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## The Role of Geographical Conditions and International Relations on the Political Stability in Kurdish Region: The Moderating Role of Economic Stability

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### **Abstract**

*Political stability is the most important aspect for a country's development, and this can be attained through stronger economic conditions and improved connections with other nations. This aspect requires the focus of new research. Consequently, this study explores the connections between Kurdish geographical conditions, foreign interactions, and political stability. The study investigates the moderating effect of economic stability on Kurdish geographical conditions, foreign relations, and political stability. Using questionnaires, the research collected information from the Kurdish department of international relations. The relationship between the constructs is also examined using smart-PLS. The results revealed a beneficial relationship between Kurdish geographical conditions and foreign relations and its economic and political stability. The results also revealed that Kurdish economic stability is moderated greatly by geographical factors, foreign ties, and political stability. The research aids regulators in the development of rules pertaining to political stability, which would be attained through optimal geographical conditions and robust international ties.*

**Keywords:** *Geographical conditions, international relations, economic stability, political stability, Kurdish region*

### **Introduction**

The ultimate goal of any nation is to improve its citizens' standard of living. Governments throughout the world do their utmost efforts to improve their economic conditions, not only to benefit their citizens but also to secure the future of future generations. The economic prosperity of a nation depends on a variety of elements, including its political and social conditions as well as its foreign contacts. The political stability of the country is a crucial aspect of the scenario (Blum & Gründler, 2020; Gründler, 2020). The political conditions of the country are the ultimate manifestation of the people's representation. Political stability affords the opportunity to expand the economy, hence facilitating business. This will further result in the improvement of its internal business relations (Sethi et al., 2020; Strachan, 2018). On the other hand, political instability has terrible repercussions. Political instability is a serious condition that hinders economic performance. Political upheaval will certainly shorten the time horizons of policymakers, resulting in less-than-ideal macroeconomic short-term policies. In addition, it may lead to more frequent policy adjustments, which would increase volatility and damage macroeconomic performance. Given its detrimental effects on economic growth, it is amazing how pervasive political instability is throughout nations and time. Political instability

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is evidenced by the regularity with which a new prime minister is appointed each year, as well as the fact that at least half of international cabinet positions are held by new ministers, demonstrating remarkable regional inequalities (Bowsby et al., 2020; Murad & Alshyab, 2019).

Iraq (i.e. Kurdistan) has been considered as one of the vital economy of the world due to its natural resources like Oil. Oil is the vital need of the world in numerous activities like for industry, for energy production, for tourism. The economies of Middle East regions like Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq i.e. Kurdish are considered as hub of the oil resources. This accelerate the importance of Iraq in the regions (Shlimon et al., 2020). After Saudi Arabia, Iraq (i.e. Kurdistan) is the second-largest producer of crude oil in OPEC. With 145 billion barrels, it has the fifth-largest proven crude oil reserves in the world, accounting for 17% of Middle Eastern reserves and 8% of worldwide reserves. From 2013 to 2019, Iraq's (i.e., the Kurdistan) crude oil output increased by 1.7 million barrels per day (b/d), reaching an all-time high of 4.7 million b/d in 2019 (Saleh, Hamad, & Hama, 2021). Iraq's (i.e., the Kurdistan) crude oil production decreased to less than 4.1 million b/d in 2020. In order to adhere to the OPEC+ agreement, Iraq (i.e., the Kurdistan Regional Government) voluntarily decreased its crude oil output in the second quarter of 2020. Because the OPEC+ members are reversing the significant production cuts made in 2020, Iraq's (i.e. Kurdistan) crude oil production rose to an average of nearly 4.4 million b/d in the first half of 2022. These production estimates include crude oil produced in the semi-autonomous northeast region in Iraq governed by the Kurdistan Regional Government (M. Simo et al., 2020). Iraq's (i.e. Kurdistan) oil income increased to more than \$75 billion in 2021 thanks to rising oil prices, up from \$42 billion in 2020. 6 Following the reversal of the OPEC+ agreement cutbacks, we anticipate that increasing crude oil production in Iraq and additional rises in oil prices in 2022 would greatly improve Iraq's (i.e. Kurdish) oil export income and somewhat offset the cost inflation of petroleum products and other goods and services (Hashim, 2019). Literature also posits that a country's political conditions are influenced by its geography, interactions with other nations, economy, and foreign involvement (Jenkins, 2022; Johnston, 2019). Keeping in mind the significance of the country's foreign relations and geographical conditions, this inquiry is currently underway.

