



The KRG's Inability Factors for Independently Exporting Oil: After 2023

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Abstract

This research investigates the key factors impacting the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) ability to achieve independent oil exports following 2023. It examines the KRG's longstanding pursuit of self-determination and its hydrocarbon resource management rights, particularly oil and gas, within the framework of the 2005 Iraqi Constitution. The study highlights a strategic shift by the KRG from reliance on hard power tactics towards a soft power strategy focused on economic development, revenue generation, and enhanced political autonomy. The abundance of oil and gas reserves in the Kurdistan Region has played a pivotal role in shaping the KRG's primary policy objectives, acting as a catalyst for regional growth and consolidation. Furthermore, the research delves into the core disagreements between the KRG and the Iraqi central government regarding the KRG's authority over its energy sector, particularly oil exports. Employing a qualitative methodology, the study critically analyzes the legal basis for the KRG's claims to independent oil export operations in the face of opposition from the Iraqi government. Despite these aspirations, the KRG's efforts have encountered significant challenges, including internal political divisions and institutional weaknesses. Additionally, the KRG faces sustained political, economic, and legal pressure exerted by Baghdad, coupled with regional and geopolitical efforts to marginalize the Kurds in energy-related discussions. Ultimately, this study seeks to illuminate the complex interplay of factors that continue to impede the KRG's independent oil export aspirations.



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1.Introduction

The Middle East, a region containing five of the world's leading oil producers – Saudi Arabia, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Iran, and Kuwait represents a significant contributor to global oil production, accounting for roughly 26% (IEA, 2024). Indeed, one-third of the world's oil originates from the Middle East (Puri-Mirza, 2024). However, within this landscape, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRG) emerges as a non-state actor with a growing role in the international energy market. This autonomous region possesses substantial oil and gas reserves and has strategically leveraged its hydrocarbon resources (oil and gas) to exert a degree of soft power, particularly in the absence of full statehood.

According to the KRG's Ministry of Natural Resources (2024), the Kurdistan Region's territory holds between 100 and 200 trillion cubic feet of natural gas and more than 45 billion barrels of crude oil. On the one hand, for the formulation of KRG's economic policy and revenue streams throughout the past two decades, oil and gas have been a top emphasis. On the other hand, the KRG has consistently demonstrated its efforts to become a necessary actor in the international community, both to ensure energy security at the domestic level of the countries that import oil and as an influential and key region by ensuring price stability in the global energy market. The second aspect has been a direct tool and gateway to further promote and strengthen diplomatic, economic, and political relations and the position of the KRG abroad. So, Oil has become a giant card for the importance of nations and strengthening them. The Kurdistan Region and oil are also two sides of the same coin. Over the past year, the corridor on which the KRG has seen itself has consistently suggested that the Kurdistan Region of Iraq will continue to build, invest more, and export its oil. Proponents within the global oil industry often assert the inherent fungibility of oil, suggesting its eventual market access regardless of origin. While this may hold true to some extent for the (KRG), its oil reserves have acquired heightened significance due to the potential for mutually beneficial bilateral trade agreements. However, despite ongoing efforts and established oil exports, the KRG currently faces significant challenges hindering independent oil export. These obstacles manifest on multiple fronts, encompassing political and geopolitical pressures, financial and institutional limitations, and unresolved legal issues.

Research Question:

This paper tries to answer the following questions:

- To what extent and for what reasons does the (KRG) lack the autonomy to independently sell and export its oil reserves?
- What are the historical, political, and legal factors contributing to the ongoing disagreements between the KRG and the Iraqi federal government regarding the management and export of Kurdish oil?

Research Problem:

This research investigates the multifaceted challenges hindering KRG's ability to independently explore and export oil. The core of this inquiry lies in understanding the interplay between KRG's energy sector capabilities and the political, legal, and economic obstacles that prevent its autonomous control over oil resources. Erbil's attempt to bypass Baghdad's authority by signing an independent oil export deal with Turkey further strained the relationship. The emergence of ISIS in 2014 compounded the crisis, leading to a budget cut-off from Baghdad, a crippling economic crisis for the KRG, and the accumulation of significant debts. The 2017 Kurdistan Region Referendum further exacerbated existing tensions.

The complexity of this issue arises from its multidimensionality. Political and geopolitical factors, financial constraints, and a murky legal landscape all pose significant threats to KRG's aspirations for independent oil exportation. This research aims to dissect these pressing concerns and their cumulative impact on KRG's ability to achieve its oil export goals again.

Research Importance and Objective:

This research is significant because it identifies and analyzes the reasons that have prevented KRG's capability from exporting its oil independently, which has previously been able to continue to develop its energy sector. Due to that, the Kurdistan Region has relied heavily on oil as a strategic tool for diplomatic and political purposes in order to achieve better and stronger relations abroad. Therefore, the aim of this study is to demonstrate the relationship between the independent variable of oil and the dependent variable of autonomous actor, which is the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, in order to benefit from overcoming hurdles and moving into a new and more comprehensive stage.

Methodology and Data Collection

This research employs a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the issues surrounding (The KRG's Inability Factors for Independently Exporting Oil: After 2023). Qualitative methods prioritize exploring experiences, meanings, and perspectives over quantifiable data. Within this framework, we utilize two primary data collection methods: in-person interviews and secondary source analysis.

Primary Data Collection: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five key informants in Erbil Province, Iraq. These informants were purposefully selected due to their expertise and access to relevant information. They included politicians, government officials, and qualified specialists with direct knowledge of the research topic. A semi-structured interview guide with ten open-ended questions was employed to facilitate in-depth discussions while allowing participants to elaborate on their experiences and insights. All interviews were conducted with informed consent and were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Additionally, detailed notes were taken to capture nonverbal cues and contextual details.

Secondary Data Collection: To supplement the primary data, a comprehensive analysis of existing literature was conducted. This included scholarly articles, books, research reports, and official government speeches relevant to the research topic.

To gain in-depth understanding of the situation, this study leverages interviews with key figures within the KRG and Kurdistan Parliament advisors, as well as Kurdish politicians with firsthand experience of the longstanding conflict between Baghdad and Erbil.

