

**T.C.
SAKARYA UNIVERSITY
MIDDLE EAST INSTITUTE**

THE US POLICY OBJECTIVES TOWARDS KRG: 1992-2017

MASTER THESIS

Mustafa GÖK



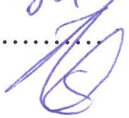
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JULY 2018

This work headed "The USA-KRG Relations 1992 – 2017: A Study On The USA Policy Objectives In Iraq" which has been prepared by Mustafa GÖK, is approved as a M.A thesis by our jury in majority vote.

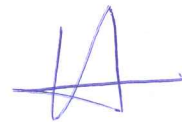
Date of Acceptance: 02/07/2018

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis fits the scientific standards of academic research and that the entire preparation of this thesis is my original work and free from utilization of others' works unless there are similarities of direct quotes and scientific standards of references, which can never be changed. I also declare that this is the first time this thesis is presented as a master's thesis, and it has never been published as another thesis at this university or any other universities.

Mustafa GÖK

02.07.2018



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like first to appreciate the great help and effort that my previous supervisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Othman ALI and current supervisor Asst. Prof. Dr. Veysel KURT have offered to me while writing this thesis. They have been indeed the cornerstone directing me how to go from the first point until the last sentence of this thesis.

I also want to greatly thank my mother Çiçek GÖK, my sisters and my friends who have always been supportive throughout the writing process of the thesis. Without their belief in me I could not have been where I'm today.

Mustafa GÖK

02.07.2018

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ABBREVIATIONS

CIA	:Central Intelligence Agency
CPA	:Coalition Provisional Authority
DPAK	:Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan
FMF	:Foreign Military Financing
ICP	:Iraq Communist Party
INC	:Iraqi National Congress
ISF	:Iraqi Security Forces
ISIS	:Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
KDP	:Kurdistan Democratic Party
KRG	:Kurdistan Regional Government
NDAA	:National Defense Authorization Act
ORHA	:Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance
PKK	:Kurdistan Workers' Party
PMF	:Popular Mobilization Forces
PUK	:Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
UAR	:United Arab Republic
UIA	:United Iraqi Alliance
UN	:United Nations
UNSC	:United Nations Security Council
USA	:United States of America
USSR	:Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WMD	:Weapon of Mass Destruction
WWI	:World War II
WWII	:World War I

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Thesis Title: The US Policy Objectives Towards KRG: 1992-2017	
Author: Mustafa GÖK	Advisor: Asst. Prof. Veysel KURT
Date of Acceptance: 02.07.2018	Number of Pages: x (pre) + 98 (main)
Department: Middle Eastern Studies	
<p>After World War I, the United States started to follow active policies in the Middle East along with weakening and withdrawal of Britain from the region. The United States settled and consolidated its power and existence in the Middle East in terms of protecting its interests. Moreover, the rivalry between the United States and Soviet Union increased as regard to Cold War effects in the Middle East. Therefore, the United States paid attention to security for flow of oil and its conservative allies in the Middle East. To perceive this end, the US government had followed different kind of strategies. Iraq which was one of the important allies of the United States in the Middle East until 1958 shifted its side from western bloc to eastern one. The United States could not face up to the loss of Iraq and established ties Kurdish nationalist movement in north to apply pressure on regime in Bagdad. The United States has viewed Iraqi Kurds as a pressure card and supported them in order to apply pressure on the central government of Iraq in terms of protecting American interests in the Middle East. As a result of American policies in Iraq, Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) accidentally was established. Accordingly, this thesis aims to examine USA -KRG relations between establishment of KRG in 1992 and unsuccessful KRG independence referendum in 2017.</p> <p>Within this framework, US-Kurdish ties before the establishment of KRG was examined in the first chapter of the thesis which consists of three chapters. In the second chapter, the accidental creation of KRG in 1992 as a result of American humanitarian policies and USA- KRG relations were discussed for some reasons, and the functioning of US policies towards Kurds in Iraq during 1990s. In the third chapter, we analyze the implementations and the attitudes of the American Administration policies in the post-invasion of Iraq until KRG independence referendum in 2017 in terms of USA and KRG relations.</p>	
Key Words: USA, KRG, Kurds, Iraq, Middle East	

Tezin Başlığı: IKBY'ye Yönelik ABD Politikası'nın Amaçları: 1992-2017	
Tezin Yazarı: Mustafa GÖK	Danışman: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Veysel KURT
Kabul Tarihi: 02.07.2018	Sayfa Sayısı: x (ön kısım) + 98 (tez)
Anabilimdalı: Ortadoğu Çalışmaları	
<p>Birinci Dünya Savaşı'ndan sonra, İngiltere'nin bölgeden zayıflayarak çekilmesi ile birlikte Birleşik Devletler, Orta Doğu'da aktif politikaları izlemeye başladı. Amerika Birleşik Devletleri kendi çıkarlarını koruması açısından Orta Doğu'daki gücünü ve varlığını yerleştirerek sağlamlaştırdı. Üstelik Amerika Birleşik Devletleri ile Sovyetler Birliği arasındaki rekabet, Orta Doğu'daki Soğuk Savaş'ın etkilerine bağlı olarak arttı. Bu nedenle, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri, Orta Doğu'da petrolün akışına ve muhafazakar müttefiklerinin güvenliğine dikkat etti. Bunu algılamak için ABD hükümeti birçok farklı strateji izledi. 1958'e kadar Amerika'nın Orta Doğu'daki önemli müttefikleri arasında yer alan Irak, yanını batı bloğundan doğu kesimine kaydırıldı. 1958'e kadar Amerika'nın Orta Doğu'daki önemli müttefikleri arasında yer alan Irak, tarafını batı bloğundan doğu kesimine doğru kaydırıldı. ABD Irak'ın kaybına katlanamadı ve Bağdat'taki rejime baskı uygulamak için kuzeyde Kürt milliyetçi hareketiyle iletişim kurdu. ABD, Iraklı Kürtleri bir baskı kartı olarak gördü ve Ortadoğu'daki Amerikan çıkarlarını korumak açısından Irak'ın merkezi hükümetine baskı uygulamak için onları destekledi. Irak'taki Amerikan politikalarının sonucu olarak, Irak Kürdistan Bölgesel Yönetimi (IKBY) tesadüfen olarak kuruldu. Buna göre, bu tez, 1992'de IKBY'nin kurulması ile 2017'de başarısız olan KBY bağımsızlık referandumu arasındaki ABD-İKBY ilişkilerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır.</p> <p>Bu çerçevede, üç bölümden oluşan tezin birinci bölümünde IKBY'nin kurulmasından önce ABD-Kürt ilişkileri ele alınmıştır. İkinci bölümde, 1992'de Amerikan insani politikaları sonucu IKBY'nin kazara kurulması ve ABD-İKBY ilişkileri 1990'larda Irak'taki Kürtlere yönelik ABD politikalarının işleyişi bazı nedenlerle birlikte tartışılmıştır. Üçüncü bölümde, Irak'ın işgalinden sonra Amerikan İdare politikalarının uygulamalarını ve tutumlarını ABD ve IKBY ilişkileri açısından 2017'de gerçekleşmiş olan IKBY bağımsızlık referandumuna kadar olan kısmı analiz ediyoruz. .</p>	
Anahtar Kelimeler: ABD, IKBY, Kürtler, Irak, Ortadoğu	

INTRODUCTION

Iraq is one of the important oil rich country in the Middle East, was created by Britain after WWI. The country stayed under control of Britain until 1958. In this period, Britain started to lose its power and Soviet Union attempted to increase its influences in the Middle East. Therefore, the United States tried to fill vacuum of power created by Britain withdrawal from the region. However, 1958 coup in Iraq changed the position of the country which began to have closed ties with Soviet Union. This shifted balance of power was to the detriment of the United States in the region. the United States embarked on finding solution for the situation which began to pose threat against American interests in the region. During this period, the Kurdish nationalist movement led by Mullah Mustafa Barzani (1901-1979) was perceived as a useful instrument to pressure Iraqi regime and prevent the expansion of communism in the Middle East. For this reason, the Kurdish – US ties should be understood in the context of the Cold War politics in the Middle East. This relationship was manipulated in nature and it was to advantage of US government. As it will be explained below; there is a noticeable pattern in the US-Kurdish policy; whenever the US and central government of Iraq had good ties, the US government had ignored the Iraqi government repressive policies towards the Kurds in the Iraq. In fact, during 1980s the US government had assisted the Iraqi regime in developing chemical weapons which was used against Kurds and these patterns will be developed in the thesis.

After the Iraq-Iran War, Saddam Hussein increased his power and invaded oil rich Kuwait, a coalition was established under the leadership of the United States in response to invasion and Iraq was kicked out of Kuwait. President Bush called Iraqi people to revolt against Saddam's regime. Therefore, Kurds in Iraq joined the rebellion in 1991 but this ended with big catastrophe and serious humanitarian crisis erupted. Although the George Bush Administration (1989-1993) was initially reluctant to assist the Kurds, the public pressure, Turkey and European Union forced the US government to be heavily involved to protection of Iraqi Kurds. American humanitarian aids accidentally provided Kurds to establish a de facto autonomous state in Iraq in 1992. However, the conflict between KDP and PUK turned into a Kurdish civil war. The civil war, which was ended by America's initiatives in 1998, helped the building of KRG structure.

KRG and USA relations gained strength throughout 1990s and with the USA invasion of Iraq in 2003 it gained more momentum. Kurdish Peshmerga (militias) fought alongside with American soldiers against Iraqi army. In this process, KRG won de jure status in Iraq and this was reflected in the Iraqi constitution which was written in 2005. In the post invasion era, the United States policies in Iraq attempts to draw a balance between Kurds strong desire for independence and its policy to build the central government in Iraq. In this process, we believe that there is a continuity of traditional US policy towards the Kurds and this policy based on maintaining of Iraq's territorial unity and the Kurdish question has merely peripheral character. This US policy can be discerned in the American policies with regard to the implementation of the Article 140 and the issue of independence referendum. It is noteworthy that US government had consistently turned a blind eyes to the Nuri al-Maliki and later Haydar al-Abadi's administrations' reluctance to settle Article 140 and settle other disputes between KRG and the central government.

Purpose of the Thesis

In this thesis, we argue that the United States' policy aims at securing its own national interests in Iraq as an oil producer and the Kurdish question in Iraq has been always used within this context. Within this framework, American policies towards Kurds and later KRG are to keep this card as a pressure against the central government of Iraq in order to control whole country rather than a piece of it. Therefore, we maintain that the period which is covered in the thesis the United States had supported a policy of the united Iraq and its policy towards KRG was subservient to the US Foreign Policy in Iraq in particular and in the Middle East in general.

The Significance of the Study

The study has two important relevances to the researchers in Turkey. Firstly, we try to refute the widely held view that US support disintegration of Iraq and supports independent KRG. Secondly, KRG is a neighbor of Turkey which has strategic national security and economic significances for Turkey. Therefore, understanding the US foreign policy in this region is important and relevant for us.

Methodology

In this thesis, we follow a methodology which is made up of partly quantitative approach and partly chronological approach. While researching this topic, we benefited from books, articles, reports, news agencies and archival documents. Therefore, the methodology which we perceive this study is to large extent of a critical discourse analysis.

Parts of the study consist of introduction, three main chapters and conclusion. In the introduction, general information is given in order to inform reader about the topic. In the first chapter, we address US policies in the Middle East in general and in Iraq in particular. Then we perceive to explain and analyze the development of US-Kurdish ties throughout the second half of 20th century. Here, we highlight the US policies in some significant stages such as .1972, 1975. In the second chapter, we will explain how the accidental creation of KRG in 1992 was to some degree the result of American humanitarian policies. In the third and last chapter, the American and KRG situations in post- Saddam Iraq and events during KRG independence referendum were addressed.

Literature Review

Although USA-KRG ties have been subject to few manuscript and journal articles it has never been explained and analyzed. They are numerous standard works on US foreign policy towards the Kurds in Iraq; these studies tend to be mostly a survey and wide in scope. As the bibliographical study of Lokman Meho 2004 shows, there has not been yet a thorough and critical appraisal of US Foreign Policy towards the Kurds and KRG. Marianna Charountaki is a serious and standard work which has tempts a lot of archival resources on Kurdish-USA ties. However, scope of this study ends with the year 2011. Therefore, we hope our study to supplement that of Charountaki. There have been also some partial studies by several scholars such as Nawzad Abdullah Shukri (2017), Kerim Yıldız (2004) and Michael Gunter (2011). Each of these studies tends to focus on a narrow aspect of US Foreign Policy toward KRG. Nevertheless, our thesis is an attempt to combine the findings of these studies in details and critical manner. Our thesis is unique in a way which makes a good use of studies in both English and Turkish sources. Finally, the issue of referendum of 2017 has never been addressed and analyzed in an exhausted manner as it has been in this thesis. We do realize our study has not exhausted the field

and future studies need to be carried out in the light of the archival materials which belong to the US, Iraqi and KRG governments.

Limitations of This Thesis

The research would have been more fruitful if we had accessed to the relevant US-Kurdish and Iraqi whole official's documents and if I had fluency of a good command of Arabic and Sorani Kurdish, It would have helped me to use invaluable resources in those languages.



CHAPTER 1: US-KURDISH TIES BEFORE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF KRG

1.1. United States in the Middle East

In order to understanding the involvement of USA policy towards Kurds of Iraq, we need to consider American interests in the Middle East after WWII. Broadly speaking, the United States had two basic strategies to follow in the Middle East. First strategy was to keep oil rich countries under American protection with spheres of influences like Saudi Arabia and its neighbors. For this reason the United States signed some agreements before and after World War II such as Red Line Agreement in 1928¹ and Anglo-American Petroleum Agreement on August 8, 1944² to control Middle Eastern energy sources and prevent to emerge any strong regional rival for American interests.³ Also president of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt shared his ideas about Middle Eastern oil for USA with the following terms “Persian oil, he told the ambassador, is yours. We share the oil of Iraq and Kuwait. As for Saudi Arabian oil, it's ours.”⁴ Hereby, the United States directly revealed its interest in the Middle East. Therefore, famous American political activist Avram Noam Chomsky states that USA viewed Middle East as “the most strategically important area of the world” and “one of the greatest material prizes in world history.”⁵ Because the Middle East produced great amount of oil in the world and the oil was vital for USA and western allies to maintain their industrial development and prevent dependency from communist Soviet Union.

The second strategy of the United States was to prevent expansion of the communism in the Middle East against Soviet Union. Therefore, the United States declared the Eisenhower Doctrine in 1957 to secure Middle East against expansion of communism.

¹ The agreement was signed between some British, French and American oil companies for oil resources in the Ottoman territories. For further info, please visit: Department of State, Office of the historian, "The 1928 Red Line Agreement", <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/red-line> (Access Date: 01.12.2017)

² The agreement was signed between the United States and Britain in order to control global petroleum supply and demand. For further info, please visit: Daniel Yergin, **The Prize: The Epic quest for Oil, Money and Power**, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991, pp.402-403.

³ Philippe Le Billon and Fadi El Khatib, "From free oil to 'freedom oil': terrorism, war and U.S. Geopolitics in the Persian Gulf", **Geopolitics**, Vol. 9, Issue. 1, (March 2004), p. 109.

⁴ Daniel Yergin, **The Prize: The Epic quest for Oil, Money and Power**, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991 p. 401.

⁵ Noam Chomsky, "Imperial Presidency", **Canadian Dimension**, Vol. 39, No.1, (January/February 2005), p.8.

This doctrine provided economic, military aid, and allowing usage of American armed forces against expansion of communism in the Middle East. Also Eisenhower Doctrine meant to increase the power of the United States against the growing and the alarm of Soviet expansion in the region.⁶ Therefore, Iraq was important to be kept within western block. However, with the coup of 1958, Iraq became an ally of Soviet Union rather than western block in the Middle East. This shifted policies undermined interests of western block in the region. Therefore, we can analyze other policies of the United States in the Middle East under with these two basic strategies in mind. Thus, US approach to Kurds of Iraq can be considered within the context of these strategies as a cold war gambit.

1.2. 1958 Coup and Kurds of Iraq

When World War I (WWI) erupted between allied and central powers, Iraq was part of Ottoman Empire and it was invaded by Britain. Then consequently British had mandate over Iraq which was composed of three ex-Ottoman proveniences. Hereby Britain united three Ottoman provinces, Mosul, Bagdad and Basra and invited Faisal I bin Hussein bin Ali al-Hashemi third, son of Hussein bin Ali, the Grand Sharif of Mecca to govern Iraq on the behalf of Britain. In this regard, Kingdom of Iraq was established under rule and got its independence from Britain in 1932. Hashemite family followed pro-western policies to protect their throne in Iraq. However, the kingdom was shaken by domestic problems and Kurdish revolts. Eventually, Hashemite royal family was toppled by military coup d'état led by prime movers of the Free Officers Group Abd al-Karim Qasim and Abdul Salam Arif on 14 July 1958. Thus the Kingdom of Iraq was ended and Republic was proclaimed in 1958.

Next to these developments, Free Officers decided to withdraw from both the Arab Federation of Iraq and Jordan and the Baghdad Pact⁷ in 1959. Free Officers left western

⁶ Peter L. Hahn, "Securing the Middle East: The Eisenhower Doctrine of 1957", **Presidential Studies Quarterly**, Vol.36, Issue.1, (March 2006), p.38.

⁷ Baghdad Pact was established by Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and Iraq to promote shared military, political and economic purposes in 1955. The main goal of the pact was to promote peace and prevent communist expansion in the Middle East. After Iraq withdrew from the pact in 1959, the pact was named Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). The pact maintained its existence for a long time but it disbanded in 1979. For further info, please visit: U.S. Department of State, Archive, "The Baghdad Pact (1955) and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO)", <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/lw/98683.htm> (Access Date: 02.12.2017)

block and looked to eastern block to get supports from Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Losing Iraq was a big loss for the United States of America (USA) in the Middle East during Cold War era because Iraq was oil rich country and western block had oil dependency. Also Soviet Union gained one more ally and power during era of the Cold War. This kind of close relations between Soviet Union and Republic of Iraq was getting risky for American and western interests in the region because of Cold War rivalry. Hereby, the United States started to look for ways to gain Iraq again in the western block. That is when; Kurds of Iraq got attention of the United States.⁸

The new Republic in Iraq in an attempt to establish stability in Iraq tried to win the sympathy of Kurds to so a Provisional Constitution was proclaimed and its second article pointed out that “Arabs and Kurds are partners in the Homeland”, and guaranteed their “national rights”.⁹ When the military coup happened in Iraq, Pan-Arabism led by Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser was developing in the Middle East and it already gave its fruit with creation of United Arab Republic (UAR) between Egypt and Syria in 1958. On 19 July 1958 an agreement was signed between the Republic of Iraq and UAR for cooperation in the fields of defense, economy, foreign affairs and culture. At that point question rose in the Republic whether Iraq should join in the UAR or not. The debate was between Qasim who was opposed to Unity and Arif who supported to join in the Unity. Also Kurds were one of the biggest obstacles to unity with UAR and Qasim used it for his political interests.¹⁰ Therefore, Qasim eventually gave his decision to invite prominent Kurdish leader Mulla Mustafa Barzani, president of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)¹¹ and declared amnesty for Barzani who were in exile in USSR since 1947 and his followers back from Soviet Union in September 1958. However, the countries of region, especially Turkey and Iran were afraid of another eruption of Kurdish revolt with

⁸ Douglas Little, “United States and the Kurds A Cold War Story”, *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 4, Fall 2010, pp. 67-68.

⁹ Avshalom H. Rubin (2007) “Abd al-Karim Qasim and the kurds of Iraq: Centralization, resistance and revolt, 1958–63”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 43:3, p. 357. ; David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 3rd Edition, London, New York: I.B.Tauris, 2004, p.302; and Ismet Sheriff Vanly “Kurdistan in Iraq” in: Gérard Chaliand (ed)., *People Without a Country; The Kurds and Kurdistan*, (139-188), London: Olive Branch Press, 1980, p.165.

¹⁰ David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 3rd Edition, I.B.Tauris, London, New York: 2004, p.303.

¹¹ Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) is one of the biggest and important political party in Iraqi Kurdistan. The party bases on Kurdish traditionalism and nationalism. On 16 August 1946, It was formed by Mulla Mustafa Barzani in Baghdad. The party has maintained its importance in the Iraq and it has been dominated by Barzani family since establishment. For further info, please visit: Michael M. Gunter, *The A to Z of the Kurds*, Lanham • Toronto • Plymouth: The Scarecrow Press, 2009, pp.106-107.

inspiration of Barzani's being back in Iraq. Furthermore, British and the United States viewed Barzani's return as a Soviet plan but Qasim expected that Barzani's return would calm down Kurdish nationalism in Iraq.

1.3. Beginning of Relations Between the United States and Kurds of Iraq

Mullah Mustafa Barzani was invited by Qasim to stabilize the country after the coup in 1958. Qasim also used Barzani and his forces to suppress his rivals in Iraq. Hereby, Qasim supported Barzani for his political reasons until he consolidated his power. When Qasim strengthened his rule in Iraq, Barzani was seen an obstacle for his personal style of leadership. For this reason, Qasim armed Harki and Zibari tribes, rival Kurdish tribes of Barzani. These Kurdish rival tribes got so powerful and began to threaten Barzani so Barzani decided to conflict with them. In addition to that, Barzani and his forces stated to be main opposition in Iraq for demanding rights of autonomy due to bad relations with Qasim.¹² Therefore, another Kurdish insurrection occurred in the country between Qasim regime and Barzani forces.

Although Qasim tried to have a peaceful approach to the Kurdish question through Barzani, a Kurdish rebellion started again in 1961 against him. This was due to disagreement between Qasim and KDP over autonomy issue for Kurdish populated territory. KDP's rebellion posed a great threat to Qasim's regime because the Iraqi army was not willing to fight for this war so the regime of Qasim got big troubles and the country went into destabilization because of Kurdish revolts. For this reason, the regime became weak and unstable. In addition, Qasim's opponents began to form a wide front composed of KDP, Iraq Communist Party (ICP), Nasserites and the Ba'ath Party to organize a coup against Qasim. Barzani expected that Kurds would achieve of autonomy with that cooperation. In the end, the coup took place on February 8, 1963 and Qasim's regime was replaced by a coalition of Nasserite, and Ba'athist elements.¹³

There are some debates about involvement of the United States in Kurdish uprising against Qasim's regime. The geography of Kurdish populated territories is mostly

¹² Stacy E. Holden, **A Documentary History of Modern Iraq**, Gainesville:University Press of Florida, 2012, p.188.

¹³ Courtney Hunt, **The History of Iraq**, Connecticut • London: Greenwood Press Westport, 2005, p.82.

mountainous in Iraq and there is not any sea outlet for the region. Although this situation provided a lot of advantages for Kurds of Iraq to maintain successful guerilla war against Qasim, at the end Kurds of Iraq were locked among mountains so they needed foreign aids to fight effectively. Therefore, any help which the revolt needed from the western countries, especially the United States had to come through a third neighboring country of Iraq and this is practically done through the regime of Muhammad Rıza Shah of Iran as it will be explained below. Hereby, Kurds of Iraq began to organize propaganda in the western countries.¹⁴ Organizing propaganda began to give its fruits and Kamaran Baderkhan, a well-known Syrian Kurd and Jamal Abdullah Iraqi Kurds, were representing Barzani abroad. These two Kurdish well-known figures met with American officials on June 22, 1962 in Washington to convince them for a United Nations hearing about the situation in Kurdish populated region and support for Kurds right of autonomy within Iraq.¹⁵ However Kurds could not get what they expected from the United States. This meeting was the beginning of contacts between the United States and Kurds of Iraq. In 1962, Barzani again asked for US supports and in a letter to US government he mentioned that some communist elements had been removed and others would be eliminated soon.¹⁶ It appears that Barzani tried to use communist threat to get the United States support but in vain.

