

# How Valuable the Future Kurdistan State Passport Will be?

## An exploratory study on the opinion of a sample of foreign academicians, researchers, and politicians

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**Abstract\_ This study aims to predict the Kurdistan state passport power rank. The study idea began in July 2017, and it became a very important topic especially when the first Kurdistan region independence referendum held on the 25th of September 2017. The main question is “will the power of the Kurdistan state passport in the future exceed the current Iraqi passport power?”. A structured questionnaire distributed to foreign academicians who works in Kurdistan academic institutions, universities and who visited the region for academic, research and diplomatic purpose, 115 questionnaires distributed online through the Google forums, only 85 responded accurately. Most of the response ranked the future Kurdistan passport within the best 75 passports among 200 passports for countries and regions according to the Henley and Partners methodology and the Nomad Passport Index measurements for best passports.**

**Keywords\_ Passport Power Ranking, Kurdistan Region-Iraq, Kurdistan State, Iraq passport ranking**

### 1. Introduction:

Generally, there are differences among nationalities, these differences can affect many aspects whether on personal or national level. It is fact that the nationalities are far from equal, as least under the suggestions that the level of life chances, settlement opportunities matter, global travel, education, healthcare, and expected welfare. (Kochenov & Lindeboom, 2017).

Nations-states implement visa restrictions to handle the complex trade-off for two main reasons; firstly, to facilitate the entrance to their territory by passport owners from certain countries for economic and political reasons; secondly in order to deter citizens from other countries for some reasons of perceived security and immigration control. Therefore, this leads to create a system with highly unequal access to foreign places, reinforcing existing inequalities. The biggest

beneficiaries from Trans-national mobility are the passport holders from privileged countries especially the rich Western countries, at the expense of severe restrictions for individuals. Thus, the objectives of visa restrictions manifest are states' unflinching willingness to regulate, monitor and surveillance entrance to their territory in a global world. (Neumayer, 2006).

The modern thinking about nationality is bound by three main purposeful mythologies which includes firstly all nationalities are equal, secondly there is a direct linkage between the power and size of the economy of a country and the quality of its nationality, and lastly there is a linkage between the geographical scope of the rights granted by a nationality and the territory of the conferring state. (Kochenov & Lindeboom, 2017). It is evident that strong market with effective demand, the effects of a change to visa-free entry could be greater than 20 percent. moreover, due to different reasons whether as individual, national, or as external can modulate each context. (Lee, Song, & Bendle, 2010).

There are many ways that countries attempt to increase their ranking power, some of country state uses citizenship by investment programs because it enables individuals to naturalize and acquire full legal citizenship status by making an exceptional economic contribution to another country. currently only seven countries that offer citizenship-by-investment programs that provide a direct route to citizenship based on investment and which have passed Henley & Partners' country due diligence: Austria, Antigua and Barbuda, Cyprus, Grenada, Malta, St. Kitts and Nevis, and St. Lucia. <http://visaindex.com>, Citizenship by investment policies constitute to institutional corruption due to fact that these policies threaten to destroy the value of national citizenship and disintegrate public trust in citizenship. (Laura, 2013).

Many countries advise their citizens to not travel to some other countries due to many reasons especially the security reasons (security alerts) through its foreign affairs ministries, embassies, consulates, and

bureau of foreign relations. The U.S government publishes continuously security alerts to its citizens through U.S department of state, bureau of consular affairs, as an example on October 18, 2018, U.S department of state published on its official site, international travel section, country information sub-section (Iraq) this statement "Do not travel to Iraq due to terrorism and armed conflict", which regarded as the third level of security alert (danger) with red color. Due to such the above statements, announcements and publications, the ranking power of the host countries can be affected because of the possibilities of prohibition of entry to these countries.

Kurdistan region currently is still considered as part of the republic of Iraqi, Kurdistan region government KRG is part of Iraq federal parliamentary republic government. Iraqi passport was ranked in the second least powerful passport ranked by passport index with 26 visa free score in the 93<sup>rd</sup> rank out of 94<sup>th</sup> (only Pakistan and Afghanistan are below Iraqi passport). One of the newest and powerful activities by the French consul general in Erbil was when it announced on Tuesday 25 July 2017 that the consulate is currently partnering with a VFS Global in Erbil to expedite and ease the process for issuing visas to the people of the Kurdistan Region. ([www.Kurdistan24.net](http://www.Kurdistan24.net)).