Although there have been numerous unexpected changes in the domestic and international politics of developed and developing countries, the present study will address the following literature gaps: 1) although there have been numerous unexpected changes in the domestic and international politics of developed and developing countries. Political stability is essential for a nation's success. The prosperity is the driver of economic stability of a country, which in turn results in economic stability and an improvement in the standard of living of its people; therefore, the present investigation will focus on political stability to emphasize its significance; despite the fact that political stability has been studied from different perspectives and at different times, it has not yet reached its zenith as a number of its aspects remain unexplored. 3) The model, which includes geographical factors, international relations, economic stability, and political stability in Kurdistan, has not been tested in recent years. 4) Corovei and Socol (2019) studied whether political stability has any effect on economic growth, notably in the European Union. However, the present study will also focus on political stability, with the addition of economic stability as a moderating element, particularly in Kurdistan. 5) Rumelili (2020) concentrated on the theory of international relations, but the current study will focus on international relations as well as geographical conditions, economic stability, and political stability in Iraq i.e. Kurdistan by examining a new data sample. 6) Yue et al. (2020) studied on the geographical conditions of Kurdistan, whereas the current study will incorporate international relations and stability and political stability to their work. In addition,

Iraq i.e. Kurdish economic stability is introduced as a moderating component in a new data set. 7) Shwede et al. (2022) investigated the moderating role of economics, i.e. financial stability, in conjunction with SME innovation, whereas the current study will also use economic stability as a moderating variable in the relationship between geographic conditions, international relations, and political stability and test the model in Iraq i.e. Kurdistan using a new data sample. The importance of the political stability of Iraq i.e. Kurdistan in the context of its geographic conditions, international relations, and economic stability will be highlighted as a result of the significance of the world's political circumstances changing rapidly, which has increased the importance of the present investigation. The present investigation will also provide support to the governments of the countries with a view to reviewing and upgrading their own political stability strategies.

## **Literature Review**

The globe has evolved into a global village. This globalization has diminished the distinctions between nations. The countries are in close proximity to one another. Such a relationship ending leads in a number of positives and cons. One of the most significant advantages of globalization is the increase in business, human resources, and international trade (Ciorciari & Haacke, 2019). In the past, countries attempted to generate nearly all of their needs; today, countries have shifted their focus to their main natural resources. Additionally, the wealthier nations express their involvement in developing nations. The race among superpowers has also developed over time. The established nations have ensured their participation in the fundamental activities of developing nations, including commerce, politics, economy, and society (Destradi & Plagemann, 2019). The industrialized nations exert their utmost efforts to help the political parties of developing nations, which positively validates their argument. According to the literature, international relations influence the political conditions of nations. Wurm (1993) worked on business, politics, and international relations in this environment. The findings suggested that with the passage of time, the world's political dynamics have likewise evolved. Now, there are a variety of elements that influence the domestic politics of nations, with foreign relations being one of the most prominent. Globalization is also regarded to be a root cause of this process. Pittaway and Bartolomei (2023) explored the interaction between countries from a local and worldwide perspective. According to the findings of the inquiry, the relationship between the countries has altered their domestic politics. Now, while making domestic political decisions, nations strongly consider the support of their international partners. Typically, developing nations are dependent on industrialized nations in a variety of ways, such as receiving economic aid and other assistance. Bove, Rivera, and Ruffa (2020) worked on politics from a military and terrorism perspective. Terrorism is one of the most significant global issues. Terrorism has also played a role in the domestic politics of developing nations. This resulted in bringing the world closer together and increasing their relations in order to address this issue. Now, countries use their political processes to exert pressure on emerging nations in an effort to reduce this issue. One of the primary reasons to exert pressure on the political actors in developing nations is to eliminate terrorism's involvement in their political process. Frequently, countries share their resources and projects in an effort to develop their relations and mutually support one another. He (2019) worked on the belt and road program in this context. One of the most important projects between China and Pakistan. This project will not only deepen the relationship between the two countries, but will also benefit their economies. Through investments, this project will also benefit the other countries. This endeavor has also had an effect on the politics of both countries. Thus, the hypotheses drawn from the preceding discussion are as follows.