When Barzani started to organize a Kurdish propaganda in the west, he gave some promises in return of western supports. Therefore, Barzani offered to USA that he would cooperate with conservative Arab regimes to bring Iraq back into Bagdad Pact in 1962.¹⁷ Withdrawing Iraq from Bagdad pact was big loss for western interests in the Middle East against Soviet Union because western block lost its important ally. In despite of Barzani's promises, the United States pointed out its policy on September 11, 1962 with Talbot's describing this policy in the following manner: "United States considers the Kurdish problem in Iraq as an internal matter which should be resolved internally. Our government

¹⁴ Avshalom H. Rubin, "Abd al-Karim Qasim and the kurds of Iraq: Centralization, resistance and revolt, 1958–63", **Middle Eastern Studies**, 43:3, 2007, p.371.

¹⁵ USA, Department of State, Historical Documents, "Foreign Relations Of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XVII, Near East, 1961–1962, Document 305", <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v17/d305> (Access Date: 01.12.2017)

¹⁶ USA, Department of State, Historical Documents, "Foreign Relations Of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XVII, Near East, 1961–1962, Document 49", <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v18/d49> (Access Date: 01.12.2017)

¹⁷ Ibid.

does not support Kurdish activities against the government of Iraq in any way and hopes an early peaceful solution will be possible.”¹⁸ This is further evidence that Kurds were not the priority of US foreign policy in Iraq this reasoning on the part of US government has been a corner stone in US foreign policy.

The Kurds destabilized Qasim’s regime in Iraq with Kurdish uprising covered one third of Iraqi territory and forced Qasim to allocate one third of Iraqi army to the north. This had weakened the regime consequently and facilitated its fall. However, scholars still debate on US role in Kurdish revolt of 1961 whether the United States involved or not. Douglas Little claims that United States was involved in Kurdish uprising and he contends that US intelligence had some contacts with KDP.¹⁹ He quotes that CIA report of April 1962 which states “Barzani may give Qasim some real trouble this year”.²⁰ However, Roham Alvandi is opposed to Little’s claim in his article on this subject and he says that there is not any substantial evidence to support this claim.²¹

When the Kurdish insurgency increased its intensity, both sides tried to pursue new policies to win western governments sympathies to take more advantages against each other. For instance, Qasim met with American diplomats in Bagdad and asked them to stop their supports for Kurdish revolt²². Qasim blamed the United States and Britain for there a legit aids to Kurds.²³ On the contrary, Avshalom H. Rubin quotes that both the United States and Britain did not help the Kurds by providing material aid and political support during the uprising.²⁴ Besides, Bryan Robert Gibson, who depends on Russian professor Vladislav Zubok’s claim²⁵, thinks Kurdish uprising was a Soviet plan.²⁶

For this reason, it appears that there are no convening evidences that the United States did support Kurdish revolt against Qasim’s regime. There are some main reasons why the

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Little, p.68.

²⁰ Little, p.68.

²¹ Roham Alvandi, “Article Review: Douglas Little, ‘United States and the Kurds: A Cold War Story’”, **Humanities and Social Sciences**, Online, p.302.

²² Yaniv Voller, **The Kurdish Liberation Movement in Iraq From insurgency to statehood**, London and New York: Routledge, 2014, p.48.

²³ Edgar O’ballance, **The Kurdish Struggle, 1920-94**, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996, p.48.

²⁴ Rubin, p. 372.

²⁵ Vladislav Zubok, “Spy Vs. Spy: The KGB Vs. the CIA, 1960-1962,’ Cold War International History Project” Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars, http://www.videofact.com/english/cia_kgb.html (Access Date: 01.12.2017)

²⁶ Bryan R. Gibson, **Sold Out? Us Foreign Policy, Iraq, the Kurds, and the Cold War**, New York: Palgrave, 2015, p.67.

United States did not provide significant support to Kurds of Iraq against Qasim. First of all, the United States had hesitations that Kurdish uprising would destabilize western allies, Turkey and Iran because both countries had significant number of Kurdish minority and they had experienced lots of Kurdish revolts inside their borders from their formation until now and Kurdish uprising in Iraq had potential to affect and stabilize these countries. Therefore, the United States could not take such a kind of risk to help Kurds of Iraq among Cold War.

As it was stated above that, the main strategies of the United States were based on the protection of oil rich countries and the demands of the struggle against communism in the Middle East. In that point, the United States tries to follow careful policies towards Barzani and KDP. It is noteworthy that Barzani spent 11 years in Soviet Union during his exile years from Iraq. Therefore, KDP had strong relations with Soviet Union and ICP and Barzani used to be referred to as “Red Mullah”.²⁷ Moreover, KDP declared before that it is a Marxist-Leninist inspired party. These views of KDP were apparently displeased for the United States policy makers in the Middle East. The main reason of USA to approach Kurds was to regain Iraq in the western block but approaching KDP was still risky for it. Also US supports to Kurds could cause Qasim to follow more close relations with Soviet Union.

1.4. 1963 Coup and the Kurds

On February 8, 1963 the Qasim’s regime was overthrown by his rival Nasserist Abdul Selam Arif who had the support of Ba’ath party and some Kurds. During the coup, the members and leaders of ICP were murdered and assassinated by the coup d’état.²⁸ The United States was pleased with coup and hoped that the new regime would considerably improve relations with them because of it is anti-communist tendency²⁹. The communist party had helped Qasim’s regime to suppress the members of Iraqi nationalists and Ba’ath

²⁷ Quil Lawrence, **Invisible Nation: How the Kurds' Quest for Statehood Is Shaping Iraq and the Middle East**, New York: Walker publishing Company, 2008, p.18.

²⁸ CIA, National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) Number 11-6-63, ‘**The Soviet Role in the Arab World**’, 24 April 1963, p5

²⁹USA, Department of State, Historical Documents, “Foreign Relations Of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XVII, Near East, 1961–1962, Document 153”, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v18/d153> (Access Date: 02.12.2017)

party. The new regime being anti-communist provided great opportunity for the United States to regain Iraq and ensure western interests in the Middle East against Soviet Union. In contrast, Soviet Union got a big scar in its policies in Iraq for losing Qasim, because Qasim helped Soviet Union to gain a lot in Iraq. There were rumors those in different fields of military and economic agreements which were signed between two parties. The most important gain of Soviet Union was that Qasim acted as the most prominent anti-western leader in the Arab.³⁰

After the coup, Kurds were still key element and factor for the stability of Iraq in this new regime. On February 10, 1963, Kurds declared ceasefire in return for releasing of Kurdish prisoners, compensations for the war damaged areas.³¹ Moreover, Mustafa Barzani began to ask for the right of autonomy as a reward for the cooperation and role of Kurds during weakening and destabilizing Qasim's regime.³² Barzani was hoping to gain autonomy for Kurd with the new regime in power in Bagdad. Therefore, Celal Talabani headed new Kurdish delegations which fist to negotiate with the new regime in Bagdad and subsequently visited President of Egypt and UAR Gamal Abdel Nasser in order to gain his sympathy for Kurdish autonomy³³⁻³⁴. It is noteworthy that the new regime in Bagdad was not ally of Nasser and it was planning to UAR. However, neither Iraq joined UAR nor did Kurds get what they expected both from new Iraqi regime and Nasser. The negotiation between Barzani and Arif failed so Kurds started another insurgency for the right of autonomy.

1.4.1. United States and the Kurds in Iraq: Kurds as Trojan Horse

New York Times reported that the coup in Iraq was supported by the United States and called upon that the Kurds to cooperate with new regime of Iraq because this would serve the interests of the United States in the Middle East.³⁵ However, The Kurds could not find what they expected from newly installed regime in Bagdad and they started another

³⁰ CIA, National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) Number 11-6-63, 'The Soviet Role in the Arab World', 24 April 1963, pp.4-5.

³¹ McDowall, p.313.

³² Little, p.69.

³³ McDowall, p.313.

³⁴ Phebe Marr, **The Modern History Of Iraq**, 3rd Edition, Boulder: Westview Press, 2012 p.113.

³⁵ Rick Noack, "The long, winding history of American dealings with Iraq's Kurds", The Washington Post, October 17, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/10/17/the-long-winding-history-of-american-dealings-with-iraqs-kurds-2/?utm_term=.85289c2d3d0a (Access Date: 03,12,2017).

insurgency against Iraqi nationalists and Ba'ath government for the Kurdish rights, especially for right of autonomy which new government was not willing to give. When the revolt was started, Barzani firstly asked the United States for the help against Arif's government as always needed foreign aids during war. However the United States refused to help Kurdish revolt because it considered it as an internal matter of Iraq.³⁶ The reason behind this decision was the initial friendly relations between Arif's government and the United States.

As it was previously stated the United States of America welcomed the new regime in Iraq. That is why; Washington wanted a peaceful resolution for the Kurdish issue in Iraq. The United States thought if the peace negotiations between Iraqi government and Kurds fail that the only winner would be Soviet Union and ICP within Iraq.³⁷ Therefore, diplomats of the United States gave notices to Iraqi regime that failing negotiations with Kurds would bring a new civil war which would be assisted by Soviet Union.³⁸ Supporting Kurds by Moscow was a challenge against Washington in Iraq because the main reasons of the United States were to support new coup and Kurds was to regain Iraq back in the western bloc.

The newly installed Iraqi regime had initially cut its relations with Soviets, who had gained a lot of benefits and influences at the expense of the western bloc during Qasim's Era. Although the coup of 1963 delivered a heavy blow to the Soviet interest in Iraq by killing hundreds of communists and by driving ICP into underground party, the new Kurdish revolt was seen by the United States as a reverse to this policy. It is noteworthy during this period both the United States and Soviet Union considered their influences in Iraq as a vital and important factor in the Cold War politics of the Middle East. Therefore, both USA and USSR had opted to appease to the central government and Kurdish leaders in Iraq.

The United States had used its influences in the region especially with the governments of Iran and Turkey to enhance and protect Arif's government against Soviet sabotage. For

³⁶ USA, Department of State, Historical Documents, "Foreign Relations Of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XVII, Near East, 1961–1962, Document 208", <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v18/d208> (Access Date: 03,12,2017)

³⁷ USA, Department of State, Historical Documents, "Foreign Relations Of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XVII, Near East, 1961–1962, Document 174", <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v18/d174> (Access Date: 03,12,2017)

³⁸ Little, p.70.

this reason, the United States government asked Iraqi neighbors to follow hand off policies with the Kurds.³⁹ The United States was hoping that Arif Regime would have eventually closer relations with the west. However, once the clash of Kurds occurred between Arif's regime and Barzani forces, the American efforts were directed at achieving peaceful compromise. For this reason the United States remained neutral in the conflict. However both sides were displeased with this policy. In fact, Iraqi government was unhappy with the US suggestion to hear that they should negotiate with Barzani over autonomy issue. Moreover, the Iraqi government thought that the external powers such as Iran and western oil companies were using the Kurds as Trojan horse in Iraq.⁴⁰ Hereby, Kurdish- Iraqi nationalist negotiations failed in terms of new civil war.

Consequently, the United States tried to build confidence with both Kurds and Iraqi government by supplying foreign aid to all Iraqis especially the surplus white which were used here as a part for US food peace program. It appears this policy did not achieve success the Iraqi regime began to get closer to the Soviet by buying weapons and assisting the Palestinian struggle.⁴¹ Although the Iraqi regime became closer to Soviet Union, the United States government continued its hands-off policy in the Kurdish rebellion.⁴² The main concerns of the United States were Soviet expansion to exploit the Kurdish question in Iraq and its neighbors which they are ally of western bloc in favor of communism.⁴³ For this reason, the United States agreed to provide military equipments to Iraqi regime.⁴⁴

³⁹USA, Department of State, Historical Documents, "Foreign Relations Of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XVII, Near East, 1961–1962, Document 174", <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v18/d174> (Access Date: 03, 12, 2017).

⁴⁰ McDowall, p.313.

⁴¹ Little, p.70.

⁴²USA, Department of State, Historical Documents, "Foreign Relations Of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XVII, Near East, 1961–1962, Page 666", https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v18/pg_666 (Access Date: 03, 12, 2017).

⁴³USA, Department of State, Historical Documents, "Foreign Relations Of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XVII, Near East, 1961–1962, Page 674", https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v18/pg_674 (Access Date: 03, 12, 2017).

⁴⁴USA, Department of State, Historical Documents, "Foreign Relations Of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XVII, Near East, 1961–1962, Page 675", https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v18/pg_675 (Access Date: 03, 12, 2017).

1.4.2. Two Brothers' Regime and One Ideology Against Kurds

Abdul Salam Arif comes from poor family in Iraq, he and his brother Abdul Rahman Arif joined in Iraqi Army during monarchy. Abdul Salam Arif cooperated with Qasim to end the Hashemite monarchy and proclaimed republic in 1958. Nevertheless, he supported Arab nationalist ideas to join UAR led by Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser and because of his ideas; he was opposed and suppressed from government by Qasim. Mainly, the ideology of Arif brothers was based on Pan-Arabism. They believe that there should be one united Arab state ruling Arab World. That is why; Abdul Salam Arif cooperated with Kurds and Ba'ath members to overthrow Qasim. At the end, the Ba'athist, Pan-Arabist and Kurdish coalition successfully ended the Qasim's regime through Abdul Salam Arif's Pan-Arabism desires. Much as, the coalition toppled the Qasim, they could not deal with each other. Firstly, Kurds started a battle for the rights of autonomy. Then, Ba'ath-Arif relations deteriorated so on November 18th 1963; Ba'ath members were expelled by Arif.⁴⁵

By ending its coalition with the Ba'ath party in Iraq Arif became isolated and stood alone in the Iraqi internal issues. Iraq became infested with many ethnic and rivalry crisis. In the north, for instance, there were heavy battles going on between Arif's forces and Barzai's forces. These rivalries and wars had its influences on the Iraqi army and it had considerably weakened Arif's position. Consequently, on 10 February 1964, Arif declared a ceasefire with Kurds. Afterwards, Barzani alleged that he signed ceasefire on the behest of Washington without proving any written or recorded verbal communication with the United States. Nonetheless, the conflict began again in April 1965. The US was against the resumption of military confrontation between Arif and Kurds and tried through in direct means to advise Kurds to be patient and continue the negotiations with Bagdad.⁴⁶ But the negotiation process collapsed and the war broke out again. In spite of fact that Abdul Salam Arif launched another offensive war against Kurds and got some strategic gains, the attempt was collapsed with sudden death of him a helicopter accident in April

⁴⁵ Tareq Y. Ismael, **The Rise and Fall of the Communist Party of Iraq**, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008, p.109.

⁴⁶ USA, Department of State, Historical Documents, "Foreign Relations Of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XVII, Near East, 1961–1962, Document 167, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v21/d167> (Access Date: 03, 12, 2017).

1966.⁴⁷ Instead of Abdul Salam Arif, his brother Abdul Rahman Arif became new president of Iraq in 1966 so that unfinished tasks remained to his successor brother to accomplish.

As the all former regime and leaders of Iraq did before, Abdul Rahman Arif also declared a truce with the Kurds to consolidate its power within Iraq against his rivals. After a heavy defeat by Kurds in May 1966, the Prime Minister of Iraq started peace initiative to end the war between Arabs and Kurds. Furthermore, he announced on TV and radio that Iraq recognized Kurdish nationalism and bi-lateral state structure as a declaration On 29 June 1966. This ceasefire last for nearly two years but the implementations of declaration was never put on practice.⁴⁸ Next to that, the new Aref's regime understood that they could not defeat Kurds by using forces. In that point, as the Kurdish historian David McDowall states that some other factors became effective. One of them was that Kurds were being provided help by Iraqi enemies, Iran and Israel. The other factor was Arab regimes got heavy defeat against Israel during Six Day War of 1967.⁴⁹ Thereby, destabilization of Iraq by Kurds caused to weaken brother Arif's regime and provide reasons to another military coup in Iraq.

1.5. Iraq under Ba'ath Party

1.5.1. The Origin of Ba'ath in Iraq

The meaning of Ba'ath comes to mind of resurrection in Arabic. This resurrection was planned by prominent Arab intellectuals who tried to save their nation and lands against imperialist western powers. Hereby, Ba'ath party was established by two Sorbonne-educated intellectuals Michel Aftaq who was a Greek Orthodox and school teacher and Salah al-Din al-Baytar who was a Sunni Muslim in Damascus. On 7 April 1947 the party was united with Arab Ba'ath Movement which was led by another intellectual named Zaki Arsuzi who was an Alawite from Alexandretta. Thereby, the three different sects of Islam were represented by three Arab intellectuals under one political party in Syria. In 1953, the newly established party was united with Arab Socialist Movement led by Akram

⁴⁷ Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett, *Iraq since 1958: from Revolution to Dictatorship*, London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2001, p.103.

⁴⁸ Little, p.73; and Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, p.104.

⁴⁹ McDowall, p.320.

Hawrani, a Sunni Muslim and son of prominent landowners in Syria. After that, the party was named Arab Ba' The Socialist Party which would affect the whole Arab world. The party rapidly went into organization of Ba'ath in the other Arab countries with opening of new branches.

The Ba'ath Party rose with 3 main slogans which are unity, liberty and socialism in the Arab World. The Ba'ath party wanted to spread its ideas and consolidate its powers in the region on the way of struggle against imperialism. The main goals of party were stated that 1st rescue the Arab nations against foreign power through practicing socialism, 2nd oppose to imperialism and colonialism to in the context of non-alignment politics, and 3rd create one united Arab nation.⁵⁰ Under those slogans, the party was aiming to unify all Arab from the Morocco to the Gulf or as the Ba'athists described and from the Taurus mountains in the north to the Indian Ocean to the south where Arabs inhabited.⁵¹ The party had been involved in several initiatives in order to achieve their goals in the Middle East as it was stated above. The Ba'ath party did not hesitate to make a coup to achieve its own goals in the Arab counties. Therefore, the Ba'athist ideology would be the triggers of coups at the era of Cold War in the Middle Eastern politics.

After the rise of Ba'ath Party in Syria, the party was also established in Iraq by efforts of members to organize in other Arab countries for their desires in region. Therefore, the Ba'ath party was established by Syrian students studying in Iraq who mainly came from Aleppo and Alexandretta. Moreover, some Iraqi students who were studying in Lebanon and Syria returned to their homeland with the effects of Ba'ath's views. Hereby, the party started to spread within Iraq by educated person and a few military members. The party attracted all Iraqi people whether they are Shia or Sunni. At that time, Shia engineering, Fuad al-Rikabi was a prominent leader of the party an Iraq. When the Ba'ath was gotten to know by the Syrian Ba'ath, the party also joined demonstration against government in 1952. The party support overthrown of monarchy but the number of members remained limited. However, the party was able to recruit some leading Iraqi figures after the coup of included 1958.

⁵⁰ Galip Çağ and Sami Eker, "Ba'ath Ideology on Middle East: Syria and Iraq", **Çankırı Karatekin University, Avrasya Strateji Dergisi**, 2(2): 057-072, pp.61-62.

⁵¹ Archie Brown and Rosemary Thorp, **Culture, History and Ideology in the Formation of Ba'thist Iraq, 1968-89**, London: Palgrave, 1991, p.9.

After the downfall of house of Hashemite in Iraq, more people began to show interests to Ba'ath in Iraq and it started to reach a few military officers. One of the prominent military members of the party, Ahmed Hasan Bakr formally joined the party after the coup of 1958.⁵² By the time the party came into disagreement with Qasim's regime and they tried to kill Qasim in 1959 by attempting unsuccessful assassination. Therefore, the party tried to organize underground because of crackdowns of Qasim's regime against Ba'ath after the unsuccessful assassination. By the time of progress, the party expanded and got strong power in Iraq and they attempted successful and bloody coup d'état against Qasim by the help of cooperation with Nasserists and Kurds in 1963. In that period, Qasim's rival and pro-Nasserite military officer Arif became president of Iraq according to deal with Ba'ath and he began to seize against its rivals. Hereby, Arif perceived Ba'ath and Kurds as threat for his regime so he did not remain faithful the deal which was made with Ba'ath and Kurds. Arif successfully kept Ba'ath out of government and under a close watch on.

After the downfall of Qasim, the Ba'ath found themselves out of government. Therefore, another unsuccessful coup attempt was organized by members of Ba'ath party in Iraq where the changes are harsh and bloody. With this unsuccessful coup attempt, the Ba'ath was aiming to topple Arif and hold the power again in 1964, but they failed and they were jailed, killed and exiled. Furthermore, they went to underground again to prepare and continue for their activities. The general Hasan Bakr tried to reorganize the Ba'ath with the help of young Saddam Hussein during that period. In this period, Arif had a lot of internal troubles within Iraq. The Kurds revolted against central government for the right of autonomy and the northern of Iraq was a battleground between Arabs and Kurds. The civil war caused destabilization of Arif's regime and the country. Also, the defeat of Arabs in Six Days War of 1967 by Jews brought immorality and shock. And it caused that Arif brothers regime lost power in Iraq. In this way, all these developments paved the ways for another coup for the Ba'ath. The Ba'ath party knew that if they do not deal with Kurds during ongoing civil war in Iraq, they would have a lot of troubles and lack of legitimization after the coup of 1968.

⁵² Brown and Thorp, p.11.

1.5.2. The Kurds and Ba'ath Party in Iraq 1968-1974

As the all Iraqi regimes had faced the Kurdish question in Iraq, Ba'ath regime inherited it from previous regime. At the beginning of Ba'ath's era, the party tried to reach a compromise with Barzani by promising to put into practice Bazzaz Declaration⁵³ in 1966. However, Barzani had some doubts about Ba'ath views so he refused it. In that period, Barzani tried to consolidate his power against Bagdad, he made contact with Iran and Israel who were regional rival and enemy of Iraq to get support and aid. Barzani was provided antiaircraft arms and artilleries to consolidate Kurdish power with his foreign supports.⁵⁴ Hereby, Barzani attacked Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC) in March 1969 with heavy artilleries. In this way, Kurds achieved to damage 5 million dollars and they prevented to pump oil around 10 days in Kirkuk.⁵⁵ This attack signaled anew escalation between the Ba'athist government and Barzani.

After starting conflicts with Kurds, the central government of Iraq began another military operation against Kurds in April 1969. The Iraqi army could not defeat Kurds. So the Ba'ath party understood that they could not fully defeat Kurds since Kurds have foreign aid and the Ba'ath had then some troubles both in military and domestic politics to consolidate its power. Ba'ath had some fears of lack of being unable to hold power in Iraq. Therefore, Ba'ath leaders made a compromise with Kurds. Kurdish fighters on their part were battle weary because they had been in battles for a long time against central government. Moreover, there were some internal problems within Kurds as well. That is why, Barzani accepted to come to a compromise with Bagdad to take a respite and cope with problems within Kurdish question. As a consequence, both sides want to end this civil war to consolidate their power.

After the both sides were willing to have a compromise, Saddam Hussein who was the second man of Iraqi Ba'ath Party made a personal visit to Mustafa Barzani for a permanent solution to end Kurdish question and revolts. Moreover, Saddam Hussein put a piece of paper in front of Mustafa Barzani and he told him to write Kurdish demands from

⁵³ It is an offer of autonomy given to Iraqi Kurds by Qasim's regime named Bazzaz Declaration. For further information, please see: David Romano and Thomas G Strong, **The Kurdish Nationalist Movement: Opportunity, Mobilization and Identity**, New York: Cambridge University press, 2006, p.191.

⁵⁴ Marr, p. 151

⁵⁵ Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, p. 152

central government and he would not return to Bagdad till they had a permanent peace agreement.⁵⁶ What is more, Saddam managed to make a peace treaty to end war and on 11 March 1970 Ba'ath party declared a truce with Barzani forces named March Manifesto. Hereby, it was expected beginning of important era for Kurds in Iraq.

Along with 15-articles peace treaty of March, Kurds had self-rule and recognition of nationhood within Iraq with Kurds is equal to Arabs, recognition of Kurdish language as official one and right of autonomy with cultural rights. On 12th March Iraqi president, Bakr declared that "the war against Kurds is over"⁵⁷ Hereby, Kurds achieved to get from Bagdad what they had fought for since formation of Iraq as independent state. The treaty was put into force to end the war by Bagdad. In this ongoing period of compromise, the only obstacle was Muhammad Habib Karim who was Iranian origin, Shia and Luri Kurd. Therefore, Ba'ath refused to accept him as a vice president.⁵⁸ By the time of progress, disagreements such as Kirkuk issue between Barzani and Ba'ath increased so another war became unavoidable for the Kurds.