The methodology used by the Passport Index is gathered based on some criteria as follows: <https://www.passportindex.org/about.php>

- Passports of 193 United Nations member countries and six territories (the Vatican, Kosovo, Taiwan, Macao, Palestinian Territory and Hong Kong,) for a total of 199 are considered.
- The gathered data are depending on official information provided by government institutions and agencies, in addition to the proprietary study from publicly available sources.
- Some territories annexed to other countries are excluded and not considered as destinations because they do not issue their own passports (Norfolk Island (Australia), French Polynesia (France), British Virgin Islands (Britain).

The Passport Index utilized a three-level method to highlight the individual rank of each passport as follows:

- Visa-Free Score (VFS) –which involves both [visa on arrival \(VOA\)](#) and visa-free (VF).
- visa on arrival portion of their score vs visa-free
- the human development index (HDI) published by United Nations development program (UNDP) is utilized as a tie breaker. The UNDP HDI is a regarded as one of the important measures on the country perception abroad.

Currently, the Passport Index is regarded as the world ultimate authority on passport ranking, which governments from around the world are using more and more to oversee its global ranking and then attempt to increase the power of their passports, thus the Passport Index became one the most recognized and trusted service if not the only one, due to its over 12 million users and increasing.

According to Added (2016) one of the critical reasons of the worst ranking of countries such Iraq is that these numbers reflect the countries' [diplomatic relationships](#). Also, Iraq regarded as the 3<sup>rd</sup> least peaceful countries according to the global peace index GPI. According to visa restrictions index in 2012 published by The Henley & Partners, the Iraqi passport ranked 109<sup>th</sup> out of 110 ranks with only 30 score which is regarded as the second least rank out of 199 nationalities.

To confirm that Iraqi passport is in the bottom line of the global ranking of country's passport power, Iraqi passport ranked in the 2<sup>nd</sup>

least passport according to the Nomad Passport Index in 2021 when ranked in 198<sup>th</sup> out 199 (with only 23 points) countries and territories in the world based on five factors: [www.nomadcapitalist.com](http://www.nomadcapitalist.com)

1. 50% of the ranking is based on visa-free travel
2. 20% of the ranking is based on country's taxation policy
3. 10% of the ranking is dependent on overall country's freedom
4. 10% of the ranking is dependent on country's perception
5. And 10% of the ranking is depends on dual citizenship

The value for each criterion is given the indicated weighting to achieve a country's total for each country's value in each category score using the formula as:

Passport Index = (0.50 \* Visa Free Travel) + (0.20 \* Taxation) + (0.10 \* Perception) + (0.10 \* Dual citizenship) + (0.10 \* Overall Freedom)).

Many factors affect one's passport power but trade and diplomatic relationship between one country with other countries are regarded as the most important ones. In addition to the above, cultural openness, GDP per capita, primary languages, or any ongoing civil or international wars or conflicts (<https://artoftravel.tips/passport-power-calculator>)

The power of the passport in practice it depends on the economic well-being of a typical citizen, also when two countries have reasonable amounts of travel and trade between themselves that makes it worth the time and effort to carry out negotiations and pass a treaty to make travel and trade easier such as between Iraq & Turkey, the online applications for Turkish visa were opened to the Iraqi citizens in early 2014 because of the numerous amount of the trade and investment between the two countries achieved since 2010.

According to <http://gulfbusiness.com> the diplomatic treaties, relations and lobbies, trade links, economic and political stability, and restricted visa requirements. The European commission recently announce that wall street journal that it will not impose visas on American travelers after the US excluded five EU countries from its no-visa list ([www.businessinsider.com](http://www.businessinsider.com))

## 2. Literature Review

Balli, Balli and Cebeci (2013) investigated the major determinants of the recent boost in number of tourists, excursionist, travelers and crew members inflows to Turkey, their study concentrated on the indirect marketing effect of the Turkish soap operas exported abroad and recent changes in the Turkish government's foreign policies. The results indicate that one of the main factors increasing the exporting products is the Turkish government's recent bilateral agreements with other countries to waive the visa requirements for ordinary foreign tourists, in addition the termination of visa requirements has boosted the traveler's flows from those countries to Turkey.

Karaman (2016) study aimed to make analysis of Turkey's tourism market demand relating inbound travel to visa requirements, macroeconomic variables, distance and regional contiguity, and industrial regulations. The countries are divided into clusters according to travel freedom their citizens enjoy using the Henley & Partners Visa Restrictions Index by employing the two-step cluster analysis. The results indicate that the visa restrictions imposed on a country has a detrimental impact of 29 percent on average on inward mobility and this impact is on the top side for countries with almost visa-free travel.