Theoretical Framework

This research adopts Neo-realism, a prominent theory in International Relations (IR) emphasizing power politics, as a framework to analyze energy security. Developed by Kenneth Waltz (1979), Neo-realism highlights the anarchic nature of the international system where states, the primary actors, prioritize survival and security. Neo-realists argue that energy resources are crucial for a state's power and security, akin to, but not fully replacing, military strength (Cesnakas, 2010, 32). Energy can be used as a political tool, with states potentially offering resources below market value to influence foreign policy.

However, Neo-realism emphasizes states' central role in shaping energy policy. States hold the legislative authority over energy extraction, use, taxation, and environmental regulations. Ultimately, a state's energy-based power hinges on its ability to extract and export resources, alongside global demand for those resources (Riddle, 2009, n.d). In essence, Neo-realism suggests that while resource possession is vital for national security, the ability to exploit and export them holds even greater weight in shaping a state's political, economic, security, and diplomatic standing.

Research Structure

This research is organized into two chapters with five distinct sections:

Introduction: This section establishes the significance of the study by introducing the independent variable (oil) and its connection to the dependent variable (Kurdistan Region). It outlines the research proposal, highlighting the key objectives and research questions.

Chapter 1: Historical Context and Growth Trajectory of the Hydrocarbon conflicts Between Erbil and Baghdad

Section 1: This section delves into the historical background of the Kurdistan Region's aspirations for self-governance in managing its energy industry. It provides context for the current situation.

Section 2: This section focuses on the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) oil industry's growth trajectory since 2009. It likely explores key milestones, policy changes, and significant developments.

Chapter 2: Factors and Challenges increased the KRG's Inability to Export Its Oil Independently

Section 1: This section examines the political and geopolitical factors that create uncertainty surrounding the KRG's authority over its oil resources. It analyzes how external actors and regional dynamics affect KRG's oil industry.

Section 2: This section focuses on the financial and economic factors impacting KRG's oil industry. This might include budgetary issues, revenue sharing models, and the impact of oil price fluctuations.

Section 3: This section analyzes and interprets recent decisions made by the Paris Court of Arbitration and the Iraqi Supreme Court concerning the KRG's oil rights. It likely discusses the potential implications of these rulings for the region.

Discussion and Conclusion: This section summarizes the key findings of the research, revisits the research questions posed in the introduction, and draws conclusions about the connection between oil and the Kurdistan Region. It may also offer recommendations or future research directions.

1- Historical Context and Growth Trajectory of the Hydrocarbon conflicts Between Erbil and Baghdad

Following the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq (Operation Iraqi Freedom - OIF), Kurdish political parties, particularly the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), played a significant role in establishing the 2005 Iraqi Constitution (IC) (Wahab, 2023, n.d). This document marked a turning point, enshrining Kurdish power-sharing within the framework of the new Iraqi political system. As Wahab (2023) notes, "They worked to enshrine their new powers and rights into the 2005 IC, which recognized Kurdistan as an official region and granted the KRG power to govern largely independently from Baghdad." This newfound autonomy included the right to manage and supervise natural resources, a crucial element for the KRG.

Historically, Kurdish aspirations for self-governance and control over resources stemmed from concerns about a centralized Iraqi government failing to protect their interests (Krasna, 2023). As Krasna (2023) explains, "the Kurds' long-held concern about a strong central government not securing their rights has driven them to invest in their own abilities and become more self-sufficient." This drive for self-sufficiency led the KRG to view its oil wealth as a strategic asset and a tool for developing "soft power" on the international stage (n.d).

1.1 The Development of KRG's Energy Sector

Following its participation in the formation of the Iraqi Constitution (IC) in 2005, the KRG recognized the potential of soft power, particularly resource wealth, to build its foreign relations within a federal Iraq. This strategy involved attracting international oil companies (IOCs) to develop the Kurdistan Region's energy sector. Furthermore, "the relative stability and security in Kurdistan compared to the rest of Iraq motivated the KRG to establish an investment board. This initiative was formalized through a bill passed by the Kurdistan Parliament and subsequently approved by President Masoud Barzani" (Ahmed, 2018, n.d). The legislation proved to be a critical step towards regulating and privatizing oil revenues in the Kurdistan Region. The underlying principle was that efficient management of oil revenue would hinge on

a well-defined investment policy (Ahmed, 2018, n.d). This policy shift ultimately led to the enactment of the KRG's Oil and Gas Law. However, this discussion around resource management raises a crucial question: who has ownership and control over the Kurdistan Region's energy sector? To address this question comprehensively, the following sections will explore two key aspects related to the governance and oversight of KRG's energy industry.

The first is the 2005 Iraqi Constitution. Although constitutions should be the last decision-makers on matters listed in their articles and provisions, the IC has always been the focus of attention on how it deals with the issue of natural resources, especially oil and gas in the regions. For this purpose, several articles, particularly articles 111 and 112, specifically address the subject of energy and property rights in the new fields in the Regions and Provinces: (Iraqi Constitution, 2005).

However, it is crucial to remember that Article 115 of the IC specifies that in the case of a dispute between the region and the center, the law of the regions be prioritized, provided that the dispute is not in the context of Article 110 of the constitution. However, the issue of oil and gas is not mentioned in Article 110 (Muhammed, 2023, n.d). So, based on the above interpretation, economic ambitions, and since the Iraqi Parliament could not pass a federal law on oil and gas, it encouraged the KRG to pass its own oil and gas law.

Therefore, the second side is the KRG's oil and gas law, which is Law No. 22 of 2007 passed by the Kurdistan Parliament with the assent of Masoud Barzani, the Kurdistan Regional President, and established based on the constitutional articles of Iraq. This was after the KRG's disappointment in the newly established Iraqi government's ability to assist the Kurdistan Region with energy extraction, especially in 2006, and its failure to comply with the constitutionally based oil and gas law. Moreover, the ambiguity of the IC made the Kurdistan Region self-reliant and took practical steps with the assistance of neighboring countries to extract, manage, and export its oil independently based on "Production Sharing Contract" (Muhammed, 2017, p. 63).

The fact that this law paved the way for the KRG to independently conducting its oil and gas revenues. This was set in a new direction, paved the way, and helped the KRG realize that it should take the first practical step, appear, and take its position as a de facto state on the map of the global energy equation. Therefore, according to this perspective, it can be said that the will of the KRG was for three key strategic purposes: (Aziz, 2013, p. 113)

1-Taking advantage of energy revenues to construct a bright economy (how to deal with natural resource revenues).

2-Using energy to build a stable political entity.

3-Energy utilization in communicating with the outside world.