**H1:** *There is a significant association between international relations and political stability.*

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Numerous variables influence the success of both developed and developing nations, including their international relations, economic stability, and geographic conditions. Natural resources are regarded as one of the most important aspects for the country's future prosperity. The natural resources of the countries included resources that could be used immediately, such as rain, resources that could be used with some effort, such as air, i.e. energy generation from it, and the topographical characteristics of the country (Bireselioglu et al., 2019; Darkwa & Attuquayefio, 2020). As a result of their geographic characteristics, industrialized nations frequently focus on developing nations, hence the geographical situation of a country determines its significance. The geographical conditions of Middle Eastern nations, such as Iran and Iraq i.e. Kurdistan, are crucial for Pakistan and Afghanistan. Iraq is abundant in natural resources, such as oil. As it is bordered by Russia, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, the country's location confers greater significance. Oil is a necessity for humanity. Thus, the role of Iraq is considerably more significant for the politics of neighboring nations. Thus, there is a substantial relationship between geographical factors and political stability (Haseeb, Wattanapongphasuk, & Jermittiparsert, 2019; Hussain et al., 2020). In this context, Barfield (2010) examined the geographical conditions of Afghanistan and proposed that although Afghanistan is not a wealthy nation, its geographical conditions, such as its borders with Pakistan, China, Russia, and Iran, increase its significance and compel the countries falls in its region like Iran, Iraq i.e. Kurdistan regions, Pakistan to take it into account when revising their political decisions. Iraq i.e. Kurdistan regions is considered as one of the vital economy due to its oil resources. Its geographical characteristics are also a crucial component in this process. Its borders with Pakistan, Iran, and old Soviet Union economies strengthen its standing. Dreher et al. (2019) examined whether foreign countries participation in African countries through aid leads in a political shift. The research was conducted on the 47 African economies. The investigation sampled data from eleven years. The collected sample spans the years 2000 to 2011. According to the findings of the analysis, foreign countries participation in African countries as a donor influences their political decisions. Since the nation has a robust economy, it aids developing nations and thus influences them politically. Thus, the hypotheses drawn from the preceding discussion are as follows.

**H2:** *There is a significant association between geographical conditions and political stability.*

In order to improve the standard of living of a country's citizens, the economic prosperity of that country is crucial. In addition to political and social stability, other elements are connected with economic stability (Gupta & Kashiramka, 2020; Orazalin, Mahmood, & Narbaev, 2019). Political stability is the ultimate pillar of a nation's economic stability; only if a nation is politically stable can it foster a thriving economy through facilitating business. The country's high ranking for ease of doing business entices the international business community to invest there. This also results in improved international ties between nations. However, a politically stable nation might result in a stable economy (Feghali, Mora, & Nassif, 2021). Literature has often suggested that economic stability might serve as an important moderator. Karim et al. (2021) studied whether or not economic stability might operate as a moderator in this setting. The investigation took place in Pakistan. As a sample, the investigation used the 14-year data set. The collected data spans the years 2006 through 2020. The collected material was examined using the GMM technique. The analysis indicated that economic, or financial, stability moderates the relationship between sustainability and banking regulation, especially prior to and after the Covid epidemic. In a similar vein, Yang et al. (2020) examined whether economic, i.e. financial, stability can attenuate the relationship between income disparity and carbon emission. The research was conducted on 47 developing economies. The investigation utilized the 46-year data set as a sample. The collected information spans the years 1980 to 2016. The

collected material was analyzed utilizing the STIRPAT model. The analysis indicated that economic, i.e. financial, stability moderates the association between income disparity and carbon emission significantly. Thus, the hypotheses drawn from the preceding discussion are as follows.