1.5.3. The United States' Approach to Kurds and the Ba'ath Party

At the time of Arif brothers' regime, the United States built stronger presence rather than Qasim's regime in Iraq against Soviet Union to prevent expansion and influences of communism in Middle East. Moreover, the United States advised Kurds to support Arif's regime and stop fighting. This time, nevertheless, Ba'athist coup was changing the situations in favor of Soviet Union, and US interests were in danger both in Iraq and Middle East due to that anti US policies of Ba'ath Party. The Iraqi regime had pursued a policy which was viewed to be unfriendly to the United States. The Ba'ath government failed that the United States was following anti-Arab policies by arming Iraq's regional opponents such as Iran and Israel. In addition, the United States supports for Israel during Six Day War in 1967 had also displeased the Iraqi government.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the United States tried not to cut all ties with hope that they would have some chances in the future to repair the bilateral relations. Yet, Ba'ath Party signed Soviet Iraq friendship treaty for fifty years on April 1972. In the following process, Ba'ath gave decision to nationalize

⁵⁶ McDowall, p. 327.

⁵⁷ Edgar, p.90.

⁵⁸ Marr, p.152.

⁵⁹ Hal Brands, "Making the Conspiracy Theorist a Prophet: Covert Action and the Contours of the United States-Iraq Relations", *The International History Review*, 33:3, 2011, p.384.

Western oil companies without providing compensation.⁶⁰ These policies of Ba'ath meant direct challenge to the United States in the region and it could not be expected that the United States could remain indifferent.

When the Ba'ath Party came to power in Iraq, the United States had some more important priorities than Middle East to tackle of problems and protect American interests in the whole world. Therefore, rising of China with US opening, defeat of Vietnam, and détente with Soviet Union had more priorities for the United States than Middle East. In this process, the United States paid attention to other part of World and encouraged American gendarme in Middle East, Iran to act and tackle problems with Iraq on behalf of the United States. Iran which had not yet consolidated its power in region wanted more American intervention in Iraq so Iran evaluated March treaty with Kurds as it is a Soviet gambit to expand communism in the region.⁶¹

After the president Richard Nixon came to power in the United States, the Middle East witnessed scene of important events. In 1971 Britain decided to leave Persian Gulf and this decision changed politics of the United States in the region. When there was British presence in the gulf, Britain did not allow vacuum of power to be filled by communist as an ally of western bloc. Nonetheless, with the withdrawal of British army, the problem of vacuum of power occurred in the region. Therefore, United Sates tried to fill this vacuum of power to provide continuity of oil flow to west and prevent expansion of communism. The United States was alarmed by fearing of permanent Soviet presence in gulf⁶² as it was stated above in the United States' strategies towards Middle East. Because, the United States were afraid of large expansion of Soviet Union in the gulf as a threat, president Nixon put Twin Pillar Policies into practice to provide aids and supports to its allies in the Middle East in order to cope with communism in the region.

At the beginning of Nixon administration, the president tried to avoid Iraqi domestic issues, especially Kurdish-Ba'ath conflict, and Nixon pursued non-involvement policies toward Kurds so that United Sates would be able to bring back in western bloc.⁶³ Nonetheless, the signing of 1972 treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Iraq and

⁶⁰ Brands, pp.384-387 and Little, pp.74-76.

⁶¹ Bryan R. Gibson, **Sold Out? Us Foreign Policy, Iraq, the Kurds, and the Cold War**, New York: Palgrave, 2015, p.277.

⁶² Brands, p.386. and Gibson, p.277.

⁶³ Gibson, p.200.

USSR had changed Nixon's approach to Iraq and the United States began to help the Kurdish leadership.⁶⁴ Along with this u-turn American decision, the United States was aiming to decrease Soviet penetration both in Iraq and Middle East with undermining Ba'ath regime by supporting Kurds. The United States faced with losing what they had built before in Iraq, looked for new ways to regain Iraq. Therefore, the United States started to play Kurdish card against Ba'ath Party by providing foreign aid to the Kurdish leadership which were seeking autonomy in Iraq and had several approaches to the US government.

1.5.4. Kurdish Revolt in 1974-75 and US Policy

As Mustafa Barzani agreed on March Agreement of 1970 with Ba'ath Party, Kurds achieved their natural rights within Iraq and the normalization process began with negotiations between two parties. In return of surrendering heavy weapons, Ba'ath accepted to share control of Kurdish territories with KDP. The first obstacle occurred with nomination of Muhammad Habib Karim who was rejected by Ba'ath as vice president of Iraq. In spite of that issue, Barzani still followed a peaceful way not to abolish the agreement. However, the subsequent events caused Kurds to pursue cautious policies towards Ba'ath Party. In the ongoing process, the doubts of Barzani increased and he started to arm and looked for foreign aids to be ready for any offensive attack of Iraqi army against his followers.

During the implementation process of March Announcement, two important developments triggered Mustafa Barzani to arm and look for foreign aids from Iran, Israel and the United States and to prepare for another Kurdish uprising. The first development was the two unsuccessful assassination attempts on his life which were carried out between 1971 and 1972 by second man of Ba'ath Party, Saddam Hussein.⁶⁵ This was apparently an attempt to weaken Kurdish movement by eliminating Barzani. Barzani managed to survive from these attempts and he started to prepare for the imminent war against Iraq. The second one was Ba'ath started to follow Arabization policy in mixed Kurdish and Arab areas, especially in Kirkuk and Mosul provinces. Therefore, Ba'ath

⁶⁴ Gibson, p.277; and Brands, p.387.

⁶⁵ Marr, 2012 p.152.

government deported around 45 or 50 thousand Failis Shia Kurds who were of Iranian origin and who mostly live in Bagdad.⁶⁶

All these events and policies of government in Kurdish territories made Barzani suspicious. However, He preferred not to confront the government before the end of 1974. For this reasons, Barzani tried to get aids from Iran, the United States and Israel for supporting Kurdish uprising against Baghdad. In addition, in 1973, The Iraqi government tried Arabization policies in Kurdish territories of Sinjar which has Yazidis majority. All these led to start anew confrontation between Barzani and government forces in the spring of 1974.⁶⁷

After signing Iraqi-Soviet friendship agreement of 1973 and nationalization of western oil companies in Iraq without compensation, Nixon administration was convinced to assist Kurdish revolt. Moreover American Kurdish expert Michael M. Gunter gave four more reasons why the United States helped Kurds. Firstly, United States did this as a favor for Shah of Iran who had problems with Iraq. Secondly, US support for Barzani was a part of Cold War policies because Iraq was ally of USSR. Thirdly, the United States government hoped that Kurdish leadership in future would provide oil the rich oil country to West. Barzani promised to USA to do so. Fourthly, a Kurdish war would be pressures on Iraqi regime not to send any military o any future Arab-Israeli war.⁶⁸ Consequently, The United States showed continuity of its main strategies in Middle East to prevent expansion of Soviet influence and provide oil flow under American protection with first three reasons. In addition to these reasons and strategies, the United States put protection of Israel at the priority of the United States in Middle East as well.

Meanwhile, Gunter classified Kurds as good and bad in the eyes of US foreign policies. When the United States classified Kurds who support Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in Turkey as bad to support its NATO ally territorial integrity and consider Kurds in Iraq as good⁶⁹ because of Soviet- Ba'ath close relations. In this point, as Gunter writes, the United States applied double standard policies towards Kurds who are living in different parts of countries in Middle East.

⁶⁶ Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, p.158.

⁶⁷ Ibid, pp.160-161.

⁶⁸ Michael M. Gunter, "The Five Stages of American Foreign Policy towards the Kurds", **Insight Turkey** Vol. 13 / No. 2 / 2011, p.96.

⁶⁹ Ibid, pp.95-96.

After Saddam made a personal visit to Moscow in order to get Soviet support with signing Iraq Soviet friendship treaty⁷⁰, President Nixon ordered CIA to fund 16 million dollars for Kurds.⁷¹ Hereby, Kurds found good foreign funders against Ba'ath government to fight. However, 16 million dollars was good for beginning but it was not enough to maintain war against a well-equipped Iraqi army. Therefore, the United States estimated that 18 million dollars per year were enough for Kurds to continue a defensive war against Bagdad but the United States only provided 3 million dollars while Iran provided 9 million dollars.⁷² The rest of 18 million dollars most probably were completed by Israel.⁷³ Under those regards, Kurds were prepared for an uprising against Soviet backed Iraqi army with cooperation of the three States in favor of their own interests.

Those countries which supported Kurds came together for different reasons and interests in Iraq even though they were ally during Cold War. While, the main goal of the United States was to weaken Ba'ath government with Kurds to protect western interests against communist expansion, Iran and Israel mostly focused on their own existence in the region. Those two countries ethnically, religiously and in terms of sectarian are more different than Arab countries with having strong geographical bases and military. Therefore, Iran and Israel, especially Israel were unwanted States among Arabs. Israel which was surrounded with Arab countries defeated Arabs and invaded the second most religious center of Muslim, Jerusalem so Israel had no friends except Iran and Kurds in the Middle East. Therefore, Israel supported minorities in Middle East as supporting Kurds to divide and rule regional countries in order to exist. On the other hand, Iran was one of the oldest countries in the Middle East that is why Iran had historical claims as a regional rival and power with neighboring countries. The main problem of Iran with Iraq based on Shatt al-Arab waterway which is vital waterway in Middle East. Think how precious while there are a few rivers in the region. Therefore, Iran wanted full control of way rather Iraq had more control than Iran. Under those regards, those three states supported Kurds under leadership of the United States in favor of reaching superiority against their rivals in the region by using Kurds.

⁷⁰ Stacy E. Holden, **A Documentary History of Modern Iraq**, Gainesville:University Press of Florida, 2012, p.215.

⁷¹ Marr, p.152.

⁷² USA, Department of State, Historical Documents, "Foreign Relations Of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XVII, Near East, 1961–1962, Document 321, July 28, 1972

<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve04/d321> (Access Date:31.12.2017)

⁷³ Little, pp.77-78.

The more Kurds resisted against Iraqi army, the more Ba'ath government got more weapons and aids from Soviet Union and the conflicts intensified between two sides. Therefore, former National Security Advisor and 56th the United States Secretary of State Henry Kissinger decided to increase Kurdish support from 3 to 5 million dollars on 29 May 1973 and Shah of Iran also increased amount of aid from 9 to 30 million dollars.⁷⁴ The main goal of the United States was to keep Kurds for defensive war rather than offensive one so the United States adopted no lose, no win policies towards to Kurds in Iraq.⁷⁵ The argument of the United States with this approach was to have future chance to gain Iraq again. Therefore, the United States had twice refused Barzani's will to begin offensive war instead of defensive war.⁷⁶ Kissinger thought that Kurdish offensive war was dangerous for American interests so he sent a message through CIA to Barzani not to start an offensive war as a result of Israeli encouragement.⁷⁷ Due to starting Arab- Israeli war in 1973 to keep Iraqi Army in war with Kurds in order to prevent Ba'ath to send army for help against Israel. Eventually, Israel achieved to keep Iraqi army in war with Kurds to prevent sending army so Iraq sent limited amount of a military aid for help during Arab- Israel war in 1973.⁷⁸

1.5.5. Algiers Agreement of 1975 and US Abandonment of the Kurds

The civil war in Iraq continued with its all violent between Ba'ath and KDP from 1974 to 1975. Kurdish resistance caused destabilization of Iraq and cost hundreds of thousands of dollars for the country. Therefore, Ba'ath firstly offered a Kurdish autonomy project in December 1973 which was supposedly based on 1953 census. That is why KDP rejected because Mustafa Barzani alleged that Kirkuk is a Kurdish city as it is capital of Kurdish populated region.⁷⁹ After that, Ba'ath tried to find a solution for Kurdish question in Iraq so Iraqi government once more again offered another Kurdish autonomy in 1974 and central government gave two weeks automaton to accept the autonomy law and join National Front in Iraq. The self-rule of Kurds offered by Iraqi government was rejected by

⁷⁴ Gibson, pp.222 -322.

⁷⁵ Neff, Donald. "The U.S., Iraq, Israel, and Iran: Backdrop to War." *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 20, no. 4, 1991, p, 26.

⁷⁶ Brands, p.389.

⁷⁷ Lokman I. Meho and Michel G. Nehme Nehme , "Pawns in a Deadly Game: Iraqi Kurds and the United States, 1972-1975", *International Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (January 1995), p.53.

⁷⁸ Ibid, p.53.

⁷⁹ McDowall, p.335.

Barzani since the amendment did not corresponded Kurdish demands, especially for Kirkuk.

According to Nader Entessar, the main reason of rejection of Autonomy Law by Kurds was that Barzani relied on the United States, Iran and Israel for their aids and supports to resist against Iraqi Army.⁸⁰ Moreover, Barzani said to Americans that if you continued to support us, we will keep on waging war. On the contrary, peace will be made because “we do not want to be massacred.”⁸¹ Later on Barzani stated that “Without American promises, we would not have acted the way we did. Were it not for American promises, we would never have become trapped and involved to such an extent.”⁸²

After Barzani refused the Autonomy Law of 1974, President Gerald Ford who came to power instead of Nixon approved the new Kurdish plan in 1974. Moreover, Israel provided 28 million dollars⁸³ and Iran provided artilleries and ordered direct operational supports for Kurds in Iraq.⁸⁴ Consequently, Kurds were ready to fight against Iraqi army with well-equipped Peshmergas. However things did not go well as Barzani expected to have better autonomy agreement with support of USA, Iran and Israel. Kurds were under heavy offensive attack of Iraqi Army so they needed more help from Iran and the United States but Iran started to decline its supports to Kurds. Kissinger also gave information to President Ford that Iran had a plan to come together with Iraq.⁸⁵

As Henry Kissinger informed President Ford, Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and the second powerful man of Ba'ath government, Saddam Hussein came together to sign an agreement in order to solve the disputed problems over Shatt al-Arab and Khuzestan borders which caused Iran to provide aids for Kurds. This meeting took place in March 1975 when members of OPEC counties gathered in capital of Algeria. Now Iran reached its interests through using Kurds as tool against Bagdad. The main goal of agreement was that Saddam wants to solve disputed borders with Iran to accept sharing control of these places in return for convincing Iran to terminate Kurdish aids. After Iran accepted the

⁸⁰ Nader Entessar, “The Kurds in Post-Revolutionary Iran and Iraq”, **Third World Quarterly**, Vol.6, No. 4 (Oct., 1984), p920.

⁸¹ David McDowall, p336.

⁸² Entessar, p.920.

⁸³ Gibson, p. 257.

⁸⁴ Alidad Mafinezam and Aria Mehrabi, **Iran and its Place Among Nations**, London: Paeger, 2008, p.32.

⁸⁵ Little, p.81.

treaty, Kurdish uprising rapidly decreased and collapsed. Saddam followed rational policy and achieved to cut foreign aids for Kurds in order to defeat Kurdish uprising.⁸⁶

After Algiers agreement, the United States also cut its supports to Kurds, William Safire wrote a column in New York Times and he claimed that United States betrayed Kurds and Ford Administration sold them out.⁸⁷ In this point, there are two approaches for abandonment of US policies towards Kurd whether the United States had possibility to assist Kurds or not. However, scholar generally agree that the United States deliberately terminate aids for Kurdish people without warning, ignored desperate Kurdish pleas for support, and failed to give humanitarian assistance.⁸⁸ Furthermore, Henry Kissinger said that “benefit of Nixon’s Kurdish decision was apparent in just over a year: Only one Iraqi division was available to participate in the October 1973 Middle East War.” Then he continued that “covert action should not be confused with missionary work.”⁸⁹ Hereby, Kurds fell short of their hopes.

After the foreign aids, especially Iranian supports ended, Kurdish situations became at the end of one's rope. The whole aids which Kurds received came through Iran so when Shah terminated assistance for Kurds, the all ways was closed for Kurds to get foreign aids because all the foreign aids were passing through Iran due to land locked Kurdish territory in Iraq. Kurds in Iraq had two neighbors Turkey and Iran. These two countries also had Kurdish minority while Iran accepted to help Kurds in Iraq, Turkey did not in spite of its interest. Therefore, Israel and the United States provided aids through Iran. Notwithstanding Iran terminated assistance for Kurds. Hereby, it was obvious that Kurds could not continue without foreign aids, especially Iranian supports so the Kurdish uprising collapsed within a few weeks.⁹⁰

After Iran cut off foreign aids for Kurds, Iraqi army launched another attack to defeat Kurdish uprising. The Kurdish defensive war collapsed and as Barzani foresaw that hundreds of Kurds were massacred without the United States and Iranian help. The rest of the Kurdish rebels included Mullah Mustafa Barzani fled to Iran. Consequently, Ba'ath

⁸⁶ Charles Tripp, **A History of Iraq**, 3rd Edition, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp.204-205.

⁸⁷ **The New York Times**, “Column by Safire on Kurds Assailed,” February 6, 1976

<http://www.nytimes.com/1976/02/06/archives/column-by-safire-on-kurds-assailed.html>

⁸⁸ Gibson, p.233.

⁸⁹ Gunter, **Out of Nowhere: The Kurds of Syria in Peace and War**, p.

⁹⁰ Martin Van Bruinessen. “The Kurds between Iran and Iraq.” **MERIP Middle East Report**, no. 141, 1986, pp.14-15.

government won a short lived victory against Kurds as a result of dealing with Iran. After that, Mustafa Barzani who was sick, went to the United States for treatment as an unwanted man and leadership Kurdish movement were on hand of his two sons, Masoud and Idris. However, It was not first defeat of Kurds by Baghdad as It was not first Kurdish revolts against central government since establishment of Iraq. It was just a change of power between Arabs and Kurds because Iraq would again become battleground with another Kurdish revolts.

1.6. Situation of Kurds During 1975-1991

In 1979, Iran witnessed an Islamic revolution which ended the rule of Muhammad Rıza Shah and established an Islamic Republic⁹¹. During the period of 1960s and 1970s the Led Shah of Iran had ruled Iran in a despotic manner.⁹²⁻⁹³

At the beginning, Iraqi regime welcomed the new regime due to Shah's policies against Iraq.⁹⁴ However, the relations between Iraq and Iran did not continue well as Bagdad expected. As it was stated before, Khomeini tried to look for ways in order to export Islamic revolution from Iran to other countries. Therefore, Tehran called for overthrow Ba'ath regime in Iraq.⁹⁵ For this reason, Saddam Hussein considered these situations as good pretext to turn into advantage for Iraq with Iraqi historical claims. Moreover, Saddam wanted to have full control of Shatt al-Arab waterway and to capture oil rich and Arab populated Iranian territory Khuzestan province.⁹⁶ After Saddam got green light from

⁹¹ The opposition both inside and abroad was led by exiled Shia cleric Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. With Khomeini's call in 1977, millions of people started to show more effective resistance against Shah of Iran by means of strikes, boycott, tax refusal, demonstrations and some different kind of noncooperation with Shah's regime.⁹¹ Shah could not control the wills of Iranians and at the end; he left the country on January 16, 1979. After that, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini came back to Iran on February 1, 1979. Khomeini organized a referendum with two option "yes" or "no" which meant whether you want an Islamic state or not so he declared Islamic state in Iran after overwhelming result. Khomeini became supreme spiritual leader (Valy-e-Faqih) of Iran. After he consolidated his power within Iran gradually, Khomeini tried to open paths from Iran to world for Islamic Revolution.

⁹² Gabrielle Vianna, "Securing Iran: Opportunities Presented with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action", **Global Security Studies**, fall 2015, Volume 6, Issue 4, p.2.

⁹³ SAVAK in Persian language (سازمان اطلاعات و امنیت کشور Sāzemān-e Ettlā'āt va Amniyat-e Keshvar), (Organization of National Intelligence and Security)

⁹⁴ Karsh, Efraim. "Geopolitical Determinism: The Origins of the Iran-Iraq War." **Middle East Journal**, 44, no. 2 (1990). pp.265-66

⁹⁵ Ibid, pp.265-66

⁹⁶ Swearingen, Will D. "Geopolitical Origins of the Iran-Iraq War." **Geographical Review**, 78, no. 4 (1988) p.408.

the United States and Arab States against new Iranian regime⁹⁷ in terms of exporting of revolution, Saddam tried to utilize political and military chaos in Iran so as to start one of the longest war in 20th century.⁹⁸⁻⁹⁹⁻¹⁰⁰

After Iran waged offensive war against Iraq, Iraq lost its power and superiority against Iran. Therefore, Kurds wanted use this advantage against central government of Iraq. However, the two prominent Kurdish parties KDP led by Barzani and PUK led by Jalal Talabani had different approach in the war at the beginning. While KDP had views to side with Iran to cooperate with other opposition groups to topple the regime, PUK supported that Kurds would have better negotiation situation against Ba'ath party. After a while, PUK also changed its approach and sided with Iran against central government of Iraq by establishing Kurdish front along with KDP within Iraq in 1984. In this period, Saddam lost its superiority against Iran and the war was moved in Iraqi territories both with Iranian attacks and Kurdish uprising against Bagdad. Therefore, Saddam appealed to mass destruction of Kurds with chemical weapons against Kurdish uprising in the following years of the war.¹⁰¹

The beginning of Kurdish uprising sided with Iran against Iraq in 1983 escalated the tension between Ba'ath and Kurds with participation of PUK into the war when two prominent Kurdish parties established Kurdish front against central government of Iraq. Therefore, Saddam Hussein launched ethnic cleansing and Arabization policies named al-Anfal campaign¹⁰² against Kurds in Iraq in 1986-1989. Saddam appointed his cousin, Ali Hassan al-Majid (known as "Chemical Ali") as both head of campaign and Northern

⁹⁷ Takeyh, Ray. "The Iran-Iraq War: A Reassessment." *Middle East Journal* 64, no. 3 (2010): 365-83. p.367.

⁹⁸ Mohammad Ayatollahi Tabaar, "Factional politics in the Iran-Iraq war", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, (2017), p.1.

⁹⁹ On September 22, 1980, Saddam Hussein launched a military operation to invade Iranian territory. At the beginning, although Iraq had superiority when the war started, Iran holds its power and started counter attacks. Furthermore, Iran became successful to carry the war from Iranian territory to Iraqi territory. Also Tehran tries to utilize minorities of Iraq to get superiority against Bagdad. It is really interesting that while Iraq supported Iranian Kurds, Iran supported Iraqi Kurds for their interests and get opportunity against its enemy during war because when the war started Kurd who located both Iran and Iraq became significant military factor for both sides

¹⁰⁰ Stephen C. Pelletiere, *The Iran-Iraq War: Chaos in a Vacuum*, London: Praeger, New York, 1992. pp.4 and 76.

¹⁰¹ Michael J. Kelly, *Ghosts of Halabja: Saddam Hussein and the Kurdish Genocide*, Westport, Connecticut, London: Praeger Security International, 2008, p.21

¹⁰² Later on, al-Anfal campaign was recognized as a genocide against Kurds by some countries such as Britain, Sweden, Norway and so on. For further information please see: *The Kurdish Genocide: Achieving Justice through EU Recognition*

Bureau. The campaign continued until 1989 with heavy destruction of Kurdish presence in Kurdish populated territory of Iraq. According to Human Right Watch (HRW), between 50.000 and 100.000 Kurds perished¹⁰³ and HRW added that 2.000 villages, lots of towns and administrative centers were demolished and these murders and destruction reached its top and Ba'ath government gassed Kurds in Halabja which caused 5.000 Kurdish civilians death On 16 March 1988.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, Kurdish officials claimed that 182.000 Kurds were massacred by the Iraqi regime¹⁰⁵ even though, Ali Hassan al-Majid said in a meeting with Kurds "It could not have been more than 100,000".¹⁰⁶ Moreover, 1.5 million Kurds were forced to displace during the war. However the number was not clear, one thing is obvious that the cost of Iran-Iraq war became really heavy for Kurds.