Following the passage of the Kurdistan Regional Oil and Gas Law in 2007, the KRG took a significant step towards independent oil development. In 2009, the KRG signed its first independent oil investment and export contracts (Babaker, 2016, p. 107). These initial deals involved established energy companies that had previously invested in Kurdistan's oil fields under agreements with the Iraqi government. Notably, Turkish Genel Energy, which had invested in the Taq Taq field in 2002, and Norwegian DNO, which had invested in the Tawke field in 2004, were awarded contracts by the KRG. This move towards independent oil exports culminated on June 1, 2009, when Masoud Barzani, president of the Kurdistan Region, and Jalal Talabani, former president of Iraq, jointly opened the Kurdistan Region's oil pipeline (Babaker, 2016, p.107). This event marked a turning point, signifying the beginning of the KRG's independent energy sector development.

However, the KRG's independent oil export initiatives heightened tensions with the Iraqi central government in Baghdad. Despite these tensions, the KRG continued to expand its oil sector throughout the early 2010s. This expansion involved attracting additional foreign oil companies, such as Exxon Mobil and Chevron from the United States, Total from France, and WesTrin Zagros from Canada (Mills, 2016, PP. 18-20).

1.2. Disagreement and Obstacles for Managing and Exporting Oil between Erbil and Baghdad

The core of the oil and gas crisis is the ownership crisis (Aziz, 2013, p. 114). The constitutional framework outlining relations between the KRG, and the federal government of Iraq remains unfulfilled. Although the dynamic KRG's relations with the federal government after 18 years since the ratification of the 2005 constitution have gone through various stages and different shapes with several conflictual points, including issues such as the status of Peshmerga, disputed areas, sharing revenues, and exporting oil (Palani, 2023, n.d). Nevertheless, as an indication of the decline of Kurdistan's power, the current disputes are more about natural resources than the other disagreements.

There were just a few of these corporations in the Kurdistan Region, but later their desire grew as they realized that it was impossible for Iraq to adopt a federal oil and gas law soon. Because the IC left the details for a subsequent and never-passed law. Interpretations of the text and spirit of the constitution varied, and the parties tried and failed in 2007 to legislate a federal oil and gas law. The KRG capitalized on better political and security stability as well as an attractive contractual model, whereas federal government relied on vast, proven reserves, sovereign status, and reliance on export routes, neither felt pressured enough to compromise (Nidawi, 2019, n.d). As the KRG gained confidence in its own hydrocarbon policies, its perspective on resource management increasingly diverged from that of the Iraqi central government (KRG, 2017, n.d). This divergence culminated in the KRG's public announcement of its own oil and gas law to attract IOCs (Grontmij, 2015, n.d). This move, however, sparked significant conflict with Baghdad. The central government deemed the KRG's oil and gas law unconstitutional and threatened to blacklist any IOCs that entered into agreements with the Kurdistan Region (Reuters, 2012, n.d). Despite these threats, the KRG remained undeterred, particularly after ExxonMobil signed a lucrative contract with the regional government in November 2011 (The New York Times, 2011, n.d). This success emboldened the KRG to pursue further autonomy in its oil sector. In 2014, the KRG embarked on the construction of an independent oil pipeline, requiring an agreement with Turkey to export oil through the Ceyhan port (Wall Street Journal, 2014).

El Dahan and Rasheed (2023) highlight the KRG's independent oil export pipeline, transporting crude from the KRG to Ceyhan, Turkey, via Fish-Khabur on the Iraqi border. Despite warnings, the Iraqi federal government responded by cutting the KRG's budget and employee salaries, aiming to pressure them to abandon independent exports. Further escalating tensions, the federal government pursued legal action against the KRG in both the Paris Commercial Court and the Texas Central Court, claiming the KRG's oil exports were unauthorized and potentially smuggled (El Dahan & Rasheed, 2023, n.d). However, the KRG persisted with independent oil exports despite these pressures. This period, particularly prior to 2014, witnessed a significant deterioration in relations between Erbil and Baghdad over oil policy. Wahab (2023) aptly describes this dynamic as "one country, two energy policies," reflecting the deep divisions regarding oil governance within Iraq. The emergence of the ISIS threat in 2014, however, forced a temporary detente as both the KRG and the federal government prioritized defense cooperation. Consequently, the dispute and obstacles to the management and export of KRG's oil between Erbil and Baghdad have been complex issues that contain legal, financial, and political aspects. Mistrust between the KRG and federal government, the KRG's desire to maintain independent revenue streams, and Baghdad's hesitant to Kurdish separatism were some of the major factors contributing to the conflict. Although the IC is vague, it calls for shared responsibility between the federal and regional governments for the oil and gas sector. Therefore, in the absence of such a law, politics will prevail.

2-Factors and Challenges increased the KRG's Inability to Export Its Oil Independently

The historical quest of the Kurdistan Region (KRG) for self-determination in managing its oil resources has been a persistent source of tension with the Iraqi federal government (Wahab, 2023). This chapter focuses on a recent escalation of this long-standing dispute. Since March 25, 2023, the KRG has faced a significant setback with the closure of the pipeline exporting approximately 400,000 barrels of oil per day, representing 0.5% of global production. Despite temporary negotiations and agreements, the resumption of exports has not materialized, highlighting the complex political dynamics at play between Erbil and Baghdad (Wahab, 2023, n.d). This chapter delves into the key internal and external factors that have directly and indirectly contributed to this suspension, analyzing the challenges that have limited the KRG's ability to navigate this situation.

