or in the future.’ From <http://www.krg.org/articles/detail.asp?lngnr=12&smap=02040100&rnr=268&anr=21122> accessed on 26.08.2008
- 10 <http://www.krg.org/articles/detail.asp?lngnr=12&smap=02040100&rnr=268&anr=21122> accessed on 26.08.2008
- 11 The president of the KRG Barzani states that ‘I don’t want you to be misused by sides that have other agendas. You will achieve more with your understanding [agreement] with Kurds. You are our brothers. We have no issues with you; our sensitivities are with external agendas.’ His full press statement is available from http://www.iraqupdates.com/p_articles.php/article/34873 accessed on 28.08.2008
- 12 Inur Cevik states that ‘The Turkmens in the areas administered by Talabani and Barzani set up several parties with the largest being the Iraqi Turkmen Front (ITC), regarded by Iraqi Kurds and the U.S. as a puppet of Turkey. There have been past accusations that the ITC had direct military links.’ His full article is available on <http://home.cogeco.ca/~konuche/22-7-03-turkmen-ask-tky-out.html> 21.07.2003.
- 13 For a brief discussion on different accounts and types of NGOs see, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-governmental_organization
- 14 The number of internationally operating NGOs is estimated around at 40,000. Anheier, Helmut (2001) *Introducing Global Civil Society in Anheier, Helmut, Marlies Glasius and Mary Kaldor (eds.) Global Civil Society 2001.*
- 15 For full report please see <http://www.aksiyon.com.tr/detay.php?id=29041> 10.12.2007

- 16 All information about Fezalar Education Institutions is based on personal correspondence with Mr. Buyuk and phone interview.
- 17 World trade was around \$11.8 trillion in 2006. In the last seven years world trade was approximately growth %7. from <http://www.dtm.gov.tr/dtmadmin/upload/IHR/2007yillik.doc> accessed on 25.09.2008
- 18 For full article please see Rauf Naqishbendi 'Iraq; economic injustice in place of integrity' at <http://www.kurdmedia.com/article.aspx?id=14923> 17/7/2008. Accessed on 25/09/2008
- 19 For full article please see Ann Scott Tyson and Robin Wrights article on 'U.S helps Turkey Hit the Rebel Kurds in Iraq' <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/12/17/AR2007121702150.html> 18.11.2007. Accessed on 25.09.2008
- 20 There are 5 journal articles on this particular issue written by Serpil Yilmaz Sobe available at:
- 21 For further information and full story please see http://www.iraqupdates.com/p_articles.php/article/23620 and ' Turkey Battles PKK, Considers Sanctions Against Iraq' <http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/article.php?enewsid=87438> 1/10/2007
- 22 There is no accurate information on the proportion of the ethnic minorities of the Kurdish Federal Region of Iraq. For further information please see www.krg.org
- 23 As Stansfield points out this as: 'these dialect groups show considerable lexical and phonological differences, and also differs in some grammatical features, such as the treatment of past tenses and transitory verbs.' (Stansfield 2003:38)
- 24 Shwan Zulal heavily criticizes current economic policies of the KRG by accusing them incapable of creating a sustainable economy in Iraqi Kurdistan. For further information please see his article at www.kurdishmedia.com 10/04/08
- 25 The PKK was the main security concern for Turkish foreign policy towards Northern Iraq.
- 26 Mainly the Arabs, Turkmens, Keldanis and Assyrians and According to the UN reports they constitute around %25 of the whole population in Iraqi Kurdistan.
- 27 July the 3rd - Human Rights Watch report gives details of human rights violation towards other ethnic communities in Northern Iraq. It also gives very detailed picture of torture and abuse in prisons run by the Kurds in the Kurdish area of northern Iraq. For further information see press release , www.hrw.org/doc
- 28 According to the Iraqi constitution article 140 states that: 'in accordance with this Constitution, provided that it accomplishes completely (normalization and census and concludes with a referendum in Kirkuk and other disputed territories to determine the will of their citizens), by a date not to exceed the 31st of December 2007.' In addition to that in James-Baker report it has been suggested that Kirkuk referendum should be postponed and special status should be given to Kirkuk.
- 29 Soner Cagaptay and Daniel Fink. 'The Battle for Kirkuk: How to Prevent a New Front in Iraq'. 2007. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateCO5.php?e=2552> Accessed on 01.05.08
- 30 Iraqi Constitution article 4 states that 'The Arabic language and the Kurdish language are the two official languages of Iraq. The right of Iraqis to educate their children in their mother tongue, such as Turkmen, Syriac, and Armenian shall be guar-