While Bagdad assisted Iranian Kurds and organization of Mujahedeen-e-Khalq, Iran assisted Iraqi Kurds against each other. The war got worsen in Iraq so Ba'ath used poison gas in the war against Kurds with causing overwhelming massacres and threatened Tehran in terms of using chemical weapons against Iran. The battle that reached huge destruction for the both sides ended without any victorious with a ceasefire between Iran and Iraq in 1988. The war only left more than one million death, injured people, and billion dollars financial damage and rundown settlements behind itself.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Human Rights Watch, "Genocide In Iraq The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds", **A Middle East Watch Report** New York, Washington, Los Angeles, July, 1993,

<https://www.hrw.org/reports/1993/iraqanfal/ANFALPRE.htm> (Access date: 18.01.18)

¹⁰⁴ Human Rights Watch, "Genocide in Iraq The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds", **A Middle East Watch Report** New York, Washington, Los Angeles, July, 1993, p.11.

¹⁰⁵ Andrea Fischer-Tahir. "Gendered Memories and Masculinities: Kurdish Peshmerga on the Anfal Campaign in Iraq." **Journal of Middle East Women's Studies**, 8, no. 1 (December 2012).. p.98.

¹⁰⁶ Human Rights Watch, "Genocide In Iraq The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds", **A Middle East Watch Report** New York, Washington, Los Angeles, July, 1993,

<https://www.hrw.org/reports/1993/iraqanfal/ANFALPRE.htm> (Access date: 18.01.18)

¹⁰⁷ The Guardian, "Iran and Iraq remember war that cost more than a million lives", 23 Sep 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/sep/23/iran-iraq-war-anniversary> (Access date: 18.01.18)

CHAPTER 2: THE USA-KRG RELATIONS 1991-2000

2.1 Invasion of Kuwait and the Gulf War

The Iraq-Iran war ended with very big destruction and disaster and both countries faced plenty of troubles both internally and externally, especially with regards to economic downswing. Iraq that started the war, run up a large amount of foreign debt. Due to the heavy destruction of the war, Iraq was not able to repay these foreign debts. After the war, a large part of the county was damaged and Iraq was only earning over 10 billion dollars from oil sales per year during that time¹⁰⁸ and this amount of money was not enough both for restoration of Iraq and repayment for foreign debts. It is noteworthy that the amount of Iraqi foreign debts reached 80 billion dollars during this period.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, Saddam looked for solutions in order to tackle problems of foreign debts with reconstruction of Iraq. Under these circumstances, Saddam embarked on another adventure in term of starting the invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990 to full fill his other ambitions in the Middle East.

Saddam tried to legitimize the invasion of Kuwait with Iraqi historical claims which dated back to Ottoman era when Kuwait was part of Ottoman vilâyet, Basra so Saddam claimed that the borders between Iraq and Kuwait were drawn by British and they are artificial and Kuwait was part of Iraq.¹¹⁰

Another reason was that there was disagreement among OPEC countries for production of oil. While Iraq wanted less production, Kuwait wanted more production of oil so Kuwait caused oil price decline as Iraq claimed.¹¹¹ Moreover, Iraq accused Kuwait of stealing Iraqi oil, especially related from Rumaila oil field on the borders between the two countries. For this reason Iraq requested 2.4 billion dollars compensation for Iraqi loss.¹¹² The main reason, behind these claims was, Saddam's desire to capture Kuwaiti oil fields

¹⁰⁸ Alastair Finlan, **Essential Histories: The Gulf War 1991**, Oxford: Osprey Publishing Ltd, 2003, p.

¹⁰⁹ Gary R. Hess, **Presidential Decisions for War Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, and Iraq**, 2nd Edition, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009, p.157.

¹¹⁰ Geoff Simons, **Iraq: from Sumer to post-Saddam**, 3rd editions, UK:Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp343-344.

¹¹¹ Christopher Greenwood, "New World Order or Old? The Invasion of Kuwait and the Rule of Law." **The Modern Law Review** 55, no. 2 (1992), p.153.

¹¹² Alan Munro, **Arab Storm Politics and Diplomacy behind the Gulf War**, London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2006 , p.27.

in order to control oil price in the World and to solve problems of Iraqi foreign debt half of which was due to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia so according to Saddam, this money could not be debt because Iraq waged the war so as to prevent Iranian expansion. Lastly, the Arab countries came together for Iraqi debt in Jeddah but Iraq could not get what Saddam wanted for Iraqi debt forgiveness. We need to point out that Kuwait had given 17 billion dollars to Iraq during Iraq-Iran war¹¹³

Iraq launched invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990 and Iraq annexed Kuwait on 8 August 1990. Furthermore, Iraq declared that Kuwait is 19th province of Iraq on 28 August. Invasion of Kuwait provided Iraq to control large amount of oil reserve and oil production in the world. This situation was hazardous for protection of oil and western interests in the Middle East due to oil dependency of western countries for their economy. Therefore the reaction of U.S. was so firm and The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) took 11 decisions to tackle the issue in peace by imposing very comprehensive sanctions against Iraq and to demand that Iraq should withdraw from Kuwait by 15th of January otherwise the military force will be used against Iraq according to resolution 678 of UNSC.¹¹⁴

An attempt to form a military coalition against Iraq was started under leadership of the United States on the refusal of Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. To legitimize use of force action against Iraq, the United States provided UNSC to have available decisions and the preparations hereby were completed. The fact that, Iraq did not withdraw from Kuwait so the British and US air forces which took off from Saudi Arabia started to bomb Iraqi military forces on 17 January 1991. Eventually, the coalition under leadership of USA destroyed big part of Iraqi army and forced Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait with Operation Desert Storm. Therefore, Iraq accepted resolutions of UN by accepting to giving up all claims over Kuwait after overwhelming defeat.

¹¹³ G. Simon Harak "Hypertexting the Gulf War " **Cross Currents**, Vol. 41, No. 4, Gary MacEoin Enrique Dussel (Winter 1991-92). p.508.

¹¹⁴ Majid Khadduri and Edmund Ghareeb, **War in the Gulf: 1990-91 The Iraq-Kuwait Conflict and Its Implications**, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, p.132.

2.2. The United States in the Middle East After the Wars

The American presence in the Middle East dates back to 19th century, when the American missionaries and merchants came to Middle East for different kind of reasons. However, the presence of the United States in the Middle East came to become visible after the World War I (WWI). First of all, the United States made an agreement with Britain for Middle East oil and following that period then the United States made another oil agreement with Saudi Arabia in 1933. In spite of the fact that the United States went into one's shell after WWI, the United States were integrated into global world politics after World War II (WWII) with rising of Soviet Union and expansion of communism. Therefore, the United States supported Middle Easter countries as USA support other states all around the world. In this regard, the United States cooperated with regional states under different name of foreign policies. The United States cooperated and assisted Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran and Israel against Soviet Union with expansion of communism while USA tried to gain Egypt and Iraq into western countries as well.

The main strategies of the United States in the Middle East is based on flow of oil along with protection oil rich Middle Easter countries under shield of USA and to prevent expansion of communism to the region. Therefore, in the 20th century the United States carried out some foreign policies such as Eisenhower Doctrine and twin pillars policies to protect interests of western countries. Therefore the United States tried to assist countries such as Iran, Iraq and Egypt to win them to the western block in the cold war politics of the Middle East. While Iraq rejected to cooperate with western block and cooperated with Soviet Union in 1967, the United States and Iran encouraged Kurds of Iraq to revolt against Iraq with a covert action. The Kurdish revolt ended due to Iranian-Iraqi agreement of 1975 which US and Israel tacitly supported Moreover, the United States did not avoid using carrots and stick so as to protect western interests. Although the United States failed to gain Iraq, Washington achieved to hold Egypt in western block after Yum Kumpir War in 1973 by signing Camp David agreement between Israel and Egypt in 1978.

Winning Egypt after Camp David Treaty, the United States had upper hand in the Middle East and Soviet Union interest was confined mainly in Iraq and some small countries in the region. However, the Islamic revolution in 1979 in Iran led to the overthrow of the

Shah of Iran who was a strategic ally of US in the region. In addition, in 1980 Carter Administration had a serious problem with Iran over hostage crisis.

After western block lost Iran, vacuum of power rose to the surface in the gulf and alarm bells started to ring for oil rich western allies and flow of oil from Middle East to western countries. In that position, according to Yakub Halabi, the United States faced two choices: to lure Iraq into western block or strengthen its power in the gulf so as to contain both Tehran and Bagdad so the United States followed both of them.¹¹⁵ In addition to increasing naval forces of USA in the gulf, Islamic revolution in Iran and Soviet invasion in Afghanistan caused the United States to follow direct policies in the gulf. After outbreak of Iraq-Iran war, Saudi Arabia appealed to the United States for protection. In the following period, the United States realized that Gulf is as important as Europe so the United States were even ready to trigger nuclear wars to protect the region.¹¹⁶

At the beginning of Iraq-Iran war, the United States protected its neutrality position. To some extent, it is argued that the United States flashed green lights to Saddam for attacking Islamic Regime in Iran.¹¹⁷ The initiatives of exporting Islamic revolution to Middle East caused American concerns and threaten western interests in the region. Therefore, the United States began to contact with Saddam so as to restrain Iran by providing assistances to Iraq in 1982. Following process, Iraq was taken out of terrorist list, foreign minister of Iraq visited Washington in 1984 and USA appointed an ambassador to Iraq in 1985. Furthermore, the United States gave credit to Iraq. Under these regards, the United States tried to keep Iraq with western block by providing aids in order to prevent expansion of communism and export of Islamic revolution in favor of western allies and interests.

With the end of Cold War, western block declared its victory against Eastern block and the United States became indisputably the only superpower and world leader. After the collapse of Soviet Union, invasion of Kuwait by Iraq was the most important development and challenge against the United States by controlling large amount of oil. Thus, multinational coalition was formed under leadership of the United States and Iraq was

¹¹⁵ Yakub Halabi, **US Foreign Policy in the Middle East: From Crises to Change**, Burlington: Ashgate, 2009, p.82.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.83.

¹¹⁷ Gibson, "Covert Relationship: American Foreign Policy, Intelligence, and the Iran-Iraq War, 1980-1988", p.34.

defeat heavily with Operation Desert Storm. Hereby, once again Iraq was added American blacklist. After that, the United States put dual containment policy into practice so as to contain American enemies, both Iraq and Iran. In this regard the United States wanted to isolate and punish these countries which dared to challenge against the United States from world. After the collapse of Soviet Union, the United States not only tried to fill out vacuum of power politically but she also tried to fill all levels- economic, political and social. Furthermore, Middle Easter countries were requested to have integration with world economy and adaptation of western kind of governance along with liberalization of economy and democratization of politics.¹¹⁸

2.3. Gulf War and Engaging Kurds Again

After Iran and Iraq had an agreement in Algeria during OPEC summit in 1975, Iraq shared control of Shatt al-Arab waterway with Iran in return to stop supporting Kurds. Furthermore, the United States had also stopped assistances for Kurd at the Shah's request. According to Marianna Charountaki, the reason behind US policy change was because of 1973 oil crisis and dependency of western countries for Iraqi oil. Also Ba'ath party put more pressures on Iraq Communist Party (ICP) which caused worse relations with Soviet Union in 1975.¹¹⁹

In 1979, Mustafa Barzani passed away and Kurdish question stayed frozen. This meant that Kurd had to bury their aspirations for long time. Furthermore, the director of CIA, John Deutsch highlighted that any attempt for Kurdish movements would bring destabilization into region, included Turkey, Iran and Iraq. In this regard, the United States followed this approach until the end of Iraq-Iran war.¹²⁰

United States always followed its strategic national interests in Middle East in terms of having good relations with the main regional actors. However, in 1979, unexpected development occurred in Iran and Khomeini declared Islamic regime and stopped cooperation with the United States. This was obvious changing balance of power for the

¹¹⁸ Ramin Ahmadov, "The US Policy Toward the Middle East in the Post-Cold War Era," **Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations**, v. 4, n. 1-2, Bahar/ Yaz 2005, s. 138-139.

¹¹⁹ Marianna Charountaki, **The Kurds and US Foreign Policy: International Relations in the Middle East Since 1945**, London and New York: Routledge, 2011, p.142.

¹²⁰ Charountaki, p.142.

United States in terms of national interests in the region. On this basis, the US national security advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski emphasized that existence of Islamic regime in the region dictated need to have good relations between the United States and Iraq.¹²¹ Even though the United States took a neutral stance at the beginning of Iraq-Iran war, at the later stage of the war it began to change its policies. The United States provided aids and weapons to Iraq. Moreover the United States provided economic and technological assistances to Iraq for production of chemical and biological weapons¹²² against Kurds and Iran in 1980s.

United States tried to follow balanced policies between Iraq and Iran during the war so Washington sometimes helped Iran when United States mainly support Iraq in the context of regional developments of the Middle East. Therefore, the Kurdish issue could not be kept apart from regional events from the view of US policy. In this regard, Kurdish issue with its developments during Iraq-Iran war was given less significance. The most important event was Halabja attack on March 16, 1988 under Anfal campaign against Kurds by using chemical weapons due to Kurdish- Iranian cooperation. Washington considered Kurds as ally of Iran so the United States accused Iran for use of chemical weapons in Halabja since there is no evidence and Washington stayed away from this debate until UN Security Council resolution 612 on May 9, 1988, which the United States supported.¹²³

The Anfal campaign was implemented by Ba'ath party for 3 years and killed thousands people. The United States helped Iraq to produce chemical weapons during this period and did not do anything to stop Iraq, even during Halabja attack. However, the US congress imposed sanction on Iraq because of use of chemical weapons but Regan administration did not go a step further.¹²⁴ The most important thing was that Congressional Bill for sanctions against Iraq turned over a new leaf for relations between the United States and Kurds.¹²⁵ The Cold War ended with hegemony of the United States but Kurdish issue was still unsolvable in Iraq. Even though the Anfal campaign provided some changes in US policies towards Kurds, the main changes came during Gulf War and

¹²¹ Ibid, p.142.

¹²² Ibid, p.142

¹²³ Lin, Sharat G. "US Lying about Halabja: Justifying the Invasion of Iraq." **Economic and Political Weekly**, 42, no. 36 (2007). p.36-29.

¹²⁴ Lin, p.30-36.

¹²⁵ Charountaki, p.148.

the United States helped Kurds to establish their de facto autonomy region in northern Iraq as It will be explained below.

2.3.1. 1991 Uprising in Iraq and the Role of Kurds

Before the United States launched a military operation against Iraq to liberate Kuwait, the President of USA, George H. W. Bush announced “that there is another way for the bloodshed to stop. And that is for the Iraqi military and the Iraqi people to take matters into their own hands and force Saddam Hussein, the dictator, to step aside”¹²⁶. Hereby, the United States was aiming to overthrow Saddam Hussein with a military coup by spending about 15-20 million dollars as well.¹²⁷ However, the United States used military forces against Iraq and Iraqi military was overwhelmingly defeated by coalition. Kuwait was liberated and Iraqi army rapidly withdrew to Bagdad. Even though the ground war was started, the coalition did not enter Bagdad and did not topple Saddam’s regime. Once more again, on March 1, 1991 Bush stated that: “In my own view...the Iraqi people should put [Saddam] aside, and that would facilitate the resolution of all these problems that exist and certainly would facilitate the acceptance of Iraq back into the family of peace-loving nations.”¹²⁸ After that statement, Shiites in southern and Kurds in northern Iraq started to revolt against Saddam Administration.

In the Kurdish area, the uprising firstly started in small Kurdish town, Ranya and the other parts of Kurdish populated region in Iraq joined the uprising against Bagdad. Dohuk, Erbil, Sulaymaniya, and Zakhu were captured one after another by Kurds. Lastly, Kirkuk, “the jewelry of Kurdistan crown” which is also claimed by Kurds was captured by Kurdish peshmerga on March 19, 1991. In this process, jash¹²⁹ joined whether KDP or PUK and they played significant role during Kurdish revolt. Hereby, the number of peshmerga increased from 15.000 to over 100.000 and merely small minority jash leaders

¹²⁶ Hashim, Ahmed. "Saddam Husayn and Civil-Military Relations in Iraq: The Quest for Legitimacy and Power." *Middle East Journal*, 57, no. 1 (2003), p.10.

¹²⁷ Kenneth Katzman, **CRS Report Iraq's Opposition Movements**, March 26, 1998
<https://web.archive.org/web/20121103122106/http://www.fas.org/irp/crs/crs-iraq-op.htm#3>
(Access date: 30.11.2018)

¹²⁸ **BBC**, Remembering the Kurdish uprising of 1991, <http://www.bbc.com/news/in-pictures-35967389>
(Access date: 30.11.2018)

¹²⁹ Jash or Josh are used by Kurdish nationalist for Kurdish militia who help central government. Bagdad named them Fursan Salah al-Din (Saladin Knights). For further information, please see: Gunter, **The A to Z of the Kurds**, pp.91-92.

kept their loyalty for Saddam.¹³⁰ The biggest reason for Kurdish forces capture of their territories rapidly was their belief that Bush Administration would support them and the defeated Iraqi army in Kuwaiti theatre had been would withdraw from Kurdish territory too.

It was widely thought that the fall of Ba'ath regime in Iraq was a matter of time. On 13 March 1991, for instance Talabani stated "I expect his [Saddam Hussein] downfall soon, in a matter of weeks".¹³¹ Nevertheless, Kurdish uprising would not be long-lived because Saddam Hussein brutally repressed the Shiite uprising in south and launched an offensive attack against the Kurds in north. In spite of the fact that the United States forbade Iraq to use fixed-wing aircraft, the helicopters were not included in this prohibition during ceasefire agreement. Iraqi army used helicopters to suppress the risings and Kurdish rebels lost captured cities and were overwhelmingly defeated against Saddam once. Hundreds of Kurds perished due to Iraqi offensive attacks and tens of thousands of Kurds scared from second Halabja so they left their homes and fled to Turkey and Iran. The wave of people clogged the road and around two million people took to roads due to fear of death. People left everything behind in order to survive and people became refugee without any shelter. Furthermore, the refugee faced and struggled against starving, thirsting and diseases such as cholera, typhus, and dysentery during windy and bitter cold. Aid workers reported that every day hundreds of thousands refugees were facing death.¹³² Therefore, both prominent Kurdish leaders, Barzani and Talabani blamed of the United States of abandonment: "You personally called upon the Iraqi people to rise up against Saddam Hussein's brutal dictatorship." Furthermore, Kurdish leaders called the United States to halt what they described as a "Kurdish genocide".¹³³

2.3.2. Operation Provide Comfort and No-fly Zone

The Kurdish refugees gathered near borders of Turkey and Iran so as to flee from Iraqi troops. A great number of them were allowed to enter Iran. This situation was different on Turkish- Iraqi border. Only small portion was allowed to enter Turkey. The refugee issue

¹³⁰ McDowall, pp.371-372.

¹³¹ Peter J. Lambert, "United States and the Kurds: case studies in the United States engagement", (Master of Arts In National Security Affairs, **The Naval Postgraduate School**, December 1997), p.71-72.

¹³² Lieutenant Colonel Ronald J. Brown, **Humanitarian Operations in Northern Iraq, 1991 With Marines in Operation Provide Comfort**, Washington, D.C: History And Museums Division Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1995, p.1-2.

¹³³ Lambert, p.72-73.

caused concerns for both Iran and Turkey because they also have important Kurdish minority within their borders. Therefore, they were afraid that exodus of Kurds would trigger and deteriorate Kurdish question inside their borders in terms of raising Kurdish nationalism which would have threatened the national security of both countries. On one hand, Iran and Turkey called UNSC to take actions for Kurdish refugees¹³⁴ and on the other hand, circumstances looked desperate for the Kurds so Moussad Barzani wanted help from the United States. Even though, the United States was initially reluctant for help, public pressure, Turkey and Britain played important role for intervention on the part of President George W. Bush in the matter.¹³⁵ For this reason, UNSC prepared resolution 668 on 5 April 1991 so as to hinder Iraq. The resolution 668 condemned Iraqi because of repression of Iraqi people, mostly Kurds and demanded immediate end for this repression. It also called for the allowance of international humanitarian aid access for desperate refugees.¹³⁶

After the resolution 668 was passed, the coalition started to take action against Iraqi policies towards Kurds. On 10 April 1991, President Bush warned Saddam for his brutal actions in Kurdish populated region and On 16 April 1991, operation in Northern Iraq was started by USA, France and Britain. A multinational coalition was established by twenty thousand troops from thirteen different countries for providing humanitarian aids to Kurds. The coalition aimed to form safe haven for Kurds in Northern part of Iraq. For this reason, no-fly zone was formed above 36th parallel.¹³⁷ However, Suleymamia was not included in 36th parallel. Although Mosul is included in 36 parallel, it was not covered in no-fly zone. In addition, Kirkuk, which is referred to by Kurds as a “hearth of Kurdistan” was not included in no-fly zone.

Along with the formation of safe zone for Kurds in 1991, Iraqi army was forced to withdraw from the most of Th Kurdish territories except Kirkuk and the army was not let to have any military actions in the no-fly zone. Kurds returned to their homes thanks to the Safe Heaven. In the process of US intervention in Northern Iraq with coalition, US

¹³⁴ James Cockayne and David Malone, *Creeping Unilateralism: How Operation Provide Comfort and the No-Fly Zones in 1991 and 1992 Paved the Way for the Iraq Crisis of 2003*, **Security Dialogue**, vol. 37, no. 1, March 2006, p.25.

¹³⁵ Brown, p.2.

¹³⁶ UNSCR Search engine for the United Nations Security Council Resolutions, <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/688> (Access date: 03.02.2018)

¹³⁷ Cockayne & Malone, p.127-128.

president Bush stated that the main goal of the United States in Northern Iraq is for “humanitarian concerns” and “aid”.¹³⁸ The no-fly zone was called under different names. Firstly, it was named “Operation Safe Heaven”. Then, it was named “Operation Poised Hammer” by Turkish government and lastly “Operation Northern Watch” in 1997. The establishment of no-fly zone provided Kurds to act freely and have full control of Kurdish populated areas in northern Iraq. These situation led Kurds to establish a de-facto Kurdish autonomy region in Northern of Iraq. According to Charountaki, the establishment of Kurdish autonomy region in Iraq was an “accidental” result of the United States humanitarian policy in Iraq.¹³⁹

2.3.3. Saddam’s Forces Leave Kurdish Areas in 1992

After the Iraqi army quelled the continuance of the riot firstly in south then in north, the president of Iraq, Saddam Hussein proclaimed an amnesty for all Kurds who joined the revolt except who blamed of murdering, raping and treason. However, the leader of KDP Masoud Barzani refused and the leaders of Kurds were blamed of being traitor due to having relations with foreign states. Even Saddam Hussein restated his offer for Kurdish amnesty on 18 April 1991 during his visit to Erbil; there were still conflict between Kurdish rebels and Iraqi army. Besides, having conflicts between Iraqi army and Kurdish rebels, the secrets talks were holding between Kurds and Bagdad. On 23 April 1991, while Barzani announced KDP had willing for “safekeeping zone” managed by coalition led by USA for Kurds, Talabani said that Saddam accepted to have a treaty under the principles of March manifesto of 1970.¹⁴⁰

Also, the United States was willing to establish a Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) so as to provide continuity of no-fly zone for Kurds in northern Iraq. The coalition led by USA provided a safe zone for Kurds in northern Iraq and they started to withdraw from Kurdish populated regions but the US commander in Kurdish populated regions rejected that the coalition was leaving Kurds to their destiny but the commander accepted that the operation in Kurdish populated regions was almost done. In addition, the coalition forces left Kurdish populated regions but they formed multinational forces in Turkey in July to

¹³⁸ Adam Roberts, *Humanitarian War: Military Intervention and Human Rights*, **International Affairs** (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-), Vol. 69, No.3 (Jul., 1993), p.436.

¹³⁹ Charountaki, p.170.