**H3:** *Economic stability significantly moderates the association between international relations and political stability.*

Over the past few decades, the world has witnessed numerous environmental, socioeconomic, and political upheavals. In the past, both emerging and developed countries were ignorant of the global situation due to a lack of awareness. Globalization has brought nations closer together. Accessibility and comprehension of both developed and developing nations are a single click away (Dikau & Volz, 2021; Le, Chuc, & Taghizadeh-Hesary, 2019). Literature suggested that economic stability, or financial stability, played a considerable moderating role. Jungo, Madaleno, and Botelho (2022) examined if economic, i.e. financial stability, is a significant mediator of the relationship between financial rules, financial inclusions, and competitiveness. The analysis encompassed both SADC and SAARC economies. As a sample, the investigation used the 13-year data set. The collected information spans the years 2005 to 2018. The collected material was examined using the FGLS technique. Economic, or financial, stability moderates the relationship between financial laws, financial inclusions, and competitiveness, according to the investigation's findings. Rjoub et al. (2021) studied whether economic, or financial, stability is an important mediator of environmental degradation. In Turkey, the investigation was conducted. The investigation utilized the 56-year data set as a sample. The collected information spans the years 1960 to 2016. The collected material was analyzed using FMOLS and other techniques. The analysis indicated that economic, i.e. financial, stability functions as a substantial modulator of environmental degradations. Thus, the hypotheses drawn from the preceding discussion are as follows.

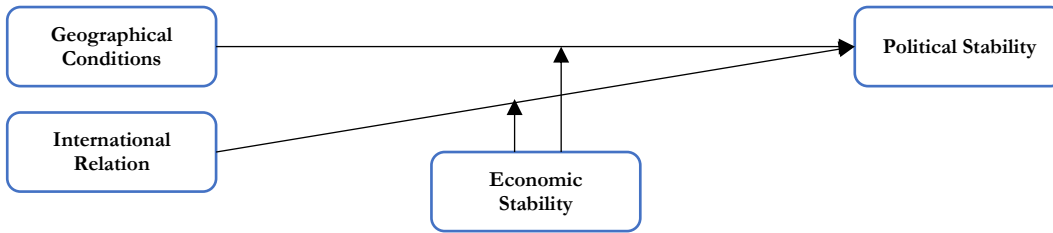
**H4:** *Economic stability significantly moderates the association between geographical conditions and political stability.*

## **Research Methods**

This study studies the linkages between geographical conditions, foreign relations, and political stability in Kurdistan, as well as the moderating effect of economic stability on these interactions. Using questionnaires, the research collected information from the Kurdistan department of international relations. These items are drawn from previous research and are used to measure the structures. The geographical conditions have ten items extracted from Fischer and Schär (2010), the international relations have eight items extracted from Krook and True (2012), the economic stability has eight items extracted from Di Crosta et al. (2020), and the political stability has seven items extracted from Eid, El-Kassrawy, and Agag (2019).

The relationship between the constructs is also examined using smart-PLS. This program offers the most accurate results for both large and small data sets (Hair et al., 2017). Additionally, this tool efficiently manages complex frameworks (Ringle, Da Silva, & Bido, 2015). In addition, the researchers employed two predictors, geographical conditions (GCN) and international relations (INR). Finally, the researchers employed a moderating construct referred to as economic stability (ECS) and a predictive construct referred to as political stability (PLS). These structures are shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1:** Theoretical model



### Research Findings

The study examines the association between items, often known as convergent validity. Alpha was greater than 0.70, factor loadings were greater than 0.50, composite reliability (CR) was also greater than 0.70, and the average variance extracted (AVE) was also greater than 0.50. These values suggested a strong relationship between elements. Table 1 displays these results.