2.1 Shifting political Power Dynamics: The KRG's Weakened Position in a Post-Independence Referendum.

The political and geopolitical dimensions stand as the primary influencers in various domestic, regional, and international matters. A couple of decades ago in the KRI, the KDP and the PUK expressed their full support and readiness to aid in the return of Shiite personalities and the establishment of a new federal government (Mustafa, 2009, n.d). In earlier times, the ruling Kurdish parties in the new Iraq held the potential for significant political dominance. However, the leaders of these parties now faced a range of security, economic, political, and legal challenges, all of which directly affected their power and posed a direct threat to shaping the KRG's ability and authority in a new phase. Prior to the 2017 referendum, relations between Erbil and Baghdad looked like a state-by-state relationship rather than a federal and regional arrangement based on the Iraqi legal framework (Palani, 2023). Despite the strategic partnership envisioned by many Kurdish leaders in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), the United States' actions have cast doubt on the reliability of this alliance. Notably, the U.S. did not endorse the 2017 Kurdish independence referendum and failed to prevent the Iranian-backed Iraqi government from militarily retaking disputed territories. This stance towards the referendum and inaction on territorial control raise questions about the true nature of U.S. patronage towards the KRI. Evidence suggests a partnership contingent upon U.S. interests and priorities, potentially limiting its effectiveness in supporting Kurdish aspirations (Alduski, A.H.T., 2021, p. 10). Gradually, after the suspension of the 2017 referendum, the position of the KRI has weakened, and the balance of power in favor of the IG has changed. Since then, the KRG leaders have announced that Baghdad represents the depth of the KR's strategy. Dr. Jutyar Adil, Head of the Department of Media and Information at the KRG and former KRG spokesman (interviewed by the author, Erbil, January 25, 2024), argued that the KRG prioritizes the Iraqi constitution as a framework for resolving its grievances. However, he expressed concern that the document is not being implemented impartially, allegedly favoring certain political actors who interpret it selectively. Dr. Adil contends that a stable Kurdistan Region serves as a strategic security buffer for Baghdad. He further asserted that the Kurdish ability to influence Iraqi decision-making through a veto mechanism has diminished. According to Dr. Adil, the Iraqi government has unilaterally passed legislation and rulings impacting the KRG, bypassing consultation with Kurdish representatives. He cited the recent presidential election as an example, where internal Kurdish political divisions (specifically between the PUK and KDP) resulted in a president chosen by Shiite and Sunni blocs, failing to represent Kurdish interests. These internal conflicts, Dr. Adil suggests, have weakened Kurdish political cohesion within the Iraqi government.

Dr. Mahmoud Othman, a former member of the Iraqi Governing Council, Iraqi Parliament member, and specialist in Kurdish political party policy (interviewed by the author in Erbil,

February 8, 2024), suggests a division of influence within the KRG regarding resource management. He claims the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) exerts greater control over oil, while the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) holds sway over natural gas. Othman attributes this, in part, to regional dynamics. Neighboring countries, he argues, may not always support Kurdish unity, fearing it could simplify and cheapen access to these resources (Othman, 2024). Furthermore, Othman emphasizes the absence of a unified Kurdish framework for oil and gas negotiations with the Iraqi government. This, he contends, stems from the prioritization of individual party interests over a collective Kurdish identity. This internal political complexity, Othman argues, weakens the KRG's bargaining position and allows Baghdad to exploit these divisions. He highlights the KRG's leadership's conflicting views on its position within Iraq and energy sector development strategies, presenting a fragmented image to the Iraqi government. Othman additionally suggests a potential distrust of the Iraqi government, particularly the Shi'ite-dominated parties. He claims these parties engage in "political cheating" (Othman, 2024), entering agreements lacking specifics and then reinterpreting them during implementation to exert control and limit the KRG's autonomy.

Therefore, Adil (2024) noted that the present IG does not have pure intention because the Shiites believe in, practice centralization rather than a federal system, and attach the Kurds to their mentality. In addition, all the KRG's administrations should return to the IG because they do not acknowledge the Peshmerga and disputed areas, which are the basic issues; the same is true for oil. "The division among the major Kurdish parties, particularly those inside the KRG, facilitates outside forces becoming a factor undermining the autonomy of the region as stipulated by the constitution" (Sheikhlari, 2023, n.d).

In this respect, we should say that, domestically, the power balance has shifted in the KDP's favor since PUK leader Jalal Talabani died. In addition, as the PUK is weaker but remains a capable disrupted because when PM Barzani pitched Kurdish gas prospects to energy-strapped Europeans in mid-2022 given the energy shortage in Europe brought about by Russia's war in Ukraine, investors did not bite. Because the bulk of natural gas in Kurdistan lies in PUK-controlled areas, and even on April 28, 2023, PUK leader Bafel Talabani declared that if the KDP ignores the PUK's demands, the gas pipeline in Sulaimani must run on his dead body, and then they must export it (Chalak, 2022, n.d). Thus, with the region's internal political polarization increasing and security stability improving in the rest of Iraq, "the power dynamic that formerly favored the KRG has shifted in favor of Baghdad, in a way that the rivalry between the PUK and the KDP which plainly perceived as a political rift, has diminished the value of the Kurdistan Region for unity and put the KRG down a confusing and uncertain path in the oil matter "(Sadiq, 2023, p. 46).

Finally, in this way, Baghdad would welcome the opportunity to deal separately with the KDP and PUK rather than with a unified KRG. In this regard, we can conclude that, despite the KRG's thirty years of significant achievements and limitless efforts for the economy and exporting oil independently, a lack of unity has hindered the KRG's ability to address oil problems abroad, because of the region's multi-zone and multi-power that have existed.

2.2 Oil's Geopolitical Powerplay: KRG's Landlocked Status and the Struggle for Autonomy

The KRG's landlocked location presents a significant challenge to independent oil exports. Dr. Othman's interview (2024) highlights the geopolitical constraints imposed upon the Kurdistan Region due to its landlocked position and lack of direct sea access (as also noted by Rasool, 2023). This geographical reality empowers neighboring countries to exert influence over the KRG and Kurdish political parties by controlling export routes and potentially forging agreements that limit the region's autonomy. Furthermore, oil serves as a critical determinant of a nation's political and economic trajectory, impacting both domestic and international policy decisions by producers and consumers alike (Shali, 2023, n.d). This strategic resource

incentivizes major oil-consuming nations to employ various strategic tactics to secure a steady supply and achieve their security objectives. Consequently, the Kurdistan Region lacks full sovereignty, and its energy sector is dependent and conditional, as well as encircled by neighboring states that possess abundant energy resources and hold significant influence in the global energy market, particularly Iran.

Regarding Iran, Dr. Othman's interview (2024) sheds light on the complex geopolitical dynamics surrounding the KRG's oil and gas industry. He suggests that Iran views the KRG's independent energy authority as a threat, potentially fueling regional instability and promoting Shi'ism. This aligns with Mohammed's (2023) observation that "Iranian-linked militias target Kurdish energy infrastructure in response to perceived pro-Western leanings" (p. 150). Furthermore, Dr. Othman highlights that Baghdad's hardening stance on oil revenue sharing has pushed Kurdish parties towards closer ties with Ankara and Western oil companies. However, he argues that Turkey's relationship with the KRG remains constrained by its dependence on Iranian gas (16% of its demand in 2021 and 2022). This dependence could shift, as the Kurdistan Region offers a potentially more reliable and affordable alternative for Turkey's future energy needs.