Visa requirements and instructions have been important tool of control for the movement of individual and what they effectuate depends on their character. They impede the flow of individuals when they are restrictive; they facilitate the entry and admission of people when they are liberal. Turkey focused so much in stimulating the tourism sector growth by using visa policies liberally. (Karaman,

2016)

One of the pioneer attempts to generate awareness about the potential detrimental influence of visa restrictions on a country's economy, through utilizing the case of People's Republic of China, that is well known country to have a history of strict visa regulations. Results from (Song, Gartner, & Tasci, 2012) study indicate that there is a negative influence of visa regulations on both prefecture-level economies and country-level.

Even though that the strict visa regulations are considered as one of the popular phenomena in the world, the tourism academia have yet to argue against strict visa regulations through providing empirical evidence on their potential impact on tourism market demand, and hence the economy. According to Song, Gartner, and Tasci (2012) study the economic security is regarded as one of the most valid reasons for imposing strict visa regulations.

Hanqin and Lam (1999) recommended that the case of China and Hong Kong should be studied by other countries; China has become one of the most critical markets for the Hong Kong hospitality industry. The results of their study indicate that the importance of push and pull factors in motivating Chinese tourists can be vary from that found in other studies. Also, they analyzed that there is a significant linkage between travel and visit motivations and social cultural and demographic factors.

Although visa-free entry is regarded one of the most important variables to tourism flows across borders, but there has been limited academic research into the effects of this arrangement on international tourism market demand. (Lee, Song, & Bendle, 2010) investigate the impact of visa-free entry on tourism demand between Japan and South Korea, and then they estimated the effect of this visa-free travel on tourism numbers and receipts. The results concluded that for Koreans visiting Japan, introducing visa-free travel was statistically significant with a positive sign. The tourist revenue also increased in rapidly especially in the first two years.

In line with the European neighborhood policy and the Eastern partnership, the European Union's depend so much on policy conditionality as it ties the benefits of visa-free travel to the adoption of specific policies by neighboring countries to better manage and organize and manage movement of tourists and migration. Ademmer and Delcour (2016) examined what effect the historically grown relations and current foreign policy actions exert on compliance with European Union's requirements for visa liberalization three countries (Armenia, Georgia, and Moldova). In all 3 countries, patterns of change have been identified over years and show them according to the interplay of partner countries' political preferences with European Union's policy conditionality and incentives by Russia. (Ademmer & Delcour, 2016).

Skeete and Skeete (2017) attempted to answer why some countries have more tourist visa-free access than others. Their results proved that if the public policies focused on improving governance and economic growth, enhancing the financial sector, then it will promote global economic welfare, which can eradicate poverty and trigger economic recovery. In addition, the results also inform theory in entailment an adequate framework for visa strategic analysis in the future.

Cyprus, Barbuda and Antigua are a group of countries and territories that provide naturalized citizenship to foreigners on the basis of significant investment in their respective economy, their action activated as of mid-2013. Granting citizenship by investment may appeal to policymaker, particularly in states experiencing financial turmoil, as a tool to attract foreign investment. The critiques to citizenship by investment policies has been explained in many research papers such as (Laura, 2013) through the prism of organizational corruption, adopting and applying institutional corruption concepts evolved in other fields to this new field of analysis.

Lawson and Roychoudhur (2016) used the travel flow data which they extracted from the World Bank and the UN's World Tourism Organization. They examine the deterrent influence of travel visa requirements on tourist flows. The results indicate that if the travel visa requirements are severe it well led to a 30 % decrease in internal travel. While, at the bilateral level, having a travel visa requirement on a particular country is related with a 70 % decrease in internal travel from that state. The acquires related with eliminating travel visas appear to be very huge.

Kochenov and Lindeboom (2017) attempted to develop and implement a reliable and straightforward methodology to measure subjectively the objective and value of having a particular nationality (that would not be perception-based) named as the Quality of Nationality Index (QNI).

One of the most important factors that affect the passport ranking is the availability of labor visa; such as the large-scale emigration of limited-time contract workers and employees from Kerala (a district from India with population of more than 35 million) to countries in the Middle East began in the early 1970s. (Nair, 1999).