**Table 1:** Convergent validity

Constructs	Items	Loadings	Alpha	CR	AVE
Economic Stability	ECS1	0.828	0.924	0.939	0.659
	ECS2	0.583			
	ECS3	0.860			
	ECS4	0.818			
	ECS5	0.861			
	ECS6	0.863			
	ECS7	0.862			
	ECS8	0.782			
Geographical Conditions	GCN1	0.847	0.946	0.953	0.672
	GCN10	0.813			
	GCN2	0.802			
	GCN3	0.832			
	GCN4	0.853			
	GCN5	0.810			
	GCN6	0.834			
	GCN7	0.787			
	GCN8	0.756			
GCN9	0.856				
International Relation	INR1	0.901	0.974	0.979	0.868
	INR2	0.941			
	INR3	0.950			
	INR4	0.934			
	INR5	0.906			
	INR6	0.953			
	INR8	0.933			
	INR9	0.933			
Political Stability	PLS1	0.762	0.916	0.933	0.666
	PLS2	0.828			
	PLS3	0.798			
	PLS4	0.827			
	PLS5	0.823			
	PLS6	0.836			
	PLS7	0.836			

The study also evaluates the discriminant validity of the correlations between variables. The research employed the Fornell Larcker, and the first value in the column is greater than the other values, indicating that the figures demonstrating the linkage with themselves are greater than those demonstrating the linkage with other constructions. These numbers suggested a weak relationship between factors. Tables 2 and 3 display these results.

**Table 2:** Fornell Larcker

	<b>ECS</b>	<b>GCN</b>	<b>INR</b>	<b>PLS</b>
ECS	0.812			
GCN	0.452	0.819		
INR	0.429	0.480	0.931	