Regarding, The KRG's Evolving Energy Strategy in Response to Geopolitical Shifts, the recent geopolitical realignments, particularly in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine war, have demonstrably influenced the Kurdistan Region's (KRG) energy decision-making (Alaaldin, 2023, n.d). The KRG has proposed an "Erbil-Ankara-GCC triangle," leveraging the recent rapprochement between Turkey and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, particularly following Turkey's reconciliations with Egypt and Israel. This strategy capitalizes on the potential for a significant shift in regional geopolitics and geoeconomics. The "GCC may view the KRG's autonomy as a rallying point for its supporters, facilitating the creation of a unified energy and political front to counter Iranian proxies in the region" (Alaaldin, 2023, n.d). This strategic shift is further evidenced by a series of high-level visits. In 2022, "President Barzani visited Ankara to discuss closer energy ties, followed by Prime Minister Barzani's visits to Qatar and the UAE to assess the KRG's gas export potential. Notably, between 2022 and 2023, the KRG's President and Prime Minister undertook a combined eleven visits to Qatar and the UAE" (Jaafar, 2023, n.d). Additionally, Deputy Prime Minister Talabani's emphasis on exporting Kurdish gas to Europe at the 2022 Delphi Economic Forum underscores this strategic pivot (Jaafar, 2023, n.d). These proactive measures demonstrate the KRG's evolving strategy to enhance its export capabilities.

Iran's Opposition to KRG's Energy Development in the recent years are increased clearly with the hard military actions. For example, On January 25, 2024, missiles targeted the residence of Sheikh Baz Karim Barzanji, head of Kar Group, a prominent Kurdish energy company. This attack, attributed to Iranian-backed forces, followed a similar strike on the Khor Mor gas field (Zed Press, 2024). These actions highlight Iran's growing opposition to the Kurdistan Region's (KRG) independent oil and gas development. As Ali Hama Salih, a former member of the Kurdistan Parliament's energy committee, noted, these attacks aim to disrupt a crucial resource for the KRG and signal clear opposition to its energy ambitions (Zed Press, 2024, n.d).

Iran's concerns stem from the potential impact of Kurdish energy exports on its regional influence. While Kar Group owns a majority stake in the KRG's oil pipeline (60%), Russia's Rosneft holds the remaining 40% (Jafaar, 2023, n.d). Iran views the KRG's energy resources as a threat to its position as a dominant gas supplier to Iraq, Turkey, and potentially the Gulf States. The prospect of Kurdish gas displacing Iranian exports in these markets undermines Iran's energy security and economic leverage. These dynamic underscores the geopolitical reality in the region, where "control over energy infrastructure dictates a nation's destiny.

2.3 Institutional Bottlenecks and Economic Dependence: The KRG's Oil Export Challenges

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq faces significant challenges in exporting its oil wealth. This section analyzes the KRG's oil export predicament through the lens of "institutional bottlenecks" and "economic dependence." Institutional bottlenecks refer to inefficiencies within the KRG's political and administrative structures that hinder smooth oil export operations. Economic dependence highlights the KRG's overreliance on oil revenue, making it vulnerable to fluctuations in global oil prices and disputes with the Iraqi federal government regarding export rights. By examining these interrelated issues based on the primary and secondary data, the article sheds light on the complex dynamics hindering the KRG's ability to fully capitalize on its oil resources. Despite the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) enactment of the Oil and Gas Law in 2007 (Sadiq, 2023, n.d), the legislation's provisions for establishing relevant institutions remain unimplemented (p. 50). Dr. Arshad Taha, the Advanced Financial and Economic Advisor in the Kurdistan Parliament specializing in energy and economic policy (interviewed by the author, Erbil, February 19, 2024), identified the KRG's dependence on foreign companies for oil exports as a crucial challenge. He emphasized the need to address this through institutionalization of the sector.

Dr. Taha advocated for the creation of a specialized institute equipped with a skilled workforce and adequate human capital to manage oil exploration, discovery, extraction, and exportation efficiently (interview, 2024). He highlighted the volatile nature of oil prices due to its political and sovereign significance as a commodity. Dr. Taha further noted that nations solely reliant on oil revenues face recurring economic crises. This, he explained, is the rationale behind the KRG's strategy to export a portion of the crude oil while allocating the remaining reserves for domestic petrochemical development. This approach, according to Dr. Taha, could potentially generate approximately 6,000 diverse materials from crude oil, thereby diversifying revenue streams, creating employment opportunities, and mitigating the risks associated with oil export dependence (interview, 2024). On the other hand, Erbil has been selling its oil at steep political discounts, averaging US\$15–18 below Brent in 2022 (Shiekhlar, 2023).

Moreover, in an interview conducted in Erbil on February 18, 2024, Safeen Muhsin Dizayee, Head of Department of Foreign Relations for the KRG, acknowledged that oil sales revenue has sometimes fallen short of budgetary requirements (Dizayee, 2024). This shortfall, Dizayee explained, stems from a confluence of factors: unilateral Iraqi government budget cuts, the devastation wrought by the ISIS war, the influx of refugees, the loss of oil fields in conflict zones, and the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, KRG has resorted to borrowing from energy companies, securing advance loans in exchange for future oil deliveries.