¹⁴⁰ O'ballance, pp .190-191.

prevent and deter any attacks of Iraqi army to no-fly zone.¹⁴¹ For the first time in the world history, along with the completion of coalition task in Kurdish populated region, the international forces took actions for Kurds in Iraq.¹⁴²

The negotiations for autonomy began between Kurdish leaders and Baghdad again. On 29 July 1991, European community and Britain stated that “it would be appropriate for the international community to give its support to a [satisfactory autonomy] agreement on the basis of Resolution 688 of the Security Council”.¹⁴³ During the negotiation process, the both Kurdish leaders, Talabani and Barzani wanted the same thing which is “expanded autonomy within the federated structure of Iraq promising democracy, pluralism and constitutional rule in Baghdad”.¹⁴⁴ While Barzani had wills to accept autonomy which Bagdad offered and did not include Kirkuk and its oil fields, Talabani did not accept these conditions.¹⁴⁵ However the autonomy negotiations between regime and Kurdish leaders were suspended on 30 July.

On 23 October 1991, when the autonomy negotiations failed between Kurdish leaders and Bagdad, central government of Iraq started to withdraw from Kurdish cities, Erbil, Dohuk, and Sulaimaniya and placed economic embargo against Kurdish populated region by withdrawing governmental staffs, employees and cut off their salary in schools, hospitals, offices and so on if the government staffs stay.¹⁴⁶ There were a lot of problems such as lack of sufficient fuel and food occurred in Kurdish populated region. Some attempts had been made with Iraqi officers by Kurdish leaders to remove blockade but no results had been obtained so the economic embargo continued. Therefore, Kurds were exposed to double embargo. The first one was directly coming from Bagdad and the second one was indirectly coming from UN that imposed embargo against Iraq. Therefore, Kurds were facing death, starvation and diseases.

On one hand, Kurdish people were struggling with terrible situations during economic blockade, on the other hand, Kurdish leaders accepted that some commanders abused their position for personal interests, corruptions in Kurdish populated regions increased and

¹⁴¹ Ibid, p.193.

¹⁴² Robert Olson, *The Kurdish Question in the Aftermath of the Gulf War: Geopolitical and Geostrategic Changes in the Middle East*, Third **World Quarterly**, Vol. 13, No. 3 (1992), pp. 475-499, p.485.

¹⁴³ Kerim Yildiz, **The Kurds in Iraq: The Past, Present and Future**, London: Pluto Press, 2004, p.42.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, p.42.

¹⁴⁵ Robert Olson, p.486.

¹⁴⁶ Gunter, "A De Facto Kurdish State in Northern Iraq", p.295.

there were differences between prominent political parties in Kurdish populated regions. All the parties in Kurdish populated regions were aware of domestic problems in no-fly zone so the parties had agreed to clean up these problems and run for elections. However, the political parties still had their different views for election and the decision of this election led to formation of Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in 1992.

2.3.4. Election in KRG

The roots of KRG date back to Kurdistan Front¹⁴⁷ after the tragedy of Anfal Campaign in 1989. As Kerim Yıldız stated that it was a rainbow alliance of Kurdish political parties.¹⁴⁸ Eight Kurdish political parties¹⁴⁹ came together to cooperate against the brutal policies of Central government of Iraq. This cooperation continued during the Gulf War and establishment of no-fly zone. Furthermore, the no fly zone was governed by Kurdistan front and the decisions within Kurdistan Front were normally taken on the bases on unanimity. However, the decisions were not taken easily, only few decisions were taken because each party had its veto power so it negatively affected to the process of administration of region. Barzani was well aware of these troubles as other Kurdish leaders were and he said "Our governing process is paralyzed" so he suggested running for election in Kurdistan so as to solve the problems of the region by electing legislative council and supreme Kurdish leaders.¹⁵⁰

The leader of PUK, Talabani stated that "the elections will lead to the formation of a legitimate, constitutional and legal entity in a parliament representing the Kurdish people and the establishment of a political decision-making body in Iraqi Kurdistan."¹⁵¹ Moreover, the leaders of two prominent parties Talabani and Barzani had different views in terms of election and autonomy. On the one hand, KDP leader Barzani was willing to

¹⁴⁷ In 1987, Kurdistan front was established against Saddam Hussein by Massoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani along with other small Kurdish groups. For further information, please visit: **BBC**, "Iraqi Kurdistan profile - timeline", 31 October 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-15467672> (Access date: 03.02.2018).

¹⁴⁸ Kerim Yildiz, p.44.

¹⁴⁹ Kurdistan Toilers' Party, Kurdistan People's Democratic Party (KDPD), KDP, the PUK, Kurdistan Socialist Party (PASOK), the Assyrian Democratic Movement and Kurdistan Branch of the Iraqi Communist Party joined in rainbow alliance of Kurdish political parties.

¹⁵⁰ Gunter, "A Kurdish State in Northern Iraq?", p.48.

¹⁵¹ Lungthuiyang Riamei, **The Kurdish Question: Identity, Representation and the Struggle for Self-Determination: Identity, Representation and the Struggle for Self- Determination**, Kindle Edition, New Delhi: KW Publishers Pvt Ltd, 2015, <https://www.kisa.link/LOWn> (Access date: 03.02.2018).

accept autonomy offered by Bagdad even though it is restricted. The main anxiety of Barzani was reactions of Iraqi neighbors who have Kurdish minority as well and afraid from establishment of Kurdish State which will affect Kurdish nationalism within their borders. Therefore, Barzani wanted to get approvals of Iraqi neighbors by avoiding radical actions against Kurds. On the other hand, PUK leader, Talabani wanted to base the Kurdish region relations with Bagdad on the principles of self determination rather than a simple autonomy. Both Kurdish leaders signaled that they had no intension to seek for an independent Kurdistan in order to avoid reaction of Iraqi neighbors.¹⁵²

Kurdistan Front was shaky and unsuitable arrangement between two Kurdish groups which had bitter and bloody relations. All felt a need for election to select the leader of the region. There were equally insurmountable obstacles to hold election. Nevertheless, in January of 1992, the date of election was decided for 3rd April but the election was held on 19 May 1992 . A million and a half Voters had participated in the election. Members of Kurdistan Front wanted to include members of Iraqi National Turcoman Party to join the election in Erbil but latter refuse to join election in order not to give recognition to KRG government. Furthermore, Saddam Hussein announced that holding this election is illegal but he could not prevent election due to shield of coalition powers.

In the election, 7 % threshold was put into practice so small parties could not achieve to pass it. For this reason, small parties failed to enter the Kurdish National Assembly. Although the election witnessed many forts and irregularities which were committed by KDP and PUK members, the results had been considered to be fair and international observers approved it.¹⁵³ There were 105 seats in assembly and KDP and PUK only achieved to pass the threshold but 5 seats were reserved for ethnic and religious minorities in KRG. In spite of the fact that KDP got more votes and seats than PUK, both parties agreed on forming a coalition government based on formula of fifty-fifty arrangement to rule the area. This was a compromise agreement to avoid conflict in future in Kurdish populated region. Under these circumstances, Kurdistan Regional Government was established.

¹⁵² Gunter, "A Kurdish State In Northern Iraq?", pp.48-49.

¹⁵³ Voller, p.72.

2.3.5. US Policy Approaches to KRG

According to Robert Olson, since the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East, Kurdish people really got good chance to establish their own national independent state or at least having broader autonomy in Iraq after providing safe heaven by coalition in 1992.¹⁵⁴ The United States played leading role during the achievement of formation of a Kurdish government in Iraq. The United States led the coalition and provided humanitarian and military aids for Kurds.¹⁵⁵

This leading role of the United States in the formation of KRG was not a planned policy. It was a large degree forced on US policy makers due to unseen circumstances which were forced upon them. Marianna Charountaki a leading expert in the field provides reasonable explanation for this. She writes that the United States had no intentions to establish a Kurdish autonomy in Iraq but Kurdish autonomy was accidentally established by US humanitarian policy in Iraq.¹⁵⁶ Moreover, Washington was reluctance to help desperate Kurds in Iraq but public pressures, Turkish president Turgut Özal and British Prime Minister John Major forced the United States to take actions for Kurds in Iraq. The main concern of the United States was to prevent “Lebanization” of Iraq and to prevent further deteriorating situations in the Middle East.¹⁵⁷ Washington was afraid of any intervention in northern Iraq would jeopardize western interest in the Middle East so USA was not willing to intervene. In this regard, Lokman Meho claimed that unification of Kurds is a threat for western interests (mainly US interests) in the Middle East¹⁵⁸ because USA has considered Kurds as pressure card against central government and the United States always tried to have influences on whole country rather than a part of it. However, the ongoing situations in Iraq forced President Bush to launch an operation for Kurds in Iraq and this operation ended with establishment of KRG in 1992.

Even though, the United States considers Kurds as a pressure cards against Baghdad during Cold War and assisted them covertly, Washington began to pursue overt policies

¹⁵⁴ Robert Olson, p.479.

¹⁵⁵ Adam Roberts, Humanitarian, p.436.

¹⁵⁶ Charountaki, p.170.

¹⁵⁷ Gunter, the United States **Foreign Policy Towards Kurds in The Kurdish Question in U.S. Foreign Policy: A documentary Source Book**, p.3.

¹⁵⁸ Meho, p.13.

towards Kurds after collapse of Soviet Union and Gulf War.¹⁵⁹ The relations between Kurds of Iraq and the United States entered another different stage after formation of KRG in 1992. The relations between the two parties began to institutionalize rapidly. The relationship was uneasy one and gradual process with a lot of hesitations surrounding it. Despite the fact that there were international observers in Kurdish populated region during Kurdish election of 1992, State Department was not willing to send observers for election.¹⁶⁰ However, United States announced that the Kurdish election in Iraq would “help lead to a better life for all the people of northern Iraq ...” Moreover, the United States gave its ideological support for democratic process but it also highlighted territorial unity of Iraq.¹⁶¹ However, the official relations between KRG and Washington began to be stabilized and went further after the Kurdish election of 1992.

We need to point out here, the warming relations between KRG and US was a part of US general policy to topple the regime of Saddam. Even CIA estimated that Saddam would collapse in six months but it did not happen. Therefore, USA started to support Kurds and Iraqi oppositions against Saddam. In July 1992, Washington granted 40 million dollars to Kurdish people as a part of Iraqi opposition and United States attempted to bring Iraqi oppositions and Kurds together under the same roof against Baghdad in order to change Iraqi Regime. The Iraqi National Congress (INC) came together both in Salahaddin (a district of Erbil) and Vienna conferences. Moreover, the United States supported Iraqi National Congress (INC) to make a military coup but they failed to success.¹⁶²

It should be noted that this new policy of US towards the Kurds was a major departure from its traditional policy of avoiding direct engagement with Kurds. It is noteworthy that during the earlier decades the relations between the United States and Kurds of Iraq continued one-way till the developments in 1980s. However, these direct relations began to increase and strengthen after US interventions in Iraq in 1991. According to former governor of Kirkuk, Najmaddin Karim, the first direct relation between the United States and Kurds took place on 25 April 1991 and the second time, US and Kurdish delegations came together in May 1991. In this meeting Kurdish representatives met with assistant secretary of Middle East Department. Thus, US- Kurdish relations have continued official

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, p.17.

¹⁶⁰ Charountaki, p.172.

¹⁶¹ Yildiz, p.44.

¹⁶² Charountaki, pp.171-173.

level up until now.¹⁶³ The United States policies towards Kurds were not in separable towards its policies in Turkey. It wanted to coordinate its policy towards KRG with Turkey because Turkish government as an ally of the United States was sensitive to the US policy towards Kurds. In the following part we need to address Turkish concerns with regard to US policies towards KRG.

2.3.6. Turkish Policy Towards Iraqi Kurds

The US call for establishment of coalition to expel Iraq from Kuwait found sympathetic ear in Turkey as well. Turkish president Turgut Özal joined in the coalition but did not send Turkish army for operation instead Turkey deployed army Turkish-Iraq border and allowed USA to use Incirlik airbase. In addition, Turkey implemented UN sanctions against Iraq by imposing trade blockade on Iraq and closed Kirkuk- Yumurtalık oil pipeline. The president Özal's foreign policies aimed at developing economic and commercial relation with Gulf States, facilitating process to join European Union (EU), and becoming important factor in the Middle East. Özal formulated this policy on the principles of "put one, take three". Moreover, it is thought that Turkish president had some plans for Mosul and Kirkuk which are mostly Kurdish populated territories, oil rich area, and Turkey had an eye on it.¹⁶⁴

Gulf War supported by Özal with great hopes, never ended as it was expected. Turkey lost grounds both politically and economically. Moreover, Turkey faced Kurdish refugee and a de facto Kurdish state in northern Iraq. When the Kurdish uprising of 1991 were suppressed by Iraqi army, Kurds scared from another massacre like Halabja so around 1.500.000 Kurds left their homes behind and fled to Turkey and Iran. Around 500.000 Kurds were not allowed to enter to Turkey because Turkey wanted to avoid costs involved. Besides, Turkey was afraid of Kurdish refugee camps will be like "Gaza Strip" within Turkish borders.¹⁶⁵ In addition, Turkey was afraid Kurdish Refugees of Iraq would

¹⁶³ Ibid, p.173

¹⁶⁴ Baskın Oran, **Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş savaşından bugüne, Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar, volumu II: 1980-2001**, 14th Edition, İstanbul: İletişim yayınları, 2013, p.254.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, p.260.

promote Kurdish nationalism and Kurdish separatism in Turkey.¹⁶⁶ Therefore, Kurds were settled in isolated refugee camps near to border within Iraq.

It is noteworthy that Turkey had unintentionally contributed to the establishment of KRG. It had a role in sponsoring along with United Kingdom and France for UNSC resolution to establish a Safe Haven for Kurds. Although Turkish government had no intentions in assisting the Iraqi Kurds to achieve some degree of self-rule, when the coalition forces withdraw from Iraq, Turkey was used as a base to protect no fly zone in northern Iraq.

After the establishment of KRG like other regional states, Turkey was concerns about the emerging Kurdish entity. Turkey opposed Kurdish elections as Syria, Iran and Iraq opposed but Ankara did not prevent election to take place. Turkey were concerned about a “Kurdish State” for many reasons: firstly, a “Kurdish State” in Iraq would promote Kurdish nationalism and separatism in Turkey, secondly, PKK would have more ability to act freely and make operation in Turkey, thirdly a Kurdish autonomy would deteriorate regional instability and the most important thing in future, this state would try to expand to Turkish territories.¹⁶⁷

Turkey stated that Ankara is against any change in Iraqi territorial integrity in term of Kurdish autonomy.¹⁶⁸ The Turkish Minister of foreign affairs, Hikmet Çetin stated that Turkey can only show its consent if only Kurdish Regional Government have consensus with central government of Iraq. On 14 November 1992, Foreign Ministers of Iran, Turkey and Syria came together in Ankara to discuss developments in Iraq and to coordinate common policies against the Kurdish nationalist movement in the Middle East. After the meeting, all three states warned the Kurds for not to establish a Kurdish state by breaking Iraqi territorial integrity.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ Kemal Kirişçi, Huzur mu Huzursuzluk mu: Çekiş Güç ve Türk dış politikası (1991-1993) in Türk Dış Politikası Analizi 3th pres, Der Yayınları, İstanbul: 2004, p. 313.

¹⁶⁷ Abdullah Kıran, Türkiye'nin Kuzey Irak Politikası, Sayı: 148 - Ağustos 2001, **Birikim Dergisi** <http://www.birikimdergisi.com/birikim-yazi/2907/turkiye-nin-kuzey-irak-politikasi#.WpVcHYPFLIW> (Access date : 27.02.2018)

¹⁶⁸ Ramazan Gözen, “Kuzey Irak Sorunu” İdris Bal (Ed.), 21. Yüzyılda Türk Dış politikası, 3th Edition, Ankara: Umuttepe, 2006.

¹⁶⁹ Abdullah Kıran, Türkiye'nin Kuzey Irak Politikası, Sayı: 148 - Ağustos 2001, **Birikim Dergisi** <http://www.birikimdergisi.com/birikim-yazi/2907/turkiye-nin-kuzey-irak-politikasi#.WpVcHYPFLIW> (Access date : 27.02.2018)

2.4. Kurdish Civil War From 1994 to 1998 and US policy

After KRG election in 1992, the seats in Kurdistan Assembly were shared fifty-fifty between KDP and PUK even though KDP got more votes and seats than PUK. However, the main goal of KDP was to prevent any conflict within no-fly zone. The shearing power between two main Kurdish factions continued to work until 1994. In May 1994, the tensions between PUK and KDP openly turned into a bloody conflict. Even though the bloody conflicts occurred due to land dispute near Qala Diza, north east of Sulaimaniya between PUK and KDP¹⁷⁰ and disagreement of sharing taxes incomes which were taken by passing through Habur Border Gate, the main reason was that the two big Kurdish parties KDP and PUK wanted to have full control over the region rather than sharing power. For that reason, the two prominent Kurdish parties waged a civil war in KRG so the policies of the United States in Iraq which based on Kurdish cooperation fell into danger against Saddam's regime.¹⁷¹

Iraqi National Congress (INC) which was known to be financed by CIA as a roof organization for Iraqi oppositions, tried to mediate between PUK and KDP in order to end this bloody conflict in region. However, INC failed to end this bloody conflict. In 1994, United States, France and United Kingdom also tried to mediate between two Kurdish factions but in vain.¹⁷² After the western countries involved in Kurdish civil war, a lot of peace process attempts failed to end this bloody conflict. Paris, Dublin, Ankara and Washington witnessed to many failed attempts to contain bloody conflict.

On 21 May 1994, "Operation room" was established to provide a truce between Kurdish factions. and on 30 May 1994, Mashooud Barzani and Cellal Talabani who were invited by Turkish government to meet in Silopi. The main concern of Turkey was the vacuum of power, which was created in northern Iraq due to conflict, PKK was availing itself of it. Later on Talabani and Barzani met in June in Erbil although the bloody conflict continued. On the one hand, the bloody clash was continuing in Kurdish populated region, from 16 to 22 July 1994, on the other hand, two prominent Kurdish factions were meeting in Paris. This meeting in Paris was supported by French government and Kurdish Institute

¹⁷⁰ McDowall, p.386.

¹⁷¹ Oran, p.264.

¹⁷² Lambert, p.90.

of Paris directed by Kendal Nezan. Also U.S. and British observers attended in the meeting.¹⁷³

In this meeting, the both sides reached an agreement to do reforms in the fields of finance and administration. Moreover, they agreed on to take precautions so as to organize and configure their forces. In addition, warring parties reached an agreement to have census and run for elections in KRG by 1995. Pursuing common policies, forming KRG bureaus in New York and Brussels and electing KRG president for four years' decisions were taken as well. Furthermore, in the Paris meeting Kurdish parties asked two things to International community: to remove UN embargo on KRG in order to reach supplies and prolong the task date of Operation Provide Comfort until KRG can stand on its own.¹⁷⁴

On one hand, the bloody civil war was going on, on the other hand, French president François Mitterrand supported Barzani and Talabani to have a peace agreement so it was expected that Barzani and Talabani to have a journey so as to sign truce but it did not happen because Turkey was afraid of an establishment of a Kurdish State. Therefore, ultra-Turkish nationalist and newly appointed Turkish Foreign Minister Mümtaz Soysal closed the borders and did not allow transit visa for Kurdish Leaders to have a journey to Paris for a peace agreement. Aftermath of this, Soysal organized a meeting with Iranian and Syrian Foreign ministers and he stated that that was a threat of Kurdish state in the region. The goal of Soysal was to force Kurds to have an agreement with Saddam.¹⁷⁵ According to Kerim Yıldız, the Paris agreement failed because of Turkish approaches to the meeting in Paris.¹⁷⁶

After the negotiations failed in Paris, the United States attempted to organize another peace process between PUK and KDP in capital of Ireland, Dublin, from 9-11 August 1995. The talks were organized and the both warring sides were persuaded by Robert Deutsch, the director of the Office of Northern Gulf Affairs in the State Department. Turkey did not want to stay out of this process. Turkish observers joined the talks too. As Kurdish factions agreed in Paris, they agreed on peace process again in Dublin. Both sides

¹⁷³ Gunter, "The KDP-PUK Conflict in Northern Iraq", p.233.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 234.

¹⁷⁵ Abdullah Kıran, Türkiye'nin Kuzey Irak Politikası, Sayı: 148 - Ağustos 2001, **Birikim Dergisi**
<http://www.birikimdergisi.com/birikim-yazi/2907/turkiye-nin-kuzey-irak-politikasi#.WpVcHYPFLIW>
(Access date : 08.03.2018)

¹⁷⁶ Yıldız, p.49.

reached agreement to have further talks and maintain peace process in Washington D.C.
¹⁷⁷ However, the peace did not last and violence erupted again.

Iran, PUK, INC and Syria supported PKK against KDP, and KDP was getting supports from Turkey but KDP was getting weak against them. Therefore, KDP lost its power in Erbil and PUK captured the city in August 1996. Therefore, Barzani appealed to Saddam for assistance so as to recapture Erbil from PUK. Saddam accepted to cooperate with Barzani and Iraqi forces entered the city. PUK fled to mountains and Saddam captured and executed US spies and Iraqi oppositions (INC) in return.¹⁷⁸ At the first time Iraqi army entered the territories since the Operation Provide Comfort took place. Hereby, KDP again started to control Erbil. When Saddam entered Erbil as a result of Barzani's call against PUK, Washington was afraid of empowerment of Saddam. Therefore, USA bombed Iraqi army and enlarged no-fly zone from 32 to 33 parallels.

After the Dublin talks failed, the two Kurdish factions continued to kill each other. Talabani and Barzani were losing their powers while waging a civil war in Kurdish populated region. Therefore, Americans, Turkish and British delegations played a significant role to bring warring sides together in Ankara. KDP and PUK were invited to Ankara for peace process on 18 October 1996. Also Turkey invited Turkmen representatives to peace talks as well. In this way, Turkey changed its observer position and started to play significant role for Kurdish peace in northern Iraq. Turkey declared that tasks of Operation Provide Comfort ended but instead of land forces, only air forces were deployed to protect no-fly zone. These air forces were named as Operation Northern Watch. USA 41, Britain 7, and Turkey 4 warplanes and helicopters were provided for this task. Until May 1997, four meetings took place but Ankara peace process failed as previous ones had.¹⁷⁹

2.4.1. Washington Accord of 1998

The United States on its part also attempted to stop civil war between the two Kurdish groups. Washington tried to bring warring sides together for peace process so as to prevent further conflicts in Kurdish populated region. The United States viewed the armed

¹⁷⁷ Gunter, "The KDP-PUK Conflict in Northern Iraq", p.238.

¹⁷⁸ Voller, p.82.

¹⁷⁹ Oran, pp.265-266.

conflict between the Kurds as harmful for its interests in Iraq. The civil war led to weakening to the position vis-à-vis was Saddam. Therefore, US president, Bill Clinton warned both Barzani and Talabani: “We will no longer cooperate with the other countries to maintain security in the region if the clashes continue.”¹⁸⁰ However, initiatives of US president could not be enough and bloody conflicts continued. Especially fall of Erbil and Syria and Iran backed PUK’s policies jeopardized and weakened US policies in Iraq.

United States had tried to bring Barzani and Talabani around the same table for peace talks. Washington played significant roles during Paris, London, Dublin and Ankara peace process and the United States bombed the position of Iraqi Army in case of any threats against no-fly zone. However, all the peace talks failed, as explained above and warring parties continued to fight each other. On one hand, the civil war took a long time, the number of countries and actors which involved in the civil war increased such as Iran, Syria and PKK. Tehran and Damascus did not want to see the United States in the region as well. On the other hand, Barzani and Talabani tried to make separated deals with Saddam. Under this regard, the United States perceived that Kurdish pressure card is under risk to be lost while Tehran and Bagdad started to increase their influences and roles of mediation. Therefore, the United States began to have more serious mediation role for peace talks between Barzani and Talabani.¹⁸¹

Especially, along with increasing influences of Iran in the region on Kurds, the United States and Britain perceived as a threat for their interests in Iraq and they began to play more serious role for permanent solution in KRG.¹⁸² Therefore, on 17 July 1998, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs in the United States Department of State, David Welch was sent to Kurdish populated region for peace talks with Barzani and Talabani. Welch had managed to convince Kurdish leaders to have truce and he invited them to Washington D.C. for the final stage of peace agreement. On 17 September 1998, Talabani and Barzani reached a peace agreement in Washington. Consequently, the Kurdish civil war was ended due to the United States’ intervention. The Washington

¹⁸⁰ Michael M Gunter, “The Five Stages of American Foreign Policy towards the Kurds”, p.98.