PLS	0.431	0.498	0.435	0.816

**Table 3:** Cross-loadings

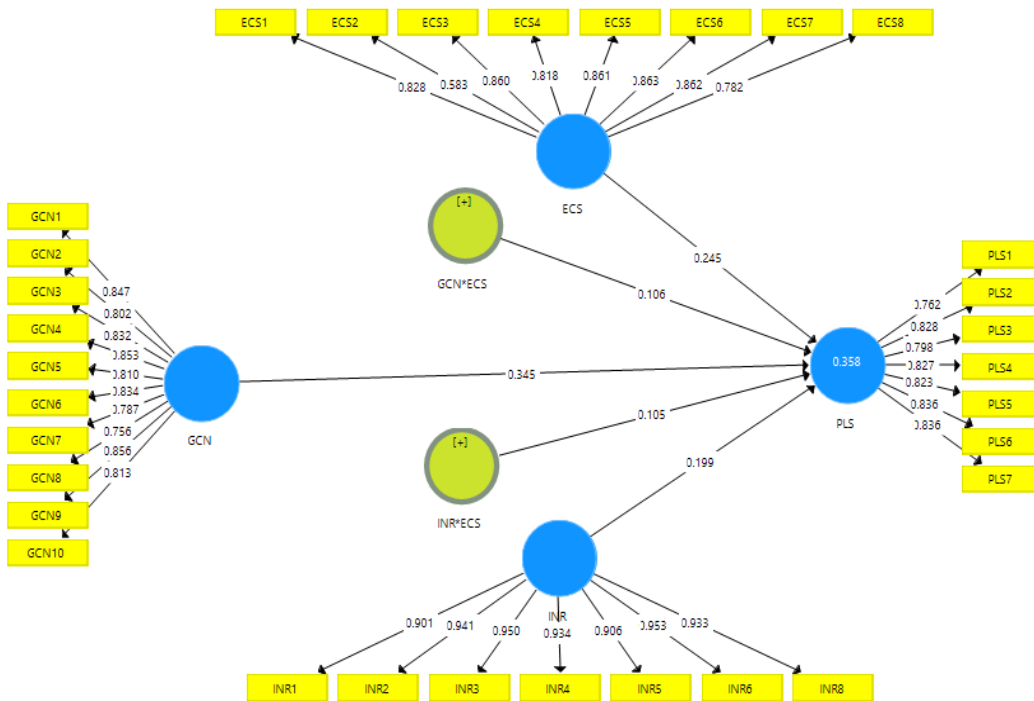
	<b>ECS</b>	<b>GCN</b>	<b>INR</b>	<b>PLS</b>
ECS1	<b>0.828</b>	0.329	0.346	0.343
ECS2	<b>0.583</b>	0.259	0.183	0.268
ECS3	<b>0.860</b>	0.389	0.355	0.354
ECS4	<b>0.818</b>	0.389	0.380	0.310
ECS5	<b>0.861</b>	0.390	0.368	0.324
ECS6	<b>0.863</b>	0.410	0.378	0.382
ECS7	<b>0.862</b>	0.405	0.392	0.425
ECS8	<b>0.782</b>	0.343	0.348	0.358
GCN1	0.378	<b>0.847</b>	0.403	0.471
GCN10	0.353	<b>0.813</b>	0.321	0.312
GCN2	0.350	<b>0.802</b>	0.452	0.466
GCN3	0.369	<b>0.832</b>	0.450	0.442
GCN4	0.405	<b>0.853</b>	0.348	0.391
GCN5	0.358	<b>0.810</b>	0.324	0.307
GCN6	0.377	<b>0.834</b>	0.455	0.437
GCN7	0.356	<b>0.787</b>	0.395	0.389
GCN8	0.351	<b>0.756</b>	0.383	0.404
GCN9	0.403	<b>0.856</b>	0.351	0.393
INR1	0.403	0.448	<b>0.901</b>	0.385
INR2	0.427	0.454	<b>0.941</b>	0.387
INR3	0.413	0.447	<b>0.950</b>	0.411
INR4	0.374	0.442	<b>0.934</b>	0.427
INR5	0.396	0.452	<b>0.906</b>	0.389
INR6	0.415	0.451	<b>0.953</b>	0.408
INR8	0.373	0.439	<b>0.933</b>	0.424
PLS1	0.373	0.455	0.430	<b>0.762</b>
PLS2	0.371	0.421	0.347	<b>0.828</b>
PLS3	0.345	0.426	0.407	<b>0.798</b>
PLS4	0.317	0.370	0.305	<b>0.827</b>
PLS5	0.355	0.378	0.325	<b>0.823</b>
PLS6	0.358	0.406	0.333	<b>0.836</b>
PLS7	0.327	0.367	0.306	<b>0.836</b>

