

## FEUTURE Policy Challenge Session on energy and security matters

19 April 2018, Middle East Research Institute (MERI), Erbil

On 19 April 2018, MERI organized a FEUTURE Policy Challenge Session to debate the main challenges in EU-Turkey relations in the field of security and energy. The event brought together a number of stakeholders, including the Turkish Consul General in Erbil Mr Hakan Karacay, the Head of the EU Liaison Office in Erbil Ms Clarisse Pasztory, as well as experts and academics, including MERI researchers Dlawer Ala'Aldeen and Kamaran Palani.

The Policy Challenge Session discussed two studies recently published by MERI, which put forward recommendations on how to improve the relationship between the EU and Turkey in the security and energy sectors.



Dlawer Ala'Aldeen and Kamaran Palani explained the premise of the two studies and shed light on the main findings on the energy and security drivers respectively. Discussions highlighted that while it is equally important for the EU and Turkey to guarantee access to and diversify the sources of energy, Turkey has used its geographic leverage to create European dependency. Both Iraq and Turkey have invested in the energy sector, increasing the potential of political and economic returns in the future. Discussants debated the security dimensions of EU-Turkey relations. Although many differing views were expressed on Turkey's military offensives in Syria, the independent referendum in the Kurdistan of Iraq, the peace process in Turkey, Turkey's closer ties with Russia, Turkey's accession into the EU, many still argued that the cleavages between the EU and Turkey are smaller than perceived.



### **Background:**

In the recent years, multiple factors have been shaping EU-Turkey relations vis-à-vis Iraq and Syria. These include security and political dynamics following the second term of al-Maliki, the withdrawal of the US forces in 2011, the 2011 Syrian Revolution, the war against the Islamic State (IS), the Global Coalition against Daesh backing the Democratic Union Party in Northern Syria, the rise of Kurdish nationalism and aspirations for statehood in Iraq and autonomy in Syria, the enhanced influence of Iran in Iraq and the growth of IS with subsequent mass displacement of persons across Iraq and Syria. Evidently, Ankara and Brussels have their own perceptions towards these factors and they act according to their own distinct priorities and interests. How do these multifarious points impact EU-Turkey relations and would they prompt them towards conflict, cooperation and/or convergence in the future?

Additionally, EU-Turkey relations are also influenced by the energy sector. Enjoying a strategic geographic positioning, connecting European demand for energy with sizeable oil and resources in the Middle East and the Caspian Basin, Turkey seems to be of cardinal importance to the EU. But, what exactly are these energy related drivers and how would they impact their relations? Again, are they likely to gear towards conflict, cooperation and/or convergence in the short, medium and long terms?