2.4 Legal factors: from Iraqi Supreme Court decisions to the latest decisions of the International Arbitration Court

With the intensification and ongoing conflicts, the courts emerge as the ultimate arbiters. After twenty years, the KRG faces its gravest challenge constitutionally and legally (Gurbuz, 2023). In the light of this argument, in an interview conducted on February 11th, 2024, in Erbil, Iraq, Dr. Khamosh Omer, a legal and constitutional advisor specializing in the Iraqi Constitution and the KRG's oil and gas law for the Kurdistan Parliament, provided valuable insights into the legal context surrounding the KRG's oil exports. Dr. Omer emphasized the shift from a centralized system to a federal one following the establishment of Iraq's permanent constitution in 2005. This necessitated the creation of specific laws to define the distribution of power within the country. However, Dr. Omer pointed out that the crucial federal oil and gas law, intended to manage natural resources effectively, was not passed by 2007 due to political disagreements between Shiite parties. Consequently, the Iraqi government relied on the general provisions of the constitution. To address this legal ambiguity and prevent a legislative void within the

Kurdistan Region, the Kurdistan Parliament enacted its own Oil and Gas Law No. 22. Following this, the KRG entered into contracts with multiple small foreign companies and subsequently established joint model contracts, which in turn attracted larger companies to invest in the KRI. Othman (2024) argues that the 2005 Iraqi constitution grants legislative, executive, and judicial authority to the regions. However, due to the lack of a regional constitution and the unity between Kurdish political parties, the Federal Supreme Court (FSC) retains jurisdiction over conflict resolution. Despite this constitutional framework, Iraq has persistently attempted to exert control over the KRG's oil exports throughout the past decade. This strategy is part of a broader effort to both restrict Kurdish autonomy within Iraq and limit competition in the oil market. Notably, Kurdish oil is offered at a discount of \$10-20 per barrel compared to Iraqi oil, creating a two-tiered pricing structure for international importers.

Othman (2024) raises a key point regarding the tension between the KRG's envisioned autonomy and the Iraqi federal government's asserted authority. While the 2005 Iraqi constitution grants legislative, executive, and judicial power to the regions, the lack of a solidified Kurdish regional constitution and internal political disunity within Kurdistan weakens the KRG's bargaining position. This vulnerability allows the Federal Supreme Court (FSC) to maintain control over resource-related disputes. Othman further exposes the potential economic motivations behind Iraq's actions. By restricting the KRG's oil exports and leveraging Kurdish oil's lower price point, Iraq could be aiming to limit Kurdish autonomy, consolidate control over the national oil market, and potentially gain a competitive advantage in international oil sales.

Besides political and budgetary pressures from the IG from 2014 to 2021, Baghdad has recently become more influential on the KRI. The FSC has emerged as a key player in settling political disputes in Iraq. In February 2022, the FSC decreed that the KRG's 2007 natural resource law was unconstitutional and its oil exports and contracts were illegal. Adding salt to the KRG's financial injuries, the FSC ruled in January 2023 that the federal budget transfers to the Kurdistan Region were illegal (Fatah, 2023). Omer (2024) highlighted the continued application of Law No. 101 of 1976 and Law No. 84 of 1985 for Iraqi oil and gas management. These laws, designed for a centralized system, are incongruous with Iraq's current federal structure. Omer's observation suggests a persistence of centralized political and legal mindsets within the Iraqi government post-2003.

Concerning the FSC structure, Omer (2024) elucidated that the authority of the FSC possesses the special ability just to revoke an article or provision, rather than an entire law, since its inception. This is in contrast to the unconstitutional ruling made on the KRG's oil and gas law, as we realize that the court has attempted to confine the region's powers to a central authority. Whereas Article 110 of the constitution defines all of the Iraqi government's federal powers, including the oil issue, which is not mentioned as a federal but joint authority, the interviewee explained, (2024).

In a recent interview (Omer, 2024), emphasis was placed on Article 112 and Decision No. 8 of 2012 issued by the Federal Supreme Court (FSC) which mandate the inclusion of producing regions and provinces in formulating strategic policies for oil and gas resource management. This seemingly contradicts the FSC's prior ruling in February 2022 that revoked the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) oil and gas law (Adil, 2024). The implication of the recent decision suggests a shift towards centralized, rather than merely shared, authority over resource management. Adil (2024) further suggests a political dimension to this decision, citing concerns from certain actors who view the KRG's expansion in the oil industry as a threat to their interests. Notably, despite the presence of two Kurdish judges on the FSC, the non-appealable nature of the court's decisions limits their ability to dissent (Omer, 2024).

The interview by Omer (2024) effectively highlights the apparent contradiction between the Federal Supreme Court's (FSC) recent emphasis on shared management and its prior decision revoking the KRG's oil and gas law (Adil, 2024). This inconsistency strengthens the argument

for a potential political influence on the court, as suggested by Adil (2024). The limited ability of the two Kurdish judges to dissent due to the non-appealable nature of FSC rulings (Omer, 2024) further underscores this point and necessitates a deeper examination of the political actors potentially impacting these decisions.

The Iraqi government did not stop until it filed suits against KRG oil exports in multiple international courts, the most recent being its complaint against Turkey in 2014 until the complaint was settled and Turkey stopped the flow of Kurdish oil through the Iraq-Turkey pipeline since a Paris arbitration court on March 23 ruled in favor of Baghdad against Ankara. That independent Kurdish exports through Ceyhan were in violation of a 1973 pipeline agreement between Iraq and Turkey, resulting in Turkey being fined \$1.5 billion in damages (Alaldin, 2023). This arbitration decision and the Turkish suspension of oil loading have well-served Baghdad's efforts to harm the KRG's international position and curtail its independent energy and economic policies (Krasna, 2023).

Finally, Dizayee (2024) attributed the recent challenges faced by the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) energy sector to limitations imposed by the Iraqi federal government. While acknowledging a setback, they downplayed the significance, arguing it does not represent a critical defeat for the KRG's energy sector and constitutes only a partial victory for the Iraqi government. Dizayee (2024) further suggested a potential link between the increased assertiveness of the Federal Supreme Court (FSC) and Iranian influence, particularly given the timing coinciding with Iranian actions targeting the KRG's energy infrastructure. This suggests a possible external dimension to the recent domestic challenges faced by the KRG's energy.

Dizayee's (2024) argument attributing the KRG's energy challenges solely to limitations imposed by the Iraqi federal government seems intended to deflect blame. While acknowledging setbacks, this perspective overlooks potential internal mismanagement within KRG's energy sector. Similarly, suggesting a purely external influence through the Federal Supreme Court (FSC) and Iran might be an oversimplification. A more comprehensive analysis could explore whether these external pressures exploit existing vulnerabilities within the KRG's energy sector, particularly those arising from the complex interplay between the two dominant political parties, the PUK and PDK, who control most of the Kurdistan Region.