Countries that Iraqi citizens can visit without prior visa ranged between visa on arrival for 7 days and extension up to 90 days are (British Virgin Islands, [Cambodia](#), [Cook Islands](#), [Comoros](#), [Dominica](#), [Cape Verde](#), [Cambodia](#), [Ecuador](#), [Haiti](#), [Laos](#), [Lebanon](#), [Grenada](#), [Maldives](#), [Niue](#), [Jordan](#), [Malaysia](#), [Madagascar](#), [Mauritania](#), [Micronesia](#), [Ecuador](#), [Mozambique](#), [Palau](#), [Samoa](#), [Tanzania](#), [Timor-Leste](#), [Tuvalu](#), [Togo](#), [Yemen](#), [Seychelles](#), [Uganda](#), [Antigua and Barbuda](#), [Gabon](#), [Zambia](#), [Saint Kitts and Nevis](#), [Sri Lanka](#), [Zimbabwe](#)). <https://travelfreedom.io/passport/iraqi/>

While Kuwait denies the entrance for Iraqi citizen due to the difficult security conditions and can be issued conditional visa for few cases related to officials in the Iraqi Government or prior to official invitation by the Kuwaiti officials. Currently Libya does not issue the tourist visa for Iraqis. While Armenia gives visa only with the formal invitation at diplomatic representations or consular posts of Armenia abroad, or for tourist groups only. Among the biggest climbers between the period of 2010-2020 2018 were United Arab Emirates, Ukraine, Colombia, and Taiwan (Chinese Taipei) as shown in the table (1).

The world's least powerful passports in second quarter of 2020 are shown in table (2) which clearly ranks Iraqi's passport at the bottom of the ranking with only 28 visas free, thus it is clearly identify the major problem with the current Iraqi passport (that is implemented on all Kurdistan region's citizens).

According to the chairman of Henley and Partners (Kälin), several major events recently happened are likely to have an impact on global mobility such as exiting of Britain from European union (Brexit) and wining of Donald Trump in the election of US, thus there is possibility of taking steps toward restricting movement and creating barriers to entry. (Smith, 2018).

According to Salter (2003), the discussion of international law concentrates on three aspects of international development:

1. The rights of individuals to leave and reenter their country and to have a nationality.
2. The sovereign right to refuse or to determine conditions of legitimates entry.
3. The sovereign obligation to protect and / or accept refugees.

Passports directly reflect the continuing dominance of the sovereign state in world politics. Additionally, passports could show as part of the larger discussion of sovereign statehood and lifeworld of

international affairs that the state engenders. (Salter, 2003).

Even though that the visa requirements will not restricting the unwanted movements, the international passport to which we have used since the first World War is a regarded as evidence of considerable ambiguity. Even though that passport is regarded as a documentary expression of modern states' efforts to monopolize the "legitimate means of movement", the passport still concentrates the enormous increase in modern states' control over individual existence that has evolved since the nineteenth century. (Caplan & Tropey, 2001)

Liu (2012) proposed a new concept known as selective citizenship that show migrants negotiate complex citizenship requirements and need to choose nationality based on ranking the states internationally and on individual needs. Thus, migrants select or change nationality as a way for adaption to local conditions and assert their own identity and autonomy. Xenophobia is one of the new terms that emerge in the beginning of the twenty-first century on a worldwide scale. Xenophobic discusses a lack of an ideal designation referring to policies and procedures of discrimination based on an individual's citizenship – that is, passport – offering the term passportism as a viable solution. (Jovanović, 2017).

#### 4. History of ranking and Countries' plans to enhance its passport ranking

Even though the European countries historically dominated the global passport ranking with majority of the 20<sup>th</sup> first ranks controlled by the countries from European union, with Germany at the top, but Asian countries overlapped the first ranks in 2017 when Singapore took the lead as the first Asian country ever to top the world's most powerful passports. By December 2017, while South Korea took the second rank and Japan's passport power increased to catch up the fourth rank in a historical development.

Out of the Arabic countries, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) took the first rank in the Arab world and 22<sup>nd</sup> globally by 2017, this advancement comes because of the efforts exerted by the UAE diplomacy to establish political, environmental economic, commercial, cultural, technological, scientific, and educational, in addition health relations and partnerships that contribute to enhancing the status of the State at the global level. The authority makers and leaders in United Arab Emirates are planning to move up more in the global ranking due to many plans and initiatives envisioned in their policy and mindset, such as the UAE Passport Force initiative which recently launched by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MoFAIC), with the view to place the State's passport on the list of the five most critical passports in the world by 2021. [www.mofa.gov.ae](http://www.mofa.gov.ae)