¹⁸¹ Krawan Salih Waisy, The Roots of the Iraqi Kurdish Internal Rivalries, Conflicts and Peace Process 1964-2000, **American International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences**, 10(3), (March-May 2015), p.228.

¹⁸² Sairan T. Ahmad, The Role Played By The Kurdistan Regional Government in The Reconstruction of The Iraqi State, the thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Middle East Politics, **University of Exeter**, January 2012), p.77.

Accord included sharing power, revenues, and joint efforts to protect KRG against Saddam and PKK. However, the de-facto division of KRG Administration remained. From then on, KDP controlled area in the north and west is called “yellow zone” and PUK controlled zone is known as “green zone”.¹⁸³

Thus the US intervention brought an end to civil war and facilitated American assistances for Kurds in Iraq. Moreover, the United States top officials such as US President Clinton gave firm promises to the Kurds. The US government announced that it “will decide how and when to respond to Baghdad’s actions based on the threat they pose to Iraq’s neighbors, to regional security, to vital U.S. interests and to the Iraqi people, including those in the north.” The then U.S. secretary of state Madeleine Albright made a similar statement on 6 November 1998 in a letter addressed to Congress and again on 19 May 1999.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ **BBC News** “Iraqi Kurdistan profile – timeline” <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-15467672> (Access date: 10.03.18)

¹⁸⁴ Michael M Gunter, “The Five Stages of American Foreign Policy towards the Kurds”, p.99.



Map 1: The administrative division between the KDP and the PUK in KRG ¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁵ Eduardo Gonzalez, "Kurdish Peshmerga: Divided from Within", *Harvard Political Review*, September 5, 2015, <http://harvardpolitics.com/world/kurdish-peshmerga-divided-within/> (Access Ddate: 27.02.2018).

CHAPTER 3: THE USA-KRG RELATIONS 2001-2017

3.1. The New Policies of the United States in Middle East and Iraq

United States declared its world sovereignty as an only superpower in 1990s after the collapse of Soviet Union. Moreover, the United States expanded its alliance power by forming new coalitions with other states to consolidate its power and It liberated Kuwait in 1990, and Washington intervened conflicts in Bosnia, Somalia, Haiti, and Kosovo to end these kinds of civil clash. In addition, the United States tried to play important role to solve Palestinian-Israeli conflicts and it pursued more liberal policies in terms of World Trade Organization and North American Free Trade Association.¹⁸⁶ However, 9/11 2001 attacks have left profound impacts on US policies in general and middle east in particular in the following lines we will confine ourselves to explain the changes in US foreign policy in Iraq and KRG in particular.

3.1. 1. September 11 Attacks

On 9/11 2001, the two most important symbols of American hegemonic power, World Trade Center in New York and Pentagon in Washington, D.C. were targeted by the terrorist organization al-Qaeda. These attacks caused around 3000 death and 6000 injured people with billions of dollars damages in the United States.¹⁸⁷ These unexpected attacks appalled whole Americans and the world. At the first time the United States experienced such attacks inside the borders of the United States and the United States had never lost such big number of civilians since American Civil War of 1861-1865. These attacks showed that the United States and American people are vulnerable to such kind of attacks. Moreover, these attacks made huge damage on undefeated and impunity myth of USA and American arrogance and pride.¹⁸⁸ Thus, 9/11 Attacks became important turning point in the US Foreign policy in 21st century and American policymakers took some important measures and implemented new policies in the World, especially in the Middle East.

¹⁸⁶ Stephen M. Walt, "Beyond Bin Laden: Reshaping US Foreign Policy," *International Security*, c. 26, n. 3, Winter 2001, pp. 56-78, p. 58.

¹⁸⁷ The Institute for the Analysis of Global Security "How much did the September 11 terrorist attack cost America?", <http://www.iags.org/costof911.html> (Access date: 22.03.2018)

¹⁸⁸ Muhittin Ataman, "Değerler ve Çıkarlar: ABD'nin Ortadoğu Politikasını Belirleyen Temel Unsurlar ve İlkeler, Ortadoğu Yıllığı 2006 ed. Kemal İnat ve ¹⁸⁸ Muhittin ATAMAN, Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık, 2008, p.411.

After the 9/11 attacks, Bush administration announced new security policy of the United States named Bush Doctrine which based on unilateralism and preventive war. The aims of preventive war were to prevent and destroy any potential threat against security of the United States and its vital interests before becoming active. For this reason, Washington aimed to provide security of the United States and its allies, prevent emergence of any potential rival military force, deter anti-Americanism, and remove any potential threats. Hereby, the human rights rhetoric, which was regularly used by US decision-makers, was replaced with "security" and "militarism" during the Bush administration.¹⁸⁹

After 9/11 Attacks, the United States went hot and cold all over. Therefore, Washington put “strategic preemption” into practice to protect its security and “act against emerging threats before they are fully formed”. Hereby, the United States followed strategic preemption strategy in the Middle East against emergence of any potential threat and destroy them before becoming active in terms of opposition groups and regional countries.¹⁹⁰

In the aftermath of 9/11 attacks, the president of the United States, George W. Bush declared in 2002 “axis of evil” which referred to Iraq, Iran and North Korea. Syria, Libya and Cuba were seen as potential candidates in this axis as well. the United States accused these countries of supporting terrorism, looking for Weapons of Mass Destruction (WM), and building nuclear weapons by announcing “axis of evil”.¹⁹¹ Under these pretexts, the United States adopted to use of force in the Middle East. Under this policy It invaded Afghanistan on 7 October in 2001 and then continued its invasion of Iraq on 20 March 2003.

3.1.2. Invasion of Iraq

These attacks caused Bush’s regime in Washington to adopt new foreign policies in the Middle East so as to prevent and struggle against expansion of WMD, terrorism, “rouge

¹⁸⁹ Ataman, p.411-412.

¹⁹⁰ Herman J. Cohen, “The Bush Doctrine of Strategic Preemption: A Revolutionary Upheaval or a Predictable Evolution of the International System,” **American Foreign Policy Interests**, s. 26, 2004, pp. 123-127.

¹⁹¹ Frank Gardner, Who's who in the 'axis of evil' **BBC** , <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/1988810.stm> (Access date: 22.03.18)

states” and provide democratic transition of the Middle East.¹⁹² Under this regard, Bush Administration was under influences of “neoconservatives”. The main goal of neoconservatives was to topple Saddam and change the regime in Iraq as a target of “war on terrorism”¹⁹³ after 9/11 Attacks. Bush’s regime estimated that regime change in Iraq would bring democratic transition in the Middle East, especially Syria, Iran and other Middle Eastern States (mainly Arab states)¹⁹⁴. Therefore, the United States started to play an important role in the Middle East by invading Iraq so as to provide democratic transition to Middle East. For this reason, the United States brought Kurds, Sunni and Shia opposition groups under the same umbrella to topple Saddam in Iraq.¹⁹⁵

On 19 March 2003, the coalition led by the United States waged a war against Saddam regime in Iraq under name of Operation Iraqi Freedom and on 9 April 2003, Saddam’s regime was overturned.¹⁹⁶ The invasion of Iraq was unilateralism of the United States although there were over 30 states¹⁹⁷ which joined the coalition against Saddam. the United States could not get UN consensus and China, Russia, France which are members of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and Germany opposed US decision of Iraqi invasion.¹⁹⁸ Therefore, the United States and Britain faced a strong opposition but invasion of Iraq took place. The main declared purpose of Washington was to provide democratic transition of Iraq as a model for rest of the Middle Eastern countries and would hinder Iraq from turning into safe zone for terrorist groups.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹² CIA, US National Security Strategy for Combating Terrorism, (February 2003), pp. 1-30
https://www.cia.gov/news-information/cia-the-war-on-terrorism/Counter_Terrorism_Strategy.pdf
(access date: 22.03.2018)

¹⁹³ Elizabeth Drew, “The Neocons in Power”, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2003/06/12/the-neocons-in-power/>(access date: 22.03.2018)

¹⁹⁴ G. W. Bush, President Bush Discusses Freedom in Iraq and Middle East, (6 November 2003)
<http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/11/20031106-2.html> (access date: 22.03.2018)

¹⁹⁵ Nawzad Abdullah Shukri, “Explaining U.S. Foreign Policy Towards Kurdistan Region of Iraq (2003-2015)”, (the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, University of Leicester, Department of Politics and International Relations January 2017), p.66.

¹⁹⁶ Kenneth Katzman, “CRS Report for congress”, **Iraq: US Regime Change Efforts and Post-Saddam Governance**, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, Updated July 29, 2005. p.66.

¹⁹⁷ Steve Schifferes, US names ‘coalition of the willing’,
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/2862343.stm> (Access Date: 23.03.18)

¹⁹⁸ **The Guardian**, France, Russia and Germany harden stance,
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/mar/06/russia.iraq> (Access Date: 23.03.18)

¹⁹⁹ Katzman, **Iraq: US Regime Change Efforts and Post-Saddam Governance**, Updated May 16, 2005, 2005, p.1.

United States started to rebuild Iraq with new political structure so Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) directed by Lieutenant General Jay M. Garner was founded in early 2003. Later on, this structure was replaced by Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), directed by Ambassador L. Paul Bremer from June 2003.²⁰⁰ The primary tasks of Bremer were to supervise Iraq's reconstruction efforts of coalition and provide assistance for Iraqi people to construct new Iraqi government and institutional structures.²⁰¹ Moreover, the United States wanted all Iraqi groups, Kurds, Sunni, and Shia to join the new construction of Iraq. For this reason, on 13 July 2003 the Iraqi Governing Council was formed. This Council was consisted of members of Kurds, Sunni and Shia figures and this Council was supposed to protect interests and aspirations of Iraqis until formation of newly recognized and elected government of Iraq.²⁰² In the process of rebuilding of Iraq, Kurds have played important roles.

3.1.3. US Policies and KRG in Post Saddam Era 2003-2006

After Washington Accord of 1998, The US Administration began to strengthen ties with KRG. This was within the context of isolated and containing regime of Saddam's regime. The years preceding the invasion of Iraq, US began to increase the aid to Kurdish groups. In July 2002, CIA started to train Kurdish forces (Peshmerga) against Ansar al-Islam and Saddam forces before invasion of Iraq in 2003. When the Operation Iraqi Freedom was started, Kurdish forces joined coalition forces and fought with US forces against Iraqi Army. Kurdish forces played very important role during the capture of Mosul and Kirkuk cities. Moreover, Kurdish forces showed significant successes both against Saddam's forces and during Operation Viking Hammer against Ansar al-Islam in 2003. On 9 April 2003, the United States invaded Baghdad and Saddam's regime was toppled.²⁰³ After the fall of Baghdad, Garner was given the task of rebuilding Iraq Administration. This task

²⁰⁰ L. Elaine Halchin, "CRS Report for congress", **The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA): Origin, Characteristics, and Institutional Authorities**, (Order Code RL32370), Washington: Congressional Research Service, Updated June 6, 2005, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL32370.pdf> (Access Date: 23.03.18)

²⁰¹ The White House, President Names Envoy to Iraq, Statement by the Press Secretary, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/05/20030506-5.html> (Access date: 23.03.18)

²⁰² Shukri, pp.66-67.

²⁰³ Michael G. Lortz, "Willing to Face Death: A History of Kurdish Military Forces – the Peshmerga – from the Ottoman Empire to Present-Day Iraq", (**the degree of Master of Arts**, The Florida State University College of Social Sciences, the Department of International Affairs, Fall Semester, 2005), pp. 66-72.

began to have more civilian aspects under Bremer and the Kurds played a visible role in the newly established political system of Iraq in post-Saddam era.

After Iraq was totally controlled by US led coalition, Coalition Provision Authority (CPA) acted as a transitional government of Iraq till creation of a democratic government in Iraq. Therefore, CPA provided assistance for formation of Governing Council in Iraq (13 July 2003 –1 June 2004). This governing council followed diverse policy rather than Sunni dominated Iraq during Saddam's regime. The Governing council contains 25 representatives from different ethnic and religious groups in Iraq according to their population rate: 1 Assyrian, 1 Turkmen, 5 Kurds, 5 Sunnis and 13 Shias.²⁰⁴ For this reason, Sunni dominant government structure was changed and Shia and Kurdish groups started played significant role in new political system of Iraq. Both Jalal Talabani in November 2003 and Masoud Barzani in May 2004²⁰⁵ served as a rotating presidency of council during the process.

The Iraqi Governing Council turned into Iraqi Interim Government (1 June 2004 – January 2005) under Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period (TAL) in March 2004. This law served as a first transitional constitution of Iraq when it was signed on 8 March 2004.²⁰⁶ Alongside with this government, Kurdish participation in political system of Iraq increased and Kurd held key Iraqi government positions : Rowsch Shaways (KDP) as a Vice-President, Barham Salih (PUK) as a Deputy Prime Minister for National Security, Hoshyar Mahmood Mohammed Zebari (KDP) as a Foreign Minister were appointed on 28 June 2004.²⁰⁷ Furthermore, on 19 March 2003 KRG was officially recognized an autonomous area (Article 53) and Kurdish language was considered second official language of Iraq (Article 9).²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴ Iraqi Governing Council, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/igc.htm> (access date: 24.03.2018)

²⁰⁵ Kurdistan Region Presidency, <http://www.presidency.krd/english/pdisplay.aspx?sm=oYjJbpqKulY> (access date: 24.03.2018)

²⁰⁶ the United States General Accounting Office, Iraq's Transitional Law, <https://www.gao.gov/new.items/d04746r.pdf> (access date: 24.03.2018)

²⁰⁷ Iraqi Interim Government, Announcement Ceremony Press Packet, http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/ERC/cpa/english/government/press_packet.pdf (access date: 24.03.2018)

²⁰⁸ Coalition Provisional Authority Law Of Administration For The State Of Iraq For The Transitional Period, <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/iraq/tal.htm> (access date: 24.03.2018)

On 30 January 2005, the first Parliamentary Elections of Iraq took place and this process provided formation of Iraqi transitional government in post Saddam Era. The 275 seats Iraqi National Assembly was established under TAL. In the Iraqi election, Shias united under United Iraqi Alliance which got 140 seats, KDP and PUK united under Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan (DPAK) got 75 seats and Iraqi List led by Ayad Allawi got 40 seats. Since Sunnis in Iraq boycotted 2005 Iraqi Parliamentary election,²⁰⁹ Kurds had important role during reconstruction of Iraq politically by imposing federalism. Besides, the Kurd leader of the PUK, Jalal Talabani was the first Iraqi democratically elected president.²¹⁰ Moreover, the Transitional Government of Iraq (3May 2005 – 20 May 2006) was established and the main purposes of this government was to prepare Iraqi permanent constitution.

After the Transitional Government of Iraq started active duty, 55 members committee was established for Iraqi draft constitution. On 15 October 2005 the draft constitution of Iraq was approved as a result of referendum. 15 members of draft constitution committee were Kurds²¹¹ and the constitution was accepted by all governorates of Kurdish areas. Once more again, Kurdistan Regional Government (Article 113) and Kurdish language (Article 4) were given legitimacy to the Kurds existence in Iraq and Kurdish people also accepted authority of Iraqi central government. Iraq was considered as federal state (Article 113) and KRG was allowed to have large autonomy for domestic and foreign policies (Article 137).²¹² Moreover, Kurds were allowed to have their own security forces. On 15 December 2005, Iraqi parliamentary election took place after approval of the constitution. However, the Kurds lost its vote rate; Kurds still protected its important position in the new Iraqi political system.

3.1.4. U.S.-KRG Relations in Post-Saddam Era Until Maliki Administration in Iraq

United States had emphasized territorial unity of Iraq many times both before and after the Iraqi invasion. Bush administration tried to provide participation of all Iraqi groups,

²⁰⁹ Joost Hiltermann to Protect or to Project? Iraqi Kurds and Their Future.

<http://www.merip.org/mer/mer247/protect-or-project> (access date: 24.03.2018)

²¹⁰ Katzman, Iraq: **Post-Saddam Governance and Security**, Updated May 16, 2006, p.18.

²¹¹ **The New York Times**, Q&A: Drafting Iraq's Constitution,

https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/cfr/international/slot2_051205.html?_r=0 (access date: 24.03.2018)

²¹² **Washington Post**, Full Text of Iraqi Constitution, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/10/12/AR2005101201450.html> (access date: 24.03.2018)

Kurds, Shias, and Sunni under the same umbrella to protect Iraqi unity and tried to contain Kurdish ambitions for independence because the United States wanted to build a democratic Iraq which contains all Iraqi groups as a democratic model for the other regional countries. Bush administration highlighted that all Iraqi groups “should enjoy freedom, prosperity, and equality in a united country.”²¹³ In progress of time, the Kurds also chose to stay with newly established Iraq as a result of American policies for keeping territorial unity of Iraq. The main factors why the United States favored policy of Iraqi unity are related to internal and external reasons in the Middle East and these factors negatively affect Kurdish role and ambitions in Iraq.

When we come to internal factors in terms of US policy to keep Iraq united after invasion of 2003, Kurds has important role for stability in Iraq. the United States always considers Kurds as a pressure card against central government of Iraq because American administration always wants to control whole country rather than a piece of the country. Therefore, when US interests match with Kurdish ambitions, Washington supports Kurds and when Kurds do not serve for US interest in Iraq, the United States tries to compromise Kurds with central government or betray Kurds. This event took places again after 2003 invasion of Iraq. Before the invasion, Kurds got US supports and aid but after the invasion, Kurds were integrated in new Iraqi system for US interest. One of the biggest reasons to keep Kurds within Iraq was Iraqi oil. The Iraqi oil is so important for Washington in terms of American interests and economy. Iraq has 143 billion barrels crude oil reserves and seventh oil producer in the world.²¹⁴ In 2035, it is expected that Iraq will have possibility to be second exporter of oil in the world.²¹⁵ That is why, Iraqi stability and unity is important for the United States so as to benefit from Iraqi oil because fragmented Iraq will be hard to control and it will hurt US interest and hegemony. Moreover, any conflict or civil war in Iraq can cause loss of oil production in Iraq and

²¹³ U.S. Department of State, Statement of the Atlantic Summit: A Vision for Iraq and the Iraqi People, U.S. Department of State, <http://2001-2009.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2003/18761.htm> (access date: 27.03.2018)

²¹⁴ U.S. Energy information Administration “Total Petroleum and Other Liquids Production – 2017” <https://www.eia.gov/beta/international/?fips=IZ> (access date: 27.03.2018)

²¹⁵ International Energy Agency (IEA)., **Iraq Energy Outlook**, World Energy Outlook Special Report, 9 October 2012), <http://www.worldenergyoutlook.org/media/weowebiste/2012/iraqenergyoutlook/fullreport.pdf> (access date: 27.03.2018)

Iraqi oil market in the world and can affect global oil price negatively.²¹⁶ Therefore, the United States wanted and still is to keep Kurds under Iraqi territorial unity in order to prevent any conflict or civil war during US invasion in newly established Iraq.

After the overthrow of Saddam's regime, while Kurds wanted to strengthen and assure their status, the United States wanted a strong central government of Iraq. Therefore, US strategy in Iraq in the post-Saddam era was based on protecting Iraqi territorial unity but Kurds were viewed as obstacles for that. That's why, the United States tried to remove Kurdish obstacle by integrating Kurds into new Iraq so as to create strong central government. For this reason, the United States support federal structure of new Iraq and Washington implemented this policy with CPA in November 2003. However, The CPA did not contain geographical and ethnic autonomy. Moreover, Kurdish leader Barzani stated that Bremer tries" to eliminate all references to the KRG from the interim constitution". In this process, Washington abstained from opening consulate in Kurdish region. In addition, USA wanted to demilitarize Peshmerga by classifying Kurdish forces as militias. Moreover, US representative in Iraq, Bremer tried to resist Kurdish demands for more rights within Iraq. However, US Strategy, creating strong central government by removing Kurdish obstacle failed because Iranian influences over Shias started to increase. Therefore, the United States changed its policy towards Kurds and once more USA needed Kurdish support to balance domestic situation in Iraq for the US interests.²¹⁷ Hereby, external factors started to play important role in the US policy towards the Kurds in Iraq.

United States tried to protect stability and balance of power in the Middle East and avoided changes in the region. Therefore, the United States avoided supporting Kurdish ambitions for independence. Supporting Kurds in Iraq by USA would cause regional instability in the region and damage US hegemony in the Middle East because Syria, Iran, Iraq and Turkey have significant Kurdish population which can destabilize regional countries. Therefore, regional countries had doubts against Kurdish ambitions in Iraq

²¹⁶ Daniel L. Byman and Kenneth M. Pollack, **Things Fall Apart: Containing the Spillover from an Iraqi Civil War**, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2007, p.20.

²¹⁷ Aram Rifaat, "U.S. -Kurdish Relations in Post-Invasion Iraq", **Middle East Review of International Affairs**, Vol. 11, No. 4, (December 2007). pp.79-81.

because any Kurdish aspiration have potential to cause security challenge.²¹⁸ For this reason, Kurdish forces were not involved in coalition until last three weeks in order to avoid Turkey's ²¹⁹ and regional countries concerns. Graham Fuller claims that if Kurds found a state, it will cause changes in geopolitics and borders of regional countries and balance of power in the region.²²⁰ Therefore, he adds that the idea of independent Kurdish state does not get acceptance internationally.²²¹ Moreover, the formation of independent Kurdish State would cause strong anti-Americanism among non-Kurds in Iraq and in the Middle East which will be destabilizing factor in US perspective. For this reason, external factors pushed USA to keep Kurds under united Iraq rather than divided Iraq. Therefore, the United States tried to eliminate Kurdish factors in new the Iraqi politics so as to create strong central government in Baghdad.

United States considered that Iraqi division as a negative point which would harm its national interests in The Middle east in post Saddam era. The division of the country would have brought about instability stems from ethnic and sectarian conflicts which would have regional spillovers.²²² Therefore, stability both in Iraq and in the Middle East was seen to be adversely affected by Kurdish ambitions for independence. Any war in Iraq between Kurds and Arabs for independence will bring other regional countries to intervene this conflict because Kurdish populated region landlocked territory and landlocked by Arab Iraq, Syria, Iran and Turkey which have significant Kurdish population.²²³ This situation is enough to destabilize region and cause strong anti-Americanism, loss of American hegemony and interests in the region. Therefore, the United States has been reluctant to support Kurdish ambitions for independence and preferred to integrate Kurds in newly established Iraq.

Another factor which affected US policy to keep Kurds with Iraq is potential conflict between Sunni and Shia in Iraq. Majority of Iraq consist of Shia Arabs and Arab states in the Middle East have important Shia minorities within their borders as well. Therefore,

²¹⁸ Shukri, p.101.

²¹⁹ Rifaat, p.80.

²²⁰ Graham E. Fuller, "The Fate of the Kurds." *Foreign Affairs*, 72, no. 2 (1993), p.119.

²²¹ Ibid, p.109

²²² Shukri, p.105.

²²³ Gunter, "The Permanent and New Realities Facing the Kurdistan Regional Government: Options and Prospects", p.37.

any conflict between Shia and Sunni in Iraq would destabilize American Arab allies in Middle East because Arab States are afraid of “Shia Crescent”.²²⁴ Therefore, the United States wanted to balance Shia with Sunni Kurds who are largely Sunni²²⁵ in order to protect its allies in the region. Especially, both the United States and Arab states perceive Iran with its Shia identity as a threat for their existences and interests and this issue were paid attention by USA in terms of security, hegemony, oil and stability in the region.²²⁶ Therefore, the United States wanted to keep Kurds under Iraqi unity as a barrier against “Shia Crescent”. However, increasing Iranian influences over Shia in Iraq softened US policy towards Kurds and brought new type of relations between Kurds and USA in post Saddam era.