anted in government educational institutions in accordance with educational guidelines, or in any other language in private educational institutions.

- 31 Iraqi Constitution article 117 states that 'First: This Constitution, upon coming into force, shall recognize the region of Kurdistan, along with its existing authorities, as a federal region.'
- 32 Fethullah Gulen won top places in Foreign Policy's 2008 the world's top intellectual competition, please see www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=4349
- 33 Full article is available from www.christianofiraq.com/conversationassyiran.html 3/9/2006.
- 34 According to Olson 'growing Kurdish nationalism was clearly evident, especially among young people, most of them when asked, said they wanted an independent state: 'we never want to mix with Arabs again; they [Arabs] were raised on fighting and cruelty; we have different colour skin etc.' (Olson 2005:42)
- 35 For full article: http://www.haberegitim.net/news_detail.php?id=1844&uniq_id=1224858860 accessed on 10.10.2008
- 36 Aland Mizell's full article on 'Gülen's new decree for the Kurdish problem in South eastern Turkey: Steal the mind, leave the body' available at <http://www.kurdmedia.com/article.aspx?id=14415> accessed on 12.10.2008
- 37 Full interview available from www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=4408 accessed on 08.2008
- 38 www.fezalar.org/articles.asp?cat=42 accessed on 25.08.2008
- 39 Translated from a Turkish article by the author. For the Turkish origin please see; By Hasim Soylemez No: 679 10.12.2007
- 40 <http://www.aksiyon.com.tr/detay.php?id=29041> accessed on 24.07.2008
- 41 Huseyin Gulerce's article on 'Turkish Schools in Northern Iraq' available from <http://www.fethullahgulen.org/press-room/columns/2450-turkish-schools-in-northern-iraq-.html>. accessed on 20.07.2008
- 42 Translated by the author from Turkish original 'Biz içinde Türkiye'nin olmadığı hiçbir stratejik adım düşünmüyoruz. Bu iyi anlaşılmalı.' as it appears in Nasuhi Gungor's article 'Northern Iraq Notes' in Star newspaper 22.09.2008 available from <http://www.stargazete.com/gazete/yazar/kuzey-irak-tan-notlar-129513.htm> accessed on 10.10.2008
- 43 For further information and full press release of the general Basbug in 05.09.2008 please see http://www.tsk.mil.tr/10_ARSIV/10_1_Basin_Yayin_Faaliyetleri/10_1_7_Konusmalar/2008/org_ilkerbasbug_diyarbakir_05092008.html accessed on 10.10.2008
- 44 Translated by the author from Turkish original 'Dünyanın çeşitli ülkelerinden 70 üniversiteyle karşılıklı anlaşmamız var. Ama henüz Türkiye'deki üniversitelerle bu anda bir adım atamadık' as it appears in Nasuhi Gungor's article 'Northern Iraq Notes' in Star newspaper 22.09.2008 available from <http://www.stargazete.com/gazete/yazar/kuzey-irak-tan-notlar-129513.htm> accessed on 10.10.2008
- 45 For full statement available from <http://www.gyv.org.tr/bpi.asp?caid=445&cid=2366> accessed on 10.10.2008
- 46 Translated by the author original text appears as 'Irak-Türk Okulları Genel Müdürü Talip Büyük, Kuzey Irak'a yönelik kapsamlı bir eğitim hamlesinin sonuçları için

20-30 yıl beklemek gerekmediğini söylüyor.' Available at <http://www.aksiyon.com.tr/detay.php?id=29041> accessed on 14.10.2008

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