By 28<sup>th</sup> of February 2018, The United Arab Emirates pursuit to be a leading example of travel freedom in the Middle East, thus continuously climbing 34 positions on the Henley Passport Index over the last decade, in addition UAE passport power climbed up 11 positions in the past two year alone. It now provides its citizens with visa-free access to 140 destinations worldwide. One of the main reasons of this advancement of the UAE passport power ranking came after gaining entry to China and Ireland earlier year 2018 and climbed to 27<sup>th</sup> place on the index. Additionally, the UAE authorities continuously signing agreements with other countries to remove visa restrictions, one of the latest agreements is signed a visa-waiver agreement with Burkina Faso, set to come into effect in the coming months. Between 1999 and 2018 only, visa restrictions on Emirati citizens have been lifted by 45 different countries, while by January 2021, UAE passport ranked 14<sup>th</sup> on global scale. [www.henleyglobal.com](http://www.henleyglobal.com)

#### 5. Methodology

This research follows the recommendation of (Lee, Song, & Bendle, 2010) research which illustrated the influence of visa controls on various aspects passport ranking, tourist, and economy of the country.

The current study regarded as the first academic attempt to answer a very critical question from various point of views such as academicians, policy makers, political experts, and individuals specialized in international law, economic, and private sector. "will the power of the Kurdistan state passport in the future exceed the current Iraqi passport power?". currently there are over 31 foreign consulate and representative offices in Kurdistan Region-Iraq and thousands of foreign companies, trade offices and company branches working in the Kurdistan region.

The qualitative approach is utilized for this study; therefore, a structured questionnaire is conducted for this purpose, and distribute to foreign academician who works in Kurdistan academic institutions, universities and who visited the region for academic purpose. 115 questionnaires have been distributed online through the Google documents (Google Form), only 85 responded accurately from different nationalities as illustrated in tables 4-6.

##### 5.1. Research Problem

Due to fact that the Iraqi passport is always considered as the second or third worst passport among all countries and territories passports in all times especially in the last three decades, and continue to be tanked in the bottom of the international passport ranking by many institutions and organizations, by January 2021 Iraq still ranked in the bottom with only two free visa access and 27 countries that gives visa to Iraq citizens by arrival, and all other 168 countries and territories continue to hold the restrictions to Iraq passport. And due to the inevitable reality of splitting Iraq into at least two new courtiers by converting the current Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and building it as new country (State) under the same (Kurdistan State).

Additionally, Iraqi passport ranked in very bad level in the welcoming country's criteria according to passport index 2021, when ranked in the bottom three level out of 198 countries and territories with only one score. <https://www.passportindex.org>

Kurdistan region currently implement a semi-visa restriction regulation to the Iraqi citizens from other Iraqi governorates (Baghdad, Mosul, Babil, Basra, Kirkuk, Maysan, Najaf, Mutahna, Saladin, Nineveh, Diyala, Alqadisyah, Dhi Qar, Al Anbar, and Wasit) coming to Kurdistan region's four governorates (Erbil, Duhok, Sulaymaniah and Halabja). The national security agency of Kurdistan region applies strict regulation on the entry of other Iraqi citizens who are not living in cities of Kurdistan region since 1992, and it became stricter after the ISIS war in August 2014. It can be said that currently Kurdistan region have a sovereign state level of independency thought its self-governance (autonomous) since 1992 from Iraq, thus it accumulated nearly thirty years of experience in self-governing in all aspects of a modern independent and sovereign state or country but still under umbrella of Iraqi citizens.

It has been said that the current Kurdistan region of Iraq is considered as independent country without passport, and official recognition of the international community due to the eligibility of all conditions and requirements of becoming an independent country in one of the most geographically, politically, economically, and strategically significant areas in the world.

Just being a citizen living in one of the current Kurdistan region's cities, it will affect on easing the visa restriction by many countries'

embassy, general consulates, representative offices such as (Egypt, United Arab of Emirates, Lebanon, Iran, Turkey, and few of European union countries). This fact by itself gives us a glimpse about the acceptance and acknowledge given by other nations to the citizens living in Kurdistan region of Iraq.

## 5.2. Research Objective

The current research seeks to achieve three main objectives; firstly, to predict the potential passport ranking of the futuristic Kurdistan state among the 200 countries and territories. Secondly to examine why it will take that rank (what are the main reasons) and lastly to identify the differences of respondent's view of point from different countries and territories about the passport ranking of the futuristic Kurdistan.