As it was stated before, majority of Iraq consists of Arab Shia population and after overthrow of Saddam’s regime, Iran started to benefit from vacuum of power by increasing its influence on Shias in Iraq. USA tried to prevent Iranian influence but Iran has gradually managed to have strong influences in Iraq. Moreover, one of the important Shia cleric and leader of Mehdi army, Muqtada al-Sadr strongly warned USA with two points: first, he asked for timetable of American withdrawal and second, he stated that he would help Iran if USA attacked Iran.²²⁷ This shows us how anti-Americanism became strong among Shias. In addition, in January 2005, Iraqi parliamentary election took place and pro-Iran and Sadr backed Shia, United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) got 140 seats (out of 275), Kurds got 75 seats as a second biggest group in parliament and Sunni boycotted the election.²²⁸ Increasing pro-Iran Shia power in Iraq alarmed US policymakers and US Administration again started to benefit from Kurdish pressure card against pro-Iranian Shia groups in Iraq. For this reason, Kurds began to benefit from this situation with strong advantages.

After the increasing influences of pro-Iran Shia groups in Iraqi politics, Sunni-Shia conflict and Iran factor forced USA to change its policy towards KRG. Especially January

²²⁴ Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, “Internal and external security in the Arab Gulf States”, **Middle East Policy**, vol.16, no.2 (2009), p.42.

²²⁵ David McDowall, p.

²²⁶ Ulrichsen, p.44.

²²⁷ Rifaat, p.83.

²²⁸ Sir Harold Walker & Sir Terence Clark “Elections in Iraq – 30 January 2005: An Assessment”, *Asian Affairs*, 36:2, (2005), p.191.

2005 election became important factor for US policy shift toward Kurds. Therefore, the United States gave up elimination of Kurds and support idea of Iraqi federalism and approved of Talabani presidency. The main goal of the United States was to use Kurds as “check and balance” between Shia and Sunni to promote Iraqi reconciliation.²²⁹ Therefore, relations between KRG and USA started to develop fastly and on October 2005, Barzani met with President Bush as a president of KRG in White House.²³⁰ In addition, on 15 May 2005, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice chose KRG as a first station visit in Iraq so US Administration gave a strong message to Iraqi opponents by favoring Kurds.²³¹ In this process, KRG got lots of advantages both from Iraqi government and the United States and it strengthened its statues in Iraq. However, this situation changed with forming Nuri al-Maliki government in Iraq as it will be explained below.

3.2. Iraq Under Maliki Administration (2006-2014)

After 2005 Iraqi Parliamentary elections, Ibrahim al-Jaafari who was a member of the Islamic Daawa Party under UIA was elected as new prime minister of Iraq. However, the disagreements between Jaafari government and Sunni and Kurdish opposition caused Jaafari to resign in May 2006. Nuri Kamal al-Maliki was replaced as a new Iraqi prime minister from same party under UIA.²³² Under this regard, the era of Maliki government began in Iraq. On 22 April 2006, Maliki started his duty and Talabani was chosen to keep his presidency on. During first Maliki government (2006-2010), Kurds held important positions²³³. In addition, Kurds took 4(out of 19) seats in the National Security Council. For this reason, The Kurds strengthened their position in Iraq and Kurds became

²²⁹ Rifaat, p.82.

²³⁰ Authenticated US. Governmnet Information (GPO), <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/WCPD-2005-10-31/pdf/WCPD-2005-10-31-Pg1591.pdf> (access date: 29.03.2018)

²³¹ Michael Rubin, The Arafat Model, American Enterprise Institute <https://www.aei.org/publication/the-arafat-model/> (access date: 29.03.2018)

²³² Katzman, **Iraq: Post-Saddam Governance and Security**, , May 16, 2006, p.6.

²³³ Minister of Industry and Minerals, Minister of Youth and Sports, Minister of Displacement and Migration, Minister of Construction and Housing, Minister of Water Resources, Environmental Minister, Justice Minister, Foreign Minister, and Deputy Prime Minister

“kingmakers” in the politics of Iraq as Kenneth Katzman stated.²³⁴ Nevertheless, disputed territories between Erbil and Baghdad and Kurdish autonomy caused tensions in Iraq.

3.2.1. The Problem of Disputed Territories and Kirkuk Between Baghdad and Erbil

The status of disputed territories, especially that of Kirkuk were major issues of contention between Baghdad and KRG during Maliki government. KRG and central government agreed to solve problem of disputed territories, specially, statue of Kirkuk with a referendum. This solution was protected both with TAL article 58 and Iraqi constitution article 140.²³⁵ The solutions based on normalization of Kirkuk and mend the Arabization problem of Kurdish populated territories. Kirkuk city was heavily under Arabization policies during Saddam’s regime so Kurds were replaced with Arabs and the ethnic demography in Kirkuk was changed in favor of Arabs. For this reason, after the invasion of Iraq by USA in 2003, the referendum was supposed to be held in the disputed territory on 15 November 2007 to settle the issue. However it was delayed on 31 December 2007, and on 31 June 2008. However, the referendum has never taken place until now. Both the United States and Maliki government had a role inthe postponing of referendum in the disputed territories which were covered by Article 140 of Iraqi 2005 constitution.

However, the United States followed dual policy and favored central government of Iraq in terms of disputed territories and Kirkuk by pressuring the Kurds to accept the postponing of the implementation of article 140.²³⁶

Instead of officially rejection of implementation of article 140, Washington Administration followed policy of delay to prevent it. Therefore, the United States put different policies into practice to delay referendum in Kirkuk and disputed territories in Iraq²³⁷ and the United States did not assist in the normalization situation of Kirkuk and deportation of Arabs who were brought for Arabization policy during Saddam time.²³⁸ Moreover, 2005-2007 sectarian war started between Sunni and Shia and this war alarmed

²³⁴ Katzman, **The Kurds in Post-Saddam Iraq**, October 1, 2010, summary.

²³⁵ 2005 Iraqi permanent constitution article 140.

²³⁶ Ghadir Nasri and Arman Salimi, “The Politics of Kirkuk: Policy Implication for Iran”, **Iranian Review of Foreign Affairs**, Vol. 3, No. 4, (Winter 2013) p. 87.

²³⁷ Shukri, p.78.

²³⁸ Nasri and Salimi, p. 87.

the United States²³⁹ because Turkmens and Arabs were also reluctance against implementation of article 140 with a referendum. Therefore, Washington followed policy of delaying referendum so as to prevent another conflict between Kurds, Arabs and Turkmens in Iraq.

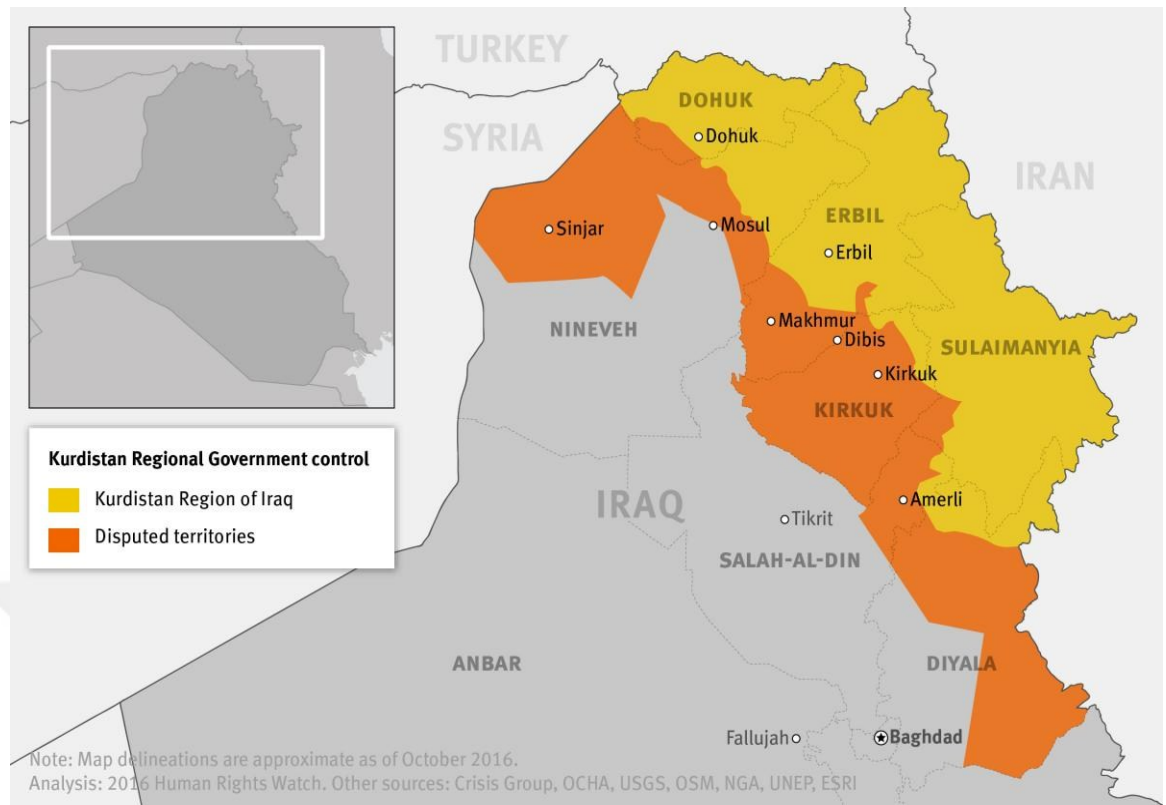
Delaying of referendum and reluctance of US for solution caused tension between KRG and Maliki government. Iraqi Army tried to enter Khanaqin in 2008 and attempt to move Makhmur in 2009 but both events were prevented by the United States.²⁴⁰ Aftermath, checkpoints were formed by American attempts in order to provide stability and abstain from hot conflicts. Moreover, Kurds got American assistances for realization of article 140 in exchange for Kurdish participation of 2010 Iraqi elections.²⁴¹ However, the United States did not keep its promises towards KRG in terms of disputed territories²⁴² and American military left Iraq without any solution for disputed territories in 2011. The balance of power changed in both Iraq and region after Maliki was reelected as Iraqi prime minister and emergence of ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant).

²³⁹ International Crisis Group, "Middle East Report N°80 – 28 October 2008", **Oil for Soil: Toward a Grand Bargain on Iraq and the Kurds**, 2008, p.i.

²⁴⁰ Larry Hanauer, Jeffrey Martini, and Omar Al-Shahery, "Managing Arab-Kurd tensions in northern Iraq after the withdrawal of US troops" **Rand National Defense Research Inst**, Santa Monica Ca, 2011. p.6.

²⁴¹ Shukri, p.81.

²⁴² Ibid, p.81.



Map 2: Disputed Territories between KRG and Iraqi Government²⁴³

3.2.2. Maliki's Domestic Policies and the United States

On 7 March 2010, Iraqi Parliamentary Election took places. In this election, Maliki was reelected as a new Iraqi prime minister. Moreover, the Kurdish role as “kingmaker” was disappeared in Iraqi politics.²⁴⁴ The seats in Iraqi Assembly were expanded from 275 to 325 but Kurds lost their influences in Baghdad because Kurdistan Alliance was weakened by other Kurdish rival groups. The Kurdistan Islamic Union and the Gorran Party did not join in Kurdish unity, therefore, DPAK got 43 seats and the other Kurdish parties got 14 seat.²⁴⁵ Under this regard, the role of Kurds in Baghdad reduced. For this reason, Maliki managed to follow more Shia based sectarian policies.

Decreasing Kurdish role in Iraqi Parliament in 2010 and the withdrawal of American forces from Iraq in 2011 encouraged Maliki to follow power and sectarian centric policies

²⁴³ Human Rights Watch, Marked With An "X" Iraqi Kurdish Forces' Destruction of Villages, Homes in Conflict with ISIS, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/11/13/marked-x/iraqi-kurdish-forces-destruction-villages-homes-conflict-isis> (Access date: 31.03.2018)

²⁴⁴ Katzman, **The Kurds in Post-Saddam Iraq**, October 1, 2010, p.6.

²⁴⁵ Ibid, p.6.

in Iraq. Therefore, Kurds were marginalized and Sunnis were targeted by Maliki government.²⁴⁶ The prominent Sunni Iraqi politicians, like the Iraqi vice president Tariq al-Hashemi²⁴⁷ and the finance minister, Rafi al-Issawi²⁴⁸ were accused of supporting terrorism in Iraq to marginalize them. Consequently, Maliki eliminated Sunni political influences and strengthened his power in Iraq. Moreover, in November 2012, the hot tension between Maliki government and KRG increased due to attempts of Iraqi army to enter disputed territories.²⁴⁹ Aftermath, the United States tried to calm down the situation in Iraq.

After the eruption of the aforementioned crisis between KRG and Baghdad, in April 4, 2012, US president Barak Obama officially received Barzani so as to argue the situation in Iraq. The White House issued statement which referred to “close and historic relationship with KRG...in the context of our strategic partnership with a federal, democratic and unified Iraq”.²⁵⁰ Furthermore, Obama and Vice President Biden advised Barzani to continue supporting of Iraqi democratic process under Iraqi constitution.²⁵¹ However, Maliki consolidated its power in Iraq by marginalizing Kurds and targeting Kurds and Sunni leaders. Therefore, the Sunni insurgencies increased, ISIS got more powerful in Iraq and Kurds insisted on referendum for independence as a sign of frustration with Maliki and that of his successor Abadi’s policies.

²⁴⁶ Gunter, “The Kurdish Spring”, pp.445-446.

²⁴⁷ Ibid, pp.445-446.

²⁴⁸ **Al Jazeera**, “Maliki’s Dilemma: The Crisis of the System of Quotas and Exclusion”, <http://studies.aljazeera.net/en/positionpapers/2013/01/201312885617985214.html> (Access date: 03.04.2018)

²⁴⁹ Gunter, “The Kurdish Spring”, p.446

²⁵⁰ The White House, Readout of the President and Vice President’s Meeting with Kurdistan Regional Government President Masoud Barzani, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2012/04/04/readout-president-and-vice-presidents-meeting-kurdistan-regional-governm> (Access date: 03.04.2018)

²⁵¹ The White House, Readout of the President and Vice President’s Meeting with Kurdistan Regional Government President Masoud Barzani, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2012/04/04/readout-president-and-vice-presidents-meeting-kurdistan-regional-governm> (Access date: 03.04.2018)

3.3. The Road to KRG Independence Referendum and US Policy Towards KRG

3.3.1. USA and KRG Relations During ISIS Expansion

In January 2014 The Islamic State (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, ISIL/ISIS) started to rise against Iraqi central government in Anbar Province of Iraq and ISIS captured Fallujah.²⁵² On June 10, 2014, ISIS captured the second biggest Iraqi city Mosul in a very short time. After that Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) abandoned Kirkuk due to ISIS attacks and KRG occupied the city on June 11, 2014. Furthermore, KRG started to control city and oil fields around Kirkuk. KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani announced that “peshmerga entered the city due to will of Iraqi Prime minster” and KRG and Iraqi central government agreed on peshmerga to stay in Kirkuk.²⁵³ In this way KRG consolidated its power in Kirkuk which is disputed area between KRG and Iraqi central government, Kurds have historical claims on and claim to be run by KRG. Therefore, KRG president Masoud Barzani declared that Article 140 of Iraqi constitution was implemented and we will not talk about it.²⁵⁴ the United States did not object to Kurdish controlled Kirkuk because the situation in Iraq was getting worse and complicated and ISIS expanded its territories day by day. Therefore, the United States did not want dissatisfy Kurds since there were the problem of ISIS in Iraq.

Furthermore, ISIS expanded its controlled areas and established a front line with KRG controlled territories in Iraq. Therefore, in August, ISIS began to attack KRG zones in Iraq. ISIS managed to capture some Yazidis towns and executed them in Iraq during attracts. Therefore, 40,000 Yazidis who are mostly Kurdish speaking²⁵⁵, fled to Mount Sinjar, Dohuk and Erbil because of fearing to be executed by ISIS.²⁵⁶ In August 2014,

²⁵² Kenneth Katzman, Christopher M. Blanchard, Carla E. Humud , Matthew C. Weed , Rhoda Margesson , Policy Alex Tiersky, “CRS Report for congress “, **The “Islamic State” Crisis and U.S. Policy**, September 10, 2014 Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, p.2.

²⁵³ Zana Baykal, “Ortadoğu’da Kürtler 2014”, Kemal İnat ve Muhittin Ataman (Ed.), **Ortadoğu Yılığ** **2014**, İstanbul: Açılım Kitap, 2015, pp. 423-433.

²⁵⁴ **Al Jazeera Türk**, Maliki’ye ‘diktatör’ suçlaması”, 9 Temmuz 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/haber/malikiye-diktator-suclamasi> (Access date: 03.04.2018)

²⁵⁵ Ishaan Tharoor, “Who are the Yazidis?”, **The Washington Post**, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/08/07/who-are-the-yazidis/?utm_term=.de13ba9188a5 accessed: 03.05.18

²⁵⁶ **The Guardian** , “Who are the Yazidis and why is Isis hunting them?”, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/07/who-yazidi-isis-iraq-religion-ethnicity-mountains> accessed: 03.05.18

United States provided food and water aids for Yazidis who fled to Sinjar Mountain.²⁵⁷ Moreover, ISIS moved along 40 miles of Erbil by August 8. ISIS advance caused USA to worry about the safety of US diplomats and military personals in Erbil.²⁵⁸ Therefore, the United States deployed troops to protect U.S. facilities and U.S. Embassy in Baghdad and Erbil.²⁵⁹ On 8 August, U.S. armed unmanned aerial vehicles and combat aircraft started to target ISIS.²⁶⁰ Moreover, US President Obama announced that US military managed to improve conditions for safely evacuations of Yazidis from Mountain Sinjar.²⁶¹ In addition, US air strikes provided ISF and peshmerga to capture Mosul Dam from ISIS in 21 August.²⁶²

United States took serious measures against rapid expansion of ISIS in Iraq. Therefore, Obama Administration put some strategies to against ISIS such as: supporting its partner forces in Iraq (Peshmerga and ISF), combination of military action (establishment of coalition), diplomacy, financial actions, and intelligence sharing.²⁶³ After these theoretical strategies, United States started to practice these in the field and KRG played big role during these US strategy. The United States sent soldiers to Erbil and established “Joint Operations Centers” there. Washington also provided help for training, advice, intelligence gathering, airstrikes power, and humanitarian assistances for KRG.²⁶⁴ Furthermore, the United States supplied mostly ammunition and lighter weaponry to peshmerga in 2014, however, US General William C. Mayville Jr. said that these kind of

²⁵⁷ Kenneth Katzman, Christopher M. Blanchard, Carla E. Humud , Matthew C. Weed , Rhoda Margesson , Policy Alex Tiersky , “CRS Report for congress “, **The “Islamic State” Crisis and U.S. Policy**, Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, September 10, 2014, p.9.

²⁵⁸ Ibid, p.4.

²⁵⁹ Ibid, p.8.

²⁶⁰ Ibid, p.8.

²⁶¹ U.S. Department of Defense, “Obama Praises Success of Humanitarian Operations in Iraq” <https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/603071/obama-praises-success-of-humanitarian-operations-in-iraq/> accessed: 03.05.18

²⁶² Jeremy Bender, “Here's The Aftermath Of The Victorious Battle Against ISIS For Mosul Dam”, **Business Insider** <http://www.businessinsider.com/aftermath-of-the-battle-for-the-mosul-dam-2014-8>, accessed: 03.05.18

²⁶³ Kenneth Katzman, Christopher M. Blanchard, Carla E. Humud , Matthew C. Weed , Rhoda Margesson , Policy Alex Tiersky , “CRS Report for congress “, **The “Islamic State” Crisis and U.S. Policy**, Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, , September 10, 2014, pp.8-9.

²⁶⁴ Ibid, pp.8-9.

weapons are not enough for Kurds to defeat ISIS so he advised for supplying long range and heavy weapons to peshmerga in 2014.²⁶⁵

In 2015, the United States continued to help KRG against ISIS in Iraq under aforementioned strategies to defeat ISIS. On November 13, 2015, Sinjar was liberated from ISIS by peshmerga and they advanced into Mosul with the help of US airstrikes.²⁶⁶ the United States continued to train and supply weapons to peshmerga under ISF, 3 peshmerga brigades were trained by USA with 9 Iraqi brigades.²⁶⁷ Moreover, the United States supplied KRG 25 of the 250 MRAP vehicles given ISF in December 2014 and January 2015 and supplied 1,000 anti-tank missiles for peshmerga.²⁶⁸ However, KRG complained about receiving weapons through Baghdad because KRG claimed that weapons are not delivered by Baghdad or they receive with shortage, therefore, the United States started to supply weapons directly to KRG.²⁶⁹ After that, American Congress took direct interest in the role of the peshmerga to defeat ISIS and kept delivering on U.S. training and assistance to KRG forces and The FY2015 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) joint statement made ready by leaders of House and Senate defense committee points out:

“We note the significant contribution that Kurdish security forces have made to countering ISIL’s advance. We understand that the administration’s plan includes assistance to train and equip 3 brigades of Kurdish peshmerga. Accordingly, we expect that a significant portion of the assistance under this authority will be provided to meet the requirements of the Kurdish security forces and urge the Secretary of Defense to ensure that such assistance is delivered in a timely manner to such forces. We further expect the Secretary of Defense to keep the congressional defense committees fully informed as this plan is developed and implemented, including any arrangements to

²⁶⁵ Department of Defense Press Briefing by Lt. Gen. Mayville in the Pentagon Briefing Room Press Operations Lieutenant General William Mayville, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript-View/Article/606909/departement-of-defense-press-briefing-by-lt-gen-mayville-in-the-pentagon-briefin/> Accessed: 08.05.18

²⁶⁶ Kenneth Katzman , Christopher M. Blanchard , Carla E. Humud , Rhoda Margesson , Matthew C. Weed , “CRS Report for congress “ , **The “Islamic State” Crisis and U.S. Policy**, Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, February 11, 2015.

²⁶⁷ Christopher M. Blanchard, Carla E. Humud A, “CRS Report for congress “ , **The “Islamic State” and U.S. Policy**, Congressional Research Service, November 18, 2015, p.21.

²⁶⁸ Christopher M. Blanchard, Carla E. Humud, Kenneth Katzman , Matthew C. Weed, “CRS Report for congress “ , **The “Islamic State” Crisis and U.S. Policy** , Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, June 11, 2015, p.20.

²⁶⁹ Baykal, “Ortadoğu’da Kürtler 2015”, 2016, p.421.

*ensure that such assistance for Kurdish security forces is promptly delivered to those forces.*²⁷⁰

Moreover, the United States Secretary of Defense visited KRG twice in 2015 and the United States supplied more military assistances to peshmerga after following visits.²⁷¹ In May 2015, KRG president Barzani also visited USA and met with US President, secretary of state and vice president. In this meeting, US President Obama and Vice President Joe Biden reaffirmed American strong and continued assistances to KRG and they also reaffirmed American commitment in terms of Strategic Framework Agreement for “a united, federal, and democratic Iraq, as defined in the Iraqi constitution”.²⁷² Furthermore, Barzani stated that “assurances” was given by the United States in terms of providing American weapons and supplies to peshmerga within “Iraqi national defense system”.²⁷³

In 2016, KRG struggles and fights against continued and peshmerga captured large areas from ISIS by the help of USA and coalition. On August 2016, peshmerga launched a successful operation against ISIS around Kirkuk and peshmerga liberated villages around city and its towns by the help of USA and coalition. Thus, ISIS threat on Kirkuk was eliminated as a result of this operation.²⁷⁴ Peshmerga mostly defeated ISIS in KRG and occupied disputed territories after ISF escaped for fear of ISIS. However, disputed territories again became problem between Bagdad and Erbil whether peshmerga will withdraw or not. In November 2016, KRG president Barzani stated that KRG and USA agreed on disputed territories for not withdrawing of peshmerga.²⁷⁵ In addition, July, 12, a military agreement was signed between KRG and USA. The importance of this agreement is first time in the Kurdish history, Kurds and USA made a written agreement.²⁷⁶ The

²⁷⁰ Christopher M. Blanchard, Carla E. Humud , Kenneth Katzman , Matthew C. Weed, “CRS Report for congress”, **The “Islamic State” Crisis and U.S. Policy**, Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, June 11, 2015,p.20.