In addition, the Heterotrait Monotrait (HTMT) ratio was utilized to test the discriminant validity, which revealed that the numbers were less than 0.85. These numbers suggested a weak relationship between factors. Table 4 displays these results.

**Table 4:** Heterotrait Monotrait ratio

	ECS	GCN	INR	PLS
ECS				
GCN	0.482			
INR	0.450	0.493		
PLS	0.462	0.521	0.454	

**Figure 2:** Measurement assessment model



The results demonstrated that geographical conditions and foreign interactions have a good relationship with Kurdish economic and political stability, hence we accept Hypotheses 1 and 2. In addition, the results demonstrate that Kurdish economic stability is strongly moderated by geographical factors, international relations, and political stability, and support hypotheses H3 and H4. Table 5 displays these results.

**Table 5:** A path analysis

Relationships	Beta	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values
ECS -> PLS	0.245	0.071	3.437	0.000
GCN -> PLS	0.345	0.070	4.917	0.000
GCN*ECS -> PLS	0.106	0.059	1.783	0.039
INR -> PLS	0.199	0.081	2.464	0.008
INR*ECS -> PLS	0.105	0.059	1.784	0.039



Figure 3: Structural assessment model

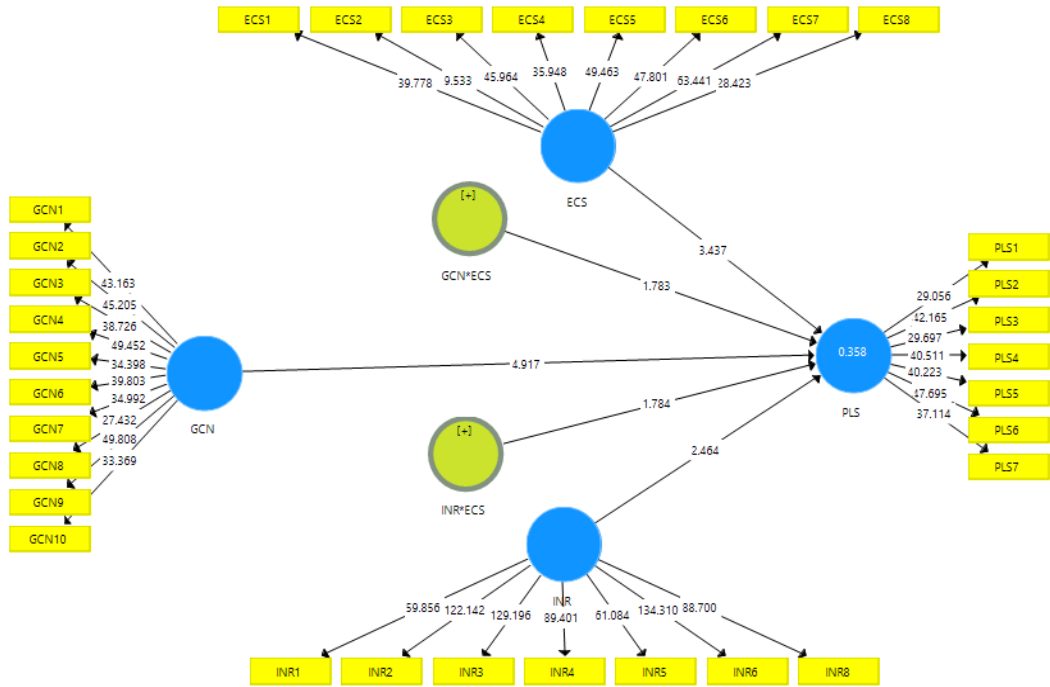
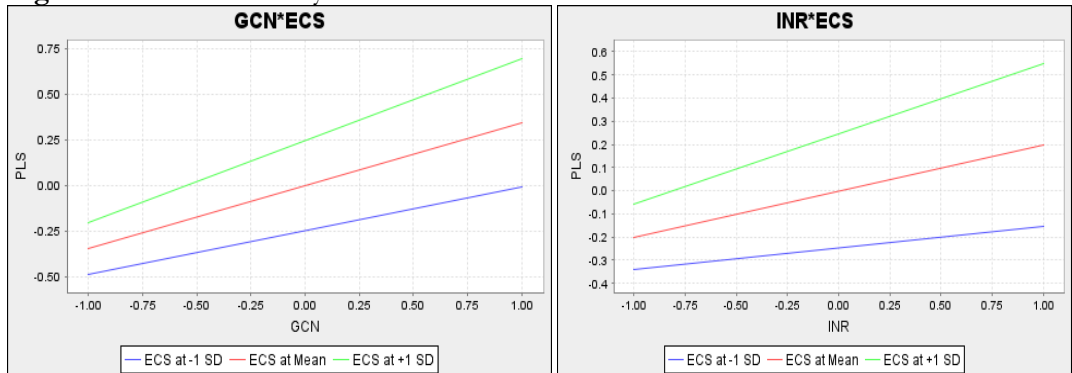


Figure 4: Moderation analysis



## Discussions

The results demonstrated a positive relationship between a country's geographical conditions and its political stability. These findings are consistent with the findings of Durazo-Herrmann and Pereira (2022), who found that a country's ability to carry out its tasks is facilitated by favorable geographical and environmental conditions. Thus, political stability exists in the country. These findings are also consistent with the research conducted by Vasilyeva and Mariev in (2021), which investigates the effects of regional circumstances on political stability. In a country with favorable geographical characteristics, there are abundant natural resources and a pleasant environment for the inhabitants. In this condition, political stability exists when there is peace in the country.