## 5.3. Research Significance

- 5.3.1.** Regarded as the first attempt to predict the power of the future passport of Kurdistan State as research article.
- 5.3.2.** Combine more than one scientific discipline (Economy, Politics, Public Management, Private Sector and more).
- 5.3.3.** Gather insights about how others are evaluating and ranking Kurdistan's Region as an independent country with its own passport, and visa restrictions.
- 5.3.4.** Identifying the determinants of strengthening the passport's power ranking of a country or territory.
- 5.3.5.** Identifying the most influential factors that effects on applying a striker visa regulation.

## 5.4. Research Limitations and Scope

Emails of the respondents have been collected through public relations in universities (especially Nawroz University and University of Duhok), without any official support from the foreign affairs agency even we asked officially from them and two visits and interview with agency's administrative manager and vice director. Therefore, one of the limitations was collection the emails of the foreign academicians, experts in politics, politics researchers.

## 6. Results:

### 6.1. Validity and Reliability:

#### 6.1.1. Face Validity:

The questionnaire was sent to a group of experts in university of Duhok to evaluate the various dimensions of the constructed questionnaire, after their adjustments and alterations, the final questionnaire sends to the academicians who are working in Kurdistan region educational and research institutions,

#### 6.1.2. Neutrality test:

The researchers gave sufficient time and complete freedom to the respondents to not influence them, and thus for them to express their opinions to achieve neutrality and scientific objectivity therein.

#### 6.1.3. Internal consistency (Content Validation):

In order to verify the validity of the content, an internal consistency test was performed between the questions of each dimension.

#### 6.1.4. Reliability

Stability on the accuracy scale is defined as the ability of the instrument to give the same results if the same measurement is repeated several times in the same conditions (Carmines & Zeller, 1991). There are a few statistical methods to measure stability and the most common

method of measuring stability is the method Alpha Cronbach, which relies on internal consistency and gives an idea of the consistency of questions with each other and with all questions in general. According to Sekeran and Bougie (2010) the acceptable reliability (the measurement of accuracy) in the way of way AlphaCronbach in business management discipline research is more than 60%. In the current study it was found that the results of the stability measure were 0.76 for the twenty questions, thus it is accepted.

## 6.2. Descriptive Statistics

Most of the respondents were male (65 respondents with 77%) and rest were female (20 respondents with 23%), while most of the respondents aged with more than 35 years old (94% of the respondents), and only 4% of the respondents were aged between 25 years and 35 years old, while only one respondent was with age less than 25 years old.

In term of respondents' experience in diplomatic jobs, about forty percent of them had experience in the related field of diplomatic for more than ten years, thus indicate that they have accumulated information about the political and diplomatically situation around the globe in general and in Iraq due to their presence and current working inside Iraqi territories. While, about twenty percent of the respondents had the experience in the political and diplomatic area of work between five years and ten years. And about twenty five percent of the respondents had the experience in the political and diplomatic area of work less than five years.

Table (3) show that biggest portion of sample was who has more than 10 years in diplomatic job, and this will be more confidence to depend on it in forecasting results. Table (5) illustrates the respondent answers to the most important question which will determine the main aspect of the research. And from a view to the table, we can see that there is an optimistic view to Kurdistan state ranking for its passport, it was 58.8 % representing 50 individuals of the chosen sample. In terms of the one-sample T test, in all five sections of the questionnaire, and in all its twenty subsections, it was statistically significant with degree of freedom of 84 at level of 0.05.

### 6.2.1. Diplomatic Treaties and Political Relations

The descriptive statistics illustrates that a good mutual diplomatic treaty has positive impact on visa-free for each passport with mean of 2.55 and Std. Deviation 0.60. the respondents agreed that friendly political relations between Kurdistan Region and foreign countries/territories will decrease the visa restrictions with mean of 2.68 and Std. Deviation of 0.52, also the majority of the respondents agreed that opening embassies, general consulates, or representative offices can simplify the procedures in giving the visa to the citizens of Kurdistan with mean of 2.70 and Std. Deviation of 0.52, the respondents also agreed to that the political stability and democratic political system affect positively in increasing the country's/ territory's passport power with mean of 2.80 and Std. Deviation of 0.55.