Conclusion

Erbil and Baghdad have a long-running disagreement about who controls the oil and gas industry. They argue over both the methods and who gets to be in charge. This is not just about the law - it is also about power. The Iraqi central government seeks to exert greater control over the Kurdistan Region of Iraq's natural resources, particularly advocating for the return of full sovereignty over resource management to Baghdad. A central point of contention is the KRG's oil and gas law passed in 2007, which the Iraqi government consistently refused to recognize. This dispute culminated in the Iraqi Federal Court declaring the law unconstitutional. Furthermore, the 2023 Paris Court of Arbitration decision in favor of the Iraqi government in its protracted legal case against Turkey regarding oil exports significantly disadvantaged the KRG. This ruling effectively halted the KRG's independent oil exports, causing uncertainty and a decrease in investment from foreign oil companies in Kurdistan.

While some Kurdish political figures, such as Adle and Dizayee (2024), view the discovery of significant oil and gas reserves in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) as a positive development for the federal state of Iraq, they primarily attribute the current disputes with Baghdad over oil management and export strategies to the federal government's actions. However, Robin Mills (2016) offers a more nuanced perspective. He argues that domestic political instability within the KRI, particularly the ongoing tensions between the two dominant parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), could significantly hinder

the KRG's ability to become a major oil producer and exporter independent of OPEC, similar to Oman and Azerbaijan (p. 1).

Through the establishment of legal infrastructure, contracts, energy company operations, and revenue sources, the KRG's oil and gas sector has made significant progress, resulting oil exports in the Kurdistan Region became a reality. In spite of the KRG's persistent efforts and noteworthy achievements in developing its autonomous oil export capability for over two decades. It is presently confronted formidable challenges on both internal and external levels including the discord among Kurdish parties regarding revenues and interests, the divergent visions between the PUK and KDP. In addition, the latter alignment with Iran and Iraqi Shiites have weakened the Kurdistan Region's ability to project a cohesive image and impeded the KRG's efforts to resolve its energy sector issues. Because they would not go to the negotiations with a single package and unity, on the contrary, the ability to resolve the problems would be greater.

This resulted in the deepening of the longstanding conflicts between Erbil and Baghdad over this matter. The method and authority to manage the sector is the heart of the differences between Erbil and Baghdad. Although the conflicts are often portrayed, as arising from divergent interpretations of constitutional articles, their essence lies in a deep-rooted political dimension and their connection to the ongoing centralization efforts in Iraq aimed at exerting control over the power of the KRG. The most prominent was the FSC's recent questionable and unconstitutional actions, particularly its opposition to the KRG's oil and gas law has consequently compelled certain foreign energy companies to halt their investments in the Kurdistan Region. As the recent interview with Mr. Omer (2024) highlights a contradiction in Iraqi Federal Supreme Court decisions. The court emphasized shared management of oil and gas resources, but previously revoked the Kurdistan Regional Government's oil and gas law. This suggests a shift towards central control, possibly due to political actors threatened by the KRG's oil industry growth. Even with Kurdish judges on the court, their limited power to dissent restricts their influence.

Iran's use of forceful tactics in its geopolitical maneuvering, such as utilizing drone strikes and supporting proxy militia groups in Iraq against the Kurdistan Region were motivated by their perception of the KRG's energy resources as a potential substitute for their own oil and gas reserves. Consequently, this posed a threat to the KRG and undermined its position in the regional energy landscape. Despite these efforts, the KRG continued. However, the KRG faced ongoing pressure from the Iraqi Shiite government, which had obtained legitimacy through its close relationship with Iran. Consequently, the Paris Court of Arbitration ultimately ruled the Iraqi government has protracted legal case against Turkey in favor of the Iraqi government. Following the Court's decision, Turkey was obliged to officially cease the oil export pipeline of the KRG after 25 March 2023. Due to the commitment of the Paris Court of Arbitration to enforceable state obligations, the KRG could not take any measure. As a result, the KRG faced heightened pressure to meet the demands of the oil companies and the financial entitlements of the people in the Kurdistan Region.

Looking at this progress realistically, While Iran's actions against the KRG, like drone strikes and supporting proxy groups, might be fueled by concerns about competition from Kurdish energy resources, attributing them solely to this motive is an oversimplification. Iran's complex relationship with the KRG likely involves additional factors like regional security and influence. Additionally, the statement overlooks the internal political struggles within the KRG that could also contribute to its challenges. On the other hand, the Paris Court of Arbitration's decision to halt oil exports through Turkey undeniably placed significant pressure on the KRG. This decision, legitimized by the Iraqi government's close ties with Iran, significantly hampered the KRG's ability to manage its resources and fulfill financial obligations. However, it's

important to acknowledge ongoing diplomatic efforts by the KRG to find a solution to reexport and potentially explore further dialogue with the Iraqi government and IOCs.

So, the KRG faces a significant challenge in reaching a consensus with the Iraqi central government regarding independent oil re-exports. This impasse, driven by a complex interplay of political, security, and legal factors, has effectively curtailed KRG's ability to export oil again. The absence of a clear agreement on resource management with Baghdad hinders the Kurdistan Region's (KRI) economic growth and carries the potential to exacerbate local instability. To find a solution, several key considerations must be addressed:

1-The KRG should recognize the dynamic political and geopolitical context both within Iraq and internationally. This includes acknowledging the central government's position on oil and gas resources, as well as the evolving attitudes of regional and international actors towards the KRG's independent oil exports. Besides this, increased flexibility in negotiations, demonstrated by a willingness to compromise, can foster a more collaborative approach.

2-International oil companies (IOCs) operating in the Kurdistan Region need to adapt to the evolving political situation. Recognizing the current difficulties of independent oil sales by the KRG, IOCs should be prepared to cooperate with both the KRG and the Iraqi Ministry of Oil. Collaborative ventures involving all stakeholders could lead to a mutually beneficial solution.

3-Political discord within the KRG, particularly between the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), must be addressed. A unified front in negotiations with the central government would strengthen the KRG's bargaining position. Fostering internal political stability demonstrates a commitment to responsible resource management.

4-The KRG should actively pursue the passage of an oil and gas law in the Iraqi parliament. This law should both recognize the KRG's right to manage oil and gas fields within its jurisdiction and establish a framework for joint resource management with the central government. Additionally, the KRG can contribute to the formulation of national resource management policies, ensuring its interests are represented.

5- Transparency and accountability in oil and gas revenue management by both the KRG and the central government are essential for building trust amongst stakeholders. Also, addressing environmental concerns associated with oil and gas production is crucial for long-term sustainability.