The results demonstrated a positive relationship between foreign ties and political stability. These findings are consistent with the study of Khan, Shah, and Azhar (2019), which demonstrates that a government can receive financial, legal, or strategic support from foreigners in times of need if it successfully develops and maintains contacts with the government or people of foreign countries. Consequently, political structure is never afflicted by turmoil or upheaval. These results are also consistent with Turaev's (2020) research; when international relations are robust and cordial, the legal authorities can curb corruption in private or public organizations. The decrease in corruption eliminates conspiracies and political unrest. Therefore, according to past research, foreign interactions have a good effect on political stability.

The results indicated that economic stability moderates the relationship between geographical conditions and political stability significantly. These findings are consistent with Rezvani's (2019) research, which indicates that a country with economic stability is rich and able to improve its geographical conditions. A nation that is economically stable has a government that can effectively plan and execute development and governance projects. In this circumstance, the country's topography contributes more to its political stability. These results are also consistent with the findings of Siddik et al. (2022), who hypothesize that if there is economic stability, the people will enjoy a good standard of living, and environmental protection will increase as a result. And government performance is effective, and the political climate is stable. Consequently, economic stability strengthens the connection between geographical conditions and political stability.

The results demonstrated that economic stability moderates the relationship between international relations and political stability. According to Gholipour's (2019) research, a nation with a high level of economic stability has greater resources and channels to build and refine relationships with outsiders, as well as superior government governance institutions. Consequently, the function of foreign relations in maintaining political stability improves. These outcomes are also consistent with Bilan, Raiien, Vasilyeva, Lyulyov, and Pimonenko's research (2019). According to the conclusions of the aforementioned study, economic stability improves international relations and political stability. Therefore, it reinforces the connection between international relations and political stability.

## **Implications**

With its scholarly contributions, this investigation will expand the knowledge of scholars. This research investigates the effects of regional variables and international ties on political stability. This study investigates the moderating effect of economic stability on the relationship between geographical factors, international relations, and political stability. The analysis of the effects of geographical factors, international relations, and economic stability on Kurdistan's political stability adds to the significance of the study.

The study has enormous significance for Kurdistan and other nations since it can promote economic peace and growth. The report provides regulatory authorities with important recommendations for enhancing political stability. The report recommends that regulators develop strategies to enhance the country's geographical conditions so that the government can ensure political stability. In addition, it stipulates that government bodies should strive to cultivate supportive and amicable foreign relations. These relationships would promote political stability. It has been suggested that governments and economists must establish economic stability policies. The research aids regulators in the development of rules pertaining

to political stability, which would be attained through optimal geographical conditions and robust international ties. It would improve geographical conditions and their significance in maintaining political stability. In addition, the study indicates that economic stability requires the development and implementation of policies. Stability in the economy would enhance international relations and hasten the process of achieving political stability.

## Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to examine the effects of regional factors and foreign ties on political stability. In addition, the authors were tasked with analyzing the role of economic stability in connection to geographical factors, international relations, and political stability. In order to gather information on geographical conditions, international ties, and political stability, surveys were conducted on the Kurdistan's economy. The observed correlation between geographical circumstances, foreign relations, and political stability was positive. The results demonstrated that if economic conditions are favorable, a country will have a pollution-free environment, an abundance of natural resources, and a solid infrastructure. All of this contributes to the achievement of political stability. The results also indicate that there are less political concerns when government institutions establish cordial and productive relationships with people from other nations. As a result, political stability exists. According to the results of the study, economic stability moderates the relationship between geographical conditions, international relations, and political stability. Political stability is enhanced by the improvement of a nation's geographical conditions, foreign ties, and international interactions. Therefore, economic stability strengthens the reciprocal relationship between geographic conditions and international ties with political stability.

## Limitations

Nevertheless, the present study has a few drawbacks. Researchers interested in political stability might eliminate these limits from future publications. First, the current study focuses solely on the impact of two variables, namely geographical conditions and international relations, on political stability. The study is insufficiently exhaustive and ineffective due to the omission of numerous other variables, such as financial matters, legal regulations, and crime rates, which affect political stability. Future scholars will increase the number of variables affecting political stability. In addition, only Kurdistan data were used to generate the results of this study. Therefore, there may be uncertainty over the validity of the results. It is suggested that the researchers acquire data from multiple economies.

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