### 6.2.2. Trade and Business links

The descriptive statistics shows that easy doing business by foreigners can have impact on getting visa for Kurdistan's citizens with mean of 2.70 and Std. Deviation of 0.48, the majority of the respondents agreed to that the strategic geographic position of Kurdistan will improve the trade with other countries which leads to initiate mutual trust between the investors and traders with mean of 2.86 and Std. Deviation of 0.47, due to the unprecedented number of business opportunities in Kurdistan region will have its effects in

decreasing the procedures of attaining the visa by Kurdistan's citizens with mean of 2.88 and Std. Deviation of 0.42, additionally the opinions of the respondents came to gather regarding the geographic position of two international airports (Erbil and Sulaimaniah) will have a major role in the international flights especially the transits thus it reduces the restrictions of travel for Kurdistan's citizens with mean of 2.85 and Std. Deviation of 0.48.

### 6.2.3. Security Stability

While for security stability, it is shown from the descriptive statistics that majority of the respondents believes that the current Peshmerga's role in fighting ISIS and other terrorist's organization will affect positively the Kurdistan's passport ranking in the future with mean of 2.82 and Std. Deviation of 0.54, in addition majority of the respondents agreed to an opinion that the Peace index (Global Prosperity Index) will be in favor of Kurdistan especially after the Peshmerga and KRG Alliances defeated the terrorists and ISIS with mean of 2.87 and Std. Deviation of 0.46, while the respondents' opinions came together regarding possible effect of the political-economic stability on the security stability of Kurdistan in the future with mean of 2.87 and Std. Deviation of 0.40. In terms of the sustainable security and safety, respondents said that it will provide a perfect condition for more investment especially by Kurdish alliances with mean of 2.68 and Std. Deviation of 0.71.

### 6.2.4. Economic and Financial Stability

The descriptive statistics shows that respondents came across a unified opinion that enormous quantity of reserved crude oil and gas in Kurdistan region will have its influence in traveling with visa free to countries that have economic interests in the future independent Kurdistan with mean of 2.63 and Std. Deviation of 0.74, also respondents have almost the same opinion regarding that Kurdistan can be a self-dependent country with its massive natural resources quantity thus it will improve its economic stability with mean of 2.74 and Std. Deviation of 0.62, while they believe that the financial sector in Kurdistan is still improving thus it will gain a positive trust from the international monetary organizations like World bank, IMF etc. with mean of 2.72 and Std. Deviation of 0.61, and finally the respondents have almost the exact opinions concerning the positive ranking of the of Kurdistan for doing business in the future which will increase its economic stability with mean of 2.68 and Std. Deviation of 0.71.

### 6.2.5. Freedom

In terms of the political freedom, the descriptive statistics shows that respondents have the same ideas regarding the possible positive affect on the visa free scores due to the cultural, religion and ethnic mosaic in Kurdistan region with mean of 2.81 and Std. Deviation of 0.52, also they have relatively the same opinions regarding the economic freedom in Kurdistan in the future (Heritage Foundation index of economic freedom) in the future in Kurdistan will be positive thus attract more foreign cash inflows into Kurdistan with mean of 2.72 and Std. Deviation of 0.67, while their opinions came across the same think regarding the prosperity index (Legatum Prosperity Index) will be in favor of Kurdistan especially after the economic booming between 2007-2013 with mean of 2.76 and Std. Deviation of 0.63, and finally the respondents agreed to an idea that Kurdistan will have a good position in the Corruption perception index (transparency international) thus it will decrease the restrictions of giving the visa to Kurdistan's citizens with mean of 2.84 and Std. Deviation of 0.55.

In terms of correlations between the perception of the future Kurdistan State passport and respondents' age and years of diplomatic experience, the multivariate analysis didn't indicate any correlation

between them because it was not significant statistically within 0.05.

Table (6) Clearly explains the predictions of the respondents and their nationality, which elaborate that 8 out of 85 with 9.4% of the respondents ranked the future Kurdistan state passport within the worst 10 passports out of 200 countries and territories, while 14 out of 85 respondents with 16.5% thought that the power of the future Kurdistan state passport will be among the worst 25 globally.

Meanwhile, 50 respondents out of 85 with 59% they ranked the power of the future Kurdistan state passport with best 75 passport among 200 passports which considered a very positive opinion, and 13 respondents feel that the Kurdistan state passport in the future will be good and within best 125 passports around the globe.

Table (7) illustrates the gender of the respondents and their predictions, which indicates that 20 out of 85 respondents were female with 24% and 65 males out of 85 were with 76%. Out of 20 females only 3 gave a low ranking for the Kurdistan state passport, while on the other hand 46 of male respondents answered with good ranking.