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Interview Questions

2. To what extent the internal political situation in the Kurdistan Region, especially the ruling parties, have weakened the Kurdistan Regional Government in independent oil exports?
3. .Geopolitically, what are the regional and international pressures to stop the KRG's oil exports?
4. Did the suspension of the KRI's oil exports influence relations, diplomatic coordination, and the Kurdistan Regional Government's position?
5. Did the Iraqi governments and Shiite parties' policies affect the Iraqi Federal Court's decision to overturn the Kurdistan Regional Government's oil and gas laws?
6. 5Has the KRG successfully developed its energy industry, including oil and gas infrastructure?
7. Institutionally and economically, was the Kurdistan Regional Government's policy another cause for suspending oil exports?
8. How constitutional and legal was the Oil and Gas Law No. 22 of 2007?
9. How constitutional was the decision of the Iraqi Federal Supreme Court on the unconstitutionality of the 2007 Kurdistan Parliament's Oil and Gas Law?

هۆکاره کانی بیتوانایی حکومتی هه رێم بۆ هه نارده کردنی نهوت به شیوه بهکی سه ره به خۆ: دواى سالى 2023

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پوخته

ئه م توێژینه وه به دوا دا چوون بۆ ئه و هۆکاره نه ده کات که رێگه نه له توانای حکومتی هه ریمی کوردستان بۆ دوا به هه نارده کردنه وه ی نهوت به سه ره به خۆی له دواى سالى 2023. توێژینه وه که به دوا دا چوون بۆ هه وه له درێز خایه نه کانی حکومتی هه ریم ده کات بۆ دیاری کردنی چاره نووس و مافه کانی له به رپوه بردنی سامانی ها بیدرو کار بۆن (نهوت و گاز) به پێی ده ستووری عێراقی سالی 2005. تیشک ده خاته سه ر گۆرانی کاری به پشت به ستن به تاکتیکه کانی "هێزی په ق" به ره و ستراتیژییه کانی "هێزی نه رم" که سه رنجیان له سه ر گه شه پێدانی ئابووری و درووست کردنی دا هات و سه ره به خۆی سیاسیه. یه ده گی زۆری نهوت و گاز له هه ریمی کوردستان رۆلی سه ره کی بینه وه له دا رشتنی سیاسه تی سه ره تایی حکومتی هه ریم له دواى 2016، وه ک ئامرازێکی به هێز بۆ گه شه کردن و چه سپاندنی هه ریم کار ده کات.

هه ره وه ها، لیکۆلینه وه که ورد تر ده بیته وه له نا کۆکیه سه ره کیه کانی ئیوان حکومتی هه ریم و حکومتی نا وه ندى عێراق (به غدا) سه به رته به که رتی وزه و نهوتی حکومتی هه ریم. به شیوه به کی په خه گرانه، ئیدیعای یاسای حکومتی هه ریم بۆ ئۆپه راسیۆنه سه ره به خۆکانی هه نارده کردنی نهوت له به رامبه ر دایه تی حکومتی عێراق دا شیده کاته وه. سه ره پای ئه م ئیدیعایانه، خواسته کانی حکومتی هه ریم بۆ هه نارده کردنی نهوت پووه پرووی ئاسته نگی به رچا و بوونه ته وه. له وانه دا به شبوونه سیاسیه ناو خۆیه کانی و لاوازیه دامه زرا وه یه کانی ناو حکومتی هه ریم، فشاره سیاسی و ئابووری و یاسایه به رده وامه کانی به غدا و هه وه له ناوچه یی و جیۆپۆله تیکه کانی بۆ په راوێز خستنی کورد له گه تگۆگۆکی په یوه ست به وزه دا. له کۆتاییدا، ئه م لیکۆلینه وه به هه ولده دات پۆشایی بخاته سه ر یاریه ئالۆزه کانی ئیوان ئه و هۆکاره نه ی که به رده وامن له رێگه کردن له خواسته کانی حکومتی هه ریم بۆ هه نارده کردنی نهوت به سه ره به خۆی.

وو شه سه ره کیه کانی: حکومتی هه ریم، حکومتی عێراق، که رتی وزه، پارته، په کیتی، نهوت و گاز، و ئاسایشی وزه.

عوامل عدم قدرة حكومة إقليم كردستان على تصدير النفط بشكل مستقل: بعد عام 2023

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ملخص

یبحث هذا البحث في العوامل التي تعيق قدرة حكومة إقليم كردستان على إعادة تصدير النفط بشكل مستقل بعد عام 2023. وتبحث الدراسة في سعي حكومة إقليم كردستان منذ فترة طويلة إلى تقرير المصير وحقوق إدارة الموارد الهيدروكربونية (النفط والغاز) بموجب الدستور العراقي لعام 2005. وهو يسلط الضوء على التحول من الاعتماد على تكتيكات "القوة الصارمة" إلى استراتيجيات "القوة الناعمة" التي تركز على التنمية الاقتصادية، وتوليد الإيرادات، والاستقلال السياسي. لعبت احتياجات النفط والغاز الوفيرة في إقليم كردستان دوراً محورياً في تشكيل السياسة الأساسية لحكومة إقليم كردستان، حيث عملت كمحفز للنمو الإقليمي والتوحيد.

علاوة على ذلك، يتطرق البحث إلى الخلافات الرئيسية بين حكومة إقليم كردستان والحكومة المركزية العراقية (بغداد) فيما يتعلق بقطاعي الطاقة والنفط في حكومة إقليم كردستان. ويحلل بشكل نقدي المطالبات القانونية لحكومة إقليم كردستان بشأن عمليات تصدير النفط المستقلة في مواجهة معارضة الحكومة العراقية. على الرغم من هذه الادعاءات، واجهت طموحات تصدير النفط لحكومة إقليم كردستان تحديات كبيرة. وتشمل هذه الانقسامات السياسية الداخلية ونقاط الضعف المؤسسية داخل حكومة إقليم كردستان، والضغط السياسي والاقتصادي والقانونية المستمرة التي تمارسها بغداد، والجهود الإقليمية والجيوستراتيجية لتهميش الأكراد في المناقشات المتعلقة بالطاقة. في نهاية المطاف، تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى تسليط الضوء على التفاعل المعقد للعوامل التي لا تزال تعيق تطلعات حكومة إقليم كردستان لتصدير النفط بشكل مستقل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: حكومة إقليم كردستان، الحكومة العراقية، قطاع الطاقة، حزب الديمقراطي الكوردستاني، لاتحاد الوطني الكوردستاني، النفط والغاز، وأمن الطاقة.