## 7. Conclusions, Recommendation, and Future Research Ideas

The results indicate that there is a high potential of getting Kurdistan region in the future a very good passport ranking when it separates from Iraq and becomes an independent state. The economic stability, numerous quantity of natural resources especially crude oil and natural gas, political stability, security stability, distinguish (language, history, culture, and living style), tourism sector capabilities and destinations, easy going political ties, good diplomatic relationship with all powerful countries, neighbors, and the latest defending and global role of Peshmerga in defeating the ISIS with support of the coalitions forces.

Due to the excellent political and diplomatic relationship with other countries, many times ministers (especially foreign affairs and defense ministers) from powerful countries such as Germany, Holland, Great Britain Countries, Russia and the United States of America, visited Kurdistan region directly without visiting the capital of Iraq (Baghdad) through Erbil international airport (Capital of Kurdistan Region) and more specifically when ISIS war started.

Almost all the respondents agreed that the future Kurdistan state passport will have much better ranking than current Iraq's passport and most of them predict that the rank will be in good situation, as more than 74 percentage of the respondents express the same opinion (predicted to be one of the best 125 or 75 passports) among 200.

This study recommends the general agency of foreign affairs which represent the foreign affairs ministry in Kurdistan region to use its good relationships with foreign general consulates and representative offices to create and establish a powerful international political lobby in order to proceed the independency position with the international community, also use its natural resources and potential economic booming as a collateral for the eligibility of the becoming a self-dependent country.

This study recommends authors to investigate in depth each variable that may influence on strengthening the prediction of the future passport ranking, and it explore its determinants using official support from the general agency of the foreign affairs in Erbil city.

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Table (1)  
Passport of biggest climbers over ten years (between 2010 and 2020)

Country	2010 ranking	2020 ranking
United Arab Emirates	65	18
Ukraine	65	44
Colombia	73	45
Taiwan (Chinese Taipei)	69	33

Source: The Henley Passport Index Q2 Update April 2020.  
[www.henleypassportindex.com](http://www.henleypassportindex.com)

Table (2)  
The world's least powerful passports in Second quarter of 2020

Territory	Countries that can be visited visa-free
Afghanistan	27
Iraq	28
Syria	32
Somalia	32
Pakistan	33
Yemen	37
Palestinian Territories	39

Source: The Henley Passport Index Q2 Update April 2020.  
[www.henleypassportindex.com](http://www.henleypassportindex.com)

Table (3)  
Years of experience in Diplomatic Job

Years of experience in Diplomatic Job	Frequency	Percent
Less than 5 years	25	29.4
Between 5 and 10 years	20	23.5
More than 10 years	40	47.1
Total	85	100.0

Source: Results of the distributed questionnaire

Table (4)  
Nationality of the Respondents

Nationality of the Respondents	Frequency	Percent
Turkish	11	12.9
British	15	17.6
Americans	4	4.7
Polish	3	3.5
Indian	5	5.9
Russian	2	2.4
Italian	4	4.7
Korean	4	4.7
Norwegian	5	5.9
Arab Countries	14	16.5
German	11	12.9
French	1	1.2
Spanish	3	3.5
Chinese	3	3.5
Total	85	100.0

Source: Results of the distributed questionnaire

Table (5)  
Kurdistan State Ranking Predictions

Kurdistan State Ranking Predictions	Frequency	Percent
Among best 125 first Passports	13	15.3
Among best 75 first Passports	50	58.8
Among Worst 25 Passports	14	16.5
Among Worst 10 Passports	8	9.4
Total	85	100.0

Source: Results of the distributed questionnaire



Table (6)  
Nationality of the Respondents and their Predictions

Nationality of the Respondents	Prediction				Total
	Best125	Best75	Worst25	Worst10	
Turkish	3	5	3	0	11
British	1	7	3	4	15
Americans	0	4	0	0	4
Polish	1	2	0	0	3
Indian	1	2	1	1	5
Russian	0	1	0	1	2
Italian	0	4	0	0	4
Korean	2	2	0	0	4
Norwegian	2	2	0	1	5
Arab Countries	1	10	2	1	14
German	2	6	3	0	11
French	0	0	1	0	1
Spanish	0	2	1	0	3
Chinese	0	3	0	0	3
Total	13	50	14	8	85

Source: Results of the distributed questionnaire

Table (7)  
Gender of the Respondents and their Predictions

Gender of the respondents	Prediction				Total
	Best125	Best75	Worst25	Worst10	
Female	3	14	2	1	20
Male	10	36	12	7	65
Total	13	50	14	8	85

Source: Results of the distributed questionnaire