²⁷¹ Baykal, “Ortadoğu’da Kürtler 2015”, p421

²⁷² The White House Office of the Press Secretary, Readout of the President and Vice President's Meeting with Iraqi Kurdistan Region President Masoud Barzani, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/05/05/readout-president-and-vice-presidents-meeting-iraqi-kurdistan-region-pre> Accessed: 08.05.18

²⁷³ Christopher M. Blanchard, Carla E. Humud , Kenneth Katzman , Matthew C. Weed, “CRS Report for congress **The “Islamic State” Crisis and U.S. Policy**, Washington D.C.:Congressional Research Service, June 11, 2015, p.13.

²⁷⁴ Baykal, “Ortadoğu’da Kürtler 2015”, p.515.

²⁷⁵ **Rudaw** “Başkan Barzani: ABD’yle anlaştık”, <http://www.rudaw.net/turkish/kurdistan/161120164> Accessed: 08.05.18

²⁷⁶ Zana Baykal, “Ortadoğu’da Kürtler 2015”, p.517.

agreement was signed by KRG minister of defense, Karim Sinjari and US wise minister of defense, Elissa Slotkin.²⁷⁷ the United States continued assisting KRG. In December 2016, FY2016 was appropriated by US congress to defeat ISIS. FY2016 contained train and equip funding. State Department-administered Foreign Military Financing (FMF) pointed out that peshmerga should benefit from this assistance.²⁷⁸ Furthermore, US congress gave authority to American president to provide assistance for Kurds and Washington offered 400 million dollars in-kind support and in defense funding to KRG monthly for deliverable installments.²⁷⁹

Mosul operation was planned to be launched in 2015 by ISF and coalition but ISIS's advanced in Ramadi and slowness of IFS caused Mosul operation to be launched in 2016.²⁸⁰ On October, 17, 2016, Mosul operation was launched by joint forces of collation, ISF, Iraqi militias and peshmerga. 40,000 Peshmerga forces participated the operation²⁸¹ but KRG president, Barzani stated that peshmerga forces will not enter Mosul city center.²⁸² Also, according to 12 July agreement between KRG and USA, the salary of Peshmerga that take operation will be paid by USA during Mosul operation and 415 million budgets will be sent to KRG to pay salaries and other things for the first phase.²⁸³ Futhermore, the United States continued to provide assistances to KRG in terms of military equipments, training, financial, humanitarian, and etc. support in 2016 and 2017. Peshmerga forces liberated Bashiqa and some villages and territories around Mosul by the help of USA and coalition during the operation. When the Mosul operation ended, KRG eliminated ISIS threat, secured its territories and had full control of disputed territories. Therefore, Barzani focused on domestic issues and thought that it is the right time to make KRG independence referendum since disputed territories under control of Peshmerga.

²⁷⁷ Ibid, p.517.

²⁷⁸ Christopher M. Blanchard and Carla E. Humud, "CRS Report for congress", **The Islamic State and U.S. Policy**, Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, February 9, 2016,. p.34.

²⁷⁹ Christopher M. Blanchard and Carla E. Humud "CRS Report for congress", **The Islamic State and U.S. Policy** Washington D.C.:Congressional Research Service, June 27, 2016, p.10.

²⁸⁰ Jethro Mullen and Nima Elbagir, After retaking most of Ramadi from ISIS, Iraq sets sights on Mosul, **CNN**, <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/12/30/middleeast/iraq-ramadi-isis/index.html> Access Date: 09.05.18

²⁸¹ Nick Paton Walsh, Max Blau, Emanuella Grinberg and Tim Hume, Battle for Mosul begins with gunfire and car bombs, **CNN**, <https://edition.cnn.com/2016/10/17/middleeast/mosul-isis-operation-begins-iraq/index.html> Access Date: 09.05.18

²⁸² **Press TV**, Peshmerga forces won't enter Iraq's Mosul: Kurdish leader, <http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2016/10/27/490940/Iraq-Mosul-Masoud-Barzani> Access Date: 09.05.18

²⁸³ Zana Baykal, "Ortadoğu'da Kürtler 2015", p.517.

3.3.2. KRG Referendum for Independence

In 2014, for the first time KRG obviously gave voice of independence in Iraq for Kurds after Peshmerga controlled disputed areas included Kirkuk as a result of ISIS attack and escape of ISF. Even though demand for independence caused tension between KRG and Baghdad, Barzani met with Iraqi Prime Minister, Haider al-Abadi and he officially demanded Independence of KRG from Iraq.²⁸⁴ This event can be summarized as demand for independence from sovereign state, has historical importance in the history of Kurds because Kurds would run for independence for the first time in the history.²⁸⁵ When it was thought of Kurds separately live in four countries in Middle East, it can be seen that any independence action in Iraq has potential to affect the entire region.

In July 2014, KRG president Barzani asked parliament for preparation of independence²⁸⁶. However, the United States opposed to this plan and wanted KRG to deter that pan because, the United States paid attention Iraqi unity more.²⁸⁷ Although Obama Administration opposed Kurdish independence, Barzani insisted on its plan and started to go further such as digging holes from northern of Mosul to Diyala.²⁸⁸ In 2014, the priority was given to domestic problems in KRG and ISIS threat and some Kurdish leaders opposed referendum as well, therefore, the idea of referendum was temporarily shelved in 2014.²⁸⁹ The independence referendum was planned to carry out in 2016 before American presidential election. However, the referendum was delayed until 2017. On June, 7, 2017, Kurdish parties in Iraq agreed on KRG independence referendum take place on September, 25, 2017.

²⁸⁴ **BasNews** 'Başkan Barzani bağımsızlık talebini açıkça dile getirdi'

<http://www.basnews.com/index.php/tr/news/kurdistan/302141> Access Date: 20.05.2018

²⁸⁵ Zana Baykal, "Ortadoğu'da Kürtler 2016", p.519.

²⁸⁶ **Reuters**, "Iraqi Kurdish president asks parliament to prepare for independence vote", <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-security/iraqi-kurdish-president-asks-parliament-to-prepare-for-independence-vote-idUSKBN0F81M220140703> (Access Date: 20.05.2018)

²⁸⁷ Jim Zanotti and Kenneth Katzman, "CRS Insights", **The Kurds and Possible Iraqi Kurdish Independence**, July 15, 2014 (IN10105), <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/IN10105.pdf> Access Date: 20.05.2018

²⁸⁸ **Anadolu Ajansı**, "İKBY bağımsızlık için sınırını mı çiziyor?", 11.01.2016, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/ikby-bagimsizlik-icin-sinirini-mi-ciziyor/503372> Access Date: 20.05.2018

²⁸⁹ Kenneth Katzman, Christopher M. Blanchard, Carla E. Humud , Matthew C. Weed , Rhoda Margesson , Policy Alex Tiersky , "CRS Report for congress" **The "Islamic State" Crisis and U.S. Policy**, Washington D.C.:Congressional Research Service, September 10, 2014, p.4.

When the date of referendum was announced, Washington opposed the plan for Kurdish independence and warned KRG in terms of distracting fight against ISIS. Moreover, State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said that “United States supports a unified, federal, stable and democratic Iraq”.²⁹⁰ Also American congress threatened to cut funding of Peshmerga if KRG separate from Iraq.²⁹¹ On August, 12, 2017, US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson called and said to Barzani that the United States “would want for the referendum to be postponed and that the issues between the Kurdish populated region and the federal government in Baghdad should be addressed through dialogue,”²⁹² However, Barzani rejected delay of referendum, therefore, on Aug. 22, 2017, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis visited KRG and asked Barzani to delay independence referendum as well.²⁹³ Mattis also could not convince Barzani for delaying referendum for another time. On September 14, 2017, Brett McGurk ²⁹⁴, therefore, visited Erbil to talk and convince Barzani to postpone referendum and McGurk said in press conference in KRG “there is no international support for the referendum, really, from anybody” and McGurk identifies referendum as “ill-timed and ill advised”.²⁹⁵ On September 20, 2017, Heather Nauert Department Spokesperson lastly said in press conference “United States strongly opposes the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government’s referendum on independence, planned for September 25. All of Iraq’s neighbors, and virtually the entire international community, also oppose this referendum. the United States urges Iraqi Kurdish leaders to accept the alternative, which is a serious and sustained dialogue with the central government, facilitated by the United States and United Nations, and other partners, on all matters of

²⁹⁰ **Al-monitor**, “Kurdish referendum would distract from IS fight, US warns”, June 8, 2017, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/afp/2017/06/iraq-politics-kurds-referendum-us-diplomacy.html> (Access Date: 20.05.2018)

²⁹¹ **Ekurd Daily**, “U.S. threatens to cut payments to Peshmerga if Kurdistan breaks with Baghdad”, June 29, 2017, <http://ekurd.net/us-cut-payments-peshmerga-2017-06-29> (Access Date: 20.05.2018)

²⁹² **Press TV**, “Top US diplomat demands delay of Iraqi Kurdistan referendum”, Aug 12, 2017, <http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2017/08/12/531503/Iraq-Kurdistan-regional-government-President-Massoud-Barzani-US-Secretary-of-State-Rex-Tillerson> (Access Date: 20.05.2018)

²⁹³ **The Washington Post**, “Mattis Asks Iraqi Kurds to Put Off Vote on Independence” ,Aug. 22, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/22/world/middleeast/iraq-kurds-independence-mattis-barzani-tillerson.html> (Access Date: 20.05.2018)

²⁹⁴ Brett McGurk is Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition To Counter ISIS, Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition To Counter ISIS

²⁹⁵ **U.S. Department of State**, “Diplomacy in Action, Press Conference by Special Presidential Envoy McGurk in Erbil”, Iraq, September 14, 2017, <https://www.state.gov/s/seci/2017remarks/274148.htm> (Access Date: 20.05.2018)

concern, including the future of the Baghdad-Erbil relationship”²⁹⁶ In this way, the United States officially and obviously explained that Washington opposes the KRG referendum for independence.

In spite of all American efforts to prevent and postpone KRG referendum for independence in Iraq, the United States could not have managed to convince Barzani, therefore, the referendum took place on September 25, 2017. 72% people of KRG voted for referendum and 92.73 % said yes to separate from Iraq in the referendum.²⁹⁷ Turkey, Iraq, and Iran condemned and harshly reacted the results. the United States did not recognize KRG referendum for independence and US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said that the referendum is “illegitimate” and The vote and the results lack legitimacy and we continue to support a united, federal, democratic and prosperous Iraq,”²⁹⁸ In spite of the fact that, KRG paid millions of dollars to Washington lobbying firms along with strong relations to both with Democrats and Republicans,²⁹⁹ KRG could not managed to convince the United States for independent Kurdistan in the region. Therefore, the United States did not support Kurdish independence referendum.

According to United States, it was not time for an independence referendum since there were some more important priorities. United States paid attention to national security, fighting against ISIS, Iran, Syria and North Korea and Washington was afraid of the referendum would cause more Iranian influences in Iraq but the United States wants to stabilization of Iraq without Tehran involvement in Iraq and referendum would create unification of Sunni and Shia followers against Kurds.³⁰⁰ Moreover, the United States had concerns about referendum that could cause more destabilization of Iraq, has potential to

²⁹⁶ **U.S. Department of State**, Diplomacy in Action, “Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government's Planned Referendum”, September 20, 2017, <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/09/274324.htm> (Access Date: 20.05.2018).

²⁹⁷ **Independent**, “Kurdistan referendum results: 93% of Iraqi Kurds vote for independence, say reports”, September 26, 2017, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/kurdistan-referendum-results-vote-yes-iraqi-kurds-independence-iran-syria-a7970241.html> (Access Date: 20.05.2018).

²⁹⁸ **CNN**, “Iraqi Kurdish referendum 'illegitimate,' Secretary of State Rex Tillerson says”, September 30, 2017, <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/09/30/middleeast/kurdistan-independence-tillerson-us/index.html> (Access Date: 20.05.2018).

²⁹⁹ Kenneth P. Vogel and Jo Becker, “Manafort Working on Kurdish Referendum Opposed by U.S.”, **The New York Times**, Sept. 20, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/20/us/politics/manafort-kurdish-referendum.html> (Access Date: 20.05.2018).

³⁰⁰ Seth J. Frantzman, “Why The Us Chose To Oppose The Kurdish Independence Referendum”, **The Jerusalem Post**, September 19, 2017, <https://www.jpost.com/International/Why-the-US-chose-to-oppose-the-Kurdish-independence-referendum-505498> (Access Date: 25.05.2018).

spark violence and conflict in disputed territories³⁰¹. In addition, the United States was afraid of referendum would create instability, hamper, undermine the war against ISIS and spark conflict and violence along with neighboring states.³⁰² There are large amount of Kurdish population in Turkey, Iran and Syria, therefore, Turkey and Iran harshly reacted the referendum and they were afraid of any independence movement in Iraq would trigger further Kurdish secessionist movements in their states.³⁰³ This means more blood and violence in the Middle East which would damage American interests and policies in the region. Therefore, the United States thought that Kurds could wait more since there were other priorities, however, Washington did not totally refuse the KRG independence referendum but she suggested KRG to postpone the referendum because of wrong timing.³⁰⁴

3.3.2.1. Loss of Disputed Territories and U.S. Acquiescence

On October 25, in spite of the all pressures, KRG carried out a successful referendum for independence with 93 % said yes. Therefore, Baghdad Administration started to cooperate with Turkey and Iran which have significant Kurdish population.³⁰⁵ The three countries closed their airspace and began to impose embargo against KRG. Moreover, central government of Iraq demanded cancel of referendum with giving control of airports and oil pipelines to Bagdad and withdrawing of Peshmerga from disputed territories. However, KRG strongly rejected these demands. On October 13, Iranian-backed Shi'ite Hashd al-Shaabi militia (Popular Mobilization Forces-PMF)³⁰⁶ were deployed around Kirkuk and

³⁰¹ Kenneth P. Vogel and Jo Becker, "Manafort Working on Kurdish Referendum Opposed by U.S.", **The New York Times**, Sept. 20, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/20/us/politics/manafort-kurdish-referendum.html> (Access Date: 25.05.2018).

³⁰² Marina Ottaway, "United States Policy and the Kurdistan Referendum: Compounding the Problem", **Wilson Center**, Sep 28, 2017, p.1. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/united-states-policy-and-the-kurdistan-referendum-compounding-the-problem> (Access Date: 25.05.2018).

³⁰³ Krishnadev Calamur, "Why Doesn't the U.S. Support Kurdish Independence?" , **The Atlantic**, Oct 20, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/10/us-kurdish-independence/543540/> (Access Date: 25.05.2018).

³⁰⁴ Seth J. Frantzman, "Why The Us Chose To Oppose The Kurdish Independence Referendum", **The Jerusalem Post**, September 19, 2017, <https://www.jpost.com/International/Why-the-US-chose-to-oppose-the-kurdish-independence-referendum-505498> (Access Date: 25.05.2018).

³⁰⁵ Financial Times, "Turkey, Iran and Iraq pledge to act jointly against Kurdistan", October 5, 2017, <https://www.ft.com/content/7ffb06e-a9b6-11e7-ab55-27219df83c97> (Access Date: 25.05.2018).

³⁰⁶ Hashd al-Shaabi militia or Popular Mobilization Forces(PMF) in English. On June 13, 2014, one of the most important Shia cleric in Iraq Ali al-Husseini al-Sistani made a call of jihad for protection after ISIS targeted Shia religious places. Therefore, hundreds of thousands Shia volunteers came together and formed Shia militia groups. Hashd al-Shaabi successfully fought against ISIS and occupied important

clash erupted between Peshmerga and Hashd al-Shaabi militia.³⁰⁷ For this reason, U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis told that Washington administration is working to ensure situation and prevent escalation between warrior sides.³⁰⁸ On October 15, the conflict between Peshmerga and Hashd al-Shaabi militia, however, erupted around Kirkuk³⁰⁹. On October 16, PUK forces in Kirkuk withdrew from their position as a result of secret agreement with Hashd al-Shaabi without Erbil Administration. Aftermath, KDP forces stayed alone and were forced to withdraw. Hereby, sovereignty of KRG over oil rich city Kirkuk ended. After that Hashd al-Shaabi captured Sinjar, Tuz Khormato and other disputed territories as well. In spite of increasing conflict between two American allies in Iraq, Washington made urgent call to stop fighting, further escalation and calm the tensions between warrior sides.³¹⁰

U.S. president Donald Trump said that USA is not welcomed with clash and highlighted USA does not take any side, moreover, he pointed out the significance of relationship between USA and KRG.³¹¹ Furthermore a spokesman for the US-led coalition, Col. Ryan Dillon told that there are no any American advisers or people with ISF or the Peshmerga on ground around disputed territories.³¹² On October 20, Department Spokesperson, Heather Nauert told that “the reassertion of federal authority over disputed areas in no way changes their status...they remain disputed until their status is resolved in accordance

position in Iraqi politics. For further information, please see, Mehmet Kılıç, Mustafa Gök and Ghulam Faruq Keskin. “From Formation to Today Shiite Militia Force Of Iraq Hashd Al-Shaabi “, *Uluslararası Beşeri ve Sosyal Bilimler İnceleme Dergisi* 2 .2018, p.49.

³⁰⁷ **Daily Sabah**, “Peshmerga, Hashd al-Shaabi reportedly clash in northern Iraq”, October 13, 2017 <https://www.dailysabah.com/mideast/2017/10/13/peshmerga-hashd-al-shaabi-reportedly-clash-in-northern-iraq> (Access Date: 04.06.2018).

³⁰⁸ Idrees Ali " Mattis says U.S. working to ensure situation around Kirkuk does not escalate", **Reuters**, October 13, 2017 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-usa/mattis-says-u-s-working-to-ensure-situation-around-kirkuk-does-not-escalate-idUSKBN1CI2VC> (Access Date: 04.06.2018).

³⁰⁹ David Zucchino, "Iraqi Forces Begin Assault Near Kurdish-Held City of Kirkuk", **The New York Times**, Oct. 15, 2017, , <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/15/world/middleeast/kurds-independence-iraq.html>(Access Date: 04.06.2018).

³¹⁰ Ben Wedeman, Angela Dewan and Sarah Sirgany, "US appeals for calm as allies clash in Iraq", **CNN**, October 17, 2017, <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/10/17/middleeast/kirkuk-iraq-kurdish-peshmerga/index.html> (Access Date: 04.06.2018).

³¹¹ Daniel Brown, "Trump: The US is 'not taking sides' in Iraqi-Kurdish dispute" **Business Insider**, Oct. 16, 2017, <http://www.businessinsider.com/r-us-not-taking-sides-in-iraqi-kurdish-dispute-trump-2017-10> (Access Date: 04.06.2018).

³¹² **U.S. Department of Defence**, "Department of Defense Press Briefing by Colonel Dillon via teleconference from Baghdad, Iraq Press Operations", Oct. 17, 2017, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript-View/Article/1345953/department-of-defense-press-briefing-by-colonel-dillon-via-teleconference-from/> (Access Date: 04.06.2018).

with the Iraqi constitution.³¹³ Under this regard, the United States did not want to lose its authority over the both sides with call for calm and not take any sides. However some experts claim that Washington approved Bagdad's actions against KRG to re-control disputed territories.³¹⁴ Also it is claimed that Kirkuk and other disputed territories were taken with American acquiescence.³¹⁵

According to a former State Department adviser David L. Phillips, USA had information for coming ISF attacks and Abadi Administration could not have done such a thing without American's knowledge.³¹⁶ Former Senior Analyst at the International Crisis Group, Maria Fantappie also claims that the essential point was green light which was given by the United States.³¹⁷ Moreover, the United States wanted restoration of Bagdad's authority over disputed territories in order of consolidate Abadi's popularity and strength for next four years with curbing Iranian influences in Iraq.³¹⁸ In addition, the reasons in decrease of American supports to Kurds were rejection of American request for cancelling referendum.³¹⁹ Therefore, the United States used carrot and sticks to punish KRG by showing their displeasure against KRG's policies during referendum.

To some extent, Dr. Zmkan A. Saleem³²⁰ brings different aspects to American policies towards KRG during and post-Referendum and loss of disputed territories. According to Saleem, the role of Iraqi Kurds (KRG) in Iraq is so significant for American strategy in

³¹³U.S. Department of State, Diplomacy in Action, "Situation Near Kirkuk, Iraq", October 20, 2017, <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/10/274980.htm> (Access Date: 04.06.2018).

³¹⁴David Zucchini and Eric Schmitt, "Struggle Over Kirkuk Puts the U.S. and Iran on the Same Side", **The New York Times**, Oct. 18, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/18/world/middleeast/iraq-kurds-kirkuk-iran.html> (Access Date: 04.06.2018).

³¹⁵ Ranj Alaaldin, "Why the US can't afford to lose Iraqi Kurdistan", **Al Jazeera** 27 Oct 2017 <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/afford-lose-iraqi-kurdistan-171026135421497.html> (Access Date: 04.06.2018).

³¹⁶ David Zucchini and Eric Schmitt, "Struggle Over Kirkuk Puts the U.S. and Iran on the Same Side", **The New York Times**, Oct. 18, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/18/world/middleeast/iraq-kurds-kirkuk-iran.html> (Access Date: 04.06.2018).

³¹⁷David Zucchini and Eric Schmitt, "Struggle Over Kirkuk Puts the U.S. and Iran on the Same Side", **The New York Times**, Oct. 18, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/18/world/middleeast/iraq-kurds-kirkuk-iran.html> (Access Date: 04.06.2018).

³¹⁸ Mustafa Gurbuz, "Iraq's Disputed Territories: A Worrisome Achilles' heel", **Arab Center Washington DC**, November 13, 2017 <https://mustafagurbuz.org/2017/12/20/disputed-territories-iraqs-achilles-heel/> (Access Date: 04.06.2018).

³¹⁹ David Zucchini and Eric Schmitt, "Struggle over Kirkuk Puts the U.S. and Iran on the Same Side", **The New York Times**, Oct. 18, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/18/world/middleeast/iraq-kurds-kirkuk-iran.html> (Access Date: 04.06.2018).

³²⁰ Zmkan A. Saleem is a lecturer in International Relations in the College of Law & Political Sciences at the University of Suleiman

Iraq in order to balance sectarian demography in Iraq since Sunni Arabs are weak and suffer from lack of leadership in post Saddam's Iraq against Shia majority ruled country.³²¹ As Britain did 100 years ago during creation of Iraq, the United States wants to use Kurds who are mostly Sunni to balance Shia with Sunni population to control Iraq as well. Moreover, the United States wants to keep Kurds with Iraq to use as a pressure card in order to control whole Iraq rather than a piece of whole state. Therefore, the United States supported and will keep supporting united Iraq for its national interest in the Middle East.



³²¹ Zmkan A. Saleem, "The Kurdish Challenge to U.S. Strategy in Iraq", **The Washington Institute**, October 16, 2017, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/fikraforum/view/the-kurdish-challenge-to-u.s.-strategy-in-iraq> (Access Date: 04.06.2018).

CONCLUSION

After weakening of Britain in the Middle East, the United States began to follow active policies in the region. The United States pursued two important strategies in the region to protect its national interest. Firstly, the United States tried to protect its allies in order to maintain flow of oil from Middle East to Western countries. Secondly, the United States aimed to prevent expansion of communism in the Middle East. For this reason, the United States tried to form spheres of influence over its allies against Soviet Union. However, 1958 coup in Iraq was interruption of American strategies in the region. The spread of communism in the Middle East and Iraq in particular and the safe and uninterrupted flow of oil became the main priorities of US foreign policy in Iraq. Therefore, the United States viewed Kurds of Iraq and the Kurdish nationalist movements as a useful policy instrument in Iraq. As it was explained in chapter one, the US-Kurdish ties were manipulated in nature and It was viewed as a secondary to the main US policy in Iraq.

As demonstrated in this study, the United States supported for Kurds was a part of US covert action in the Middle East and it was within the context of Cold War politics. When Kurdish insurgencies were useful for the United States, Washington Administration supported Kurds against central government in Iraq. However, the United States stopped assistance to the Kurdish movement when Kurdish insurgencies did not serve American interests. This kind of American strategy is obviously seen in 1970s. At the start, the United States encouraged and supported Kurds to revolt against Iraq but USA stopped supporting Kurds on the request of Shah of Iran in 1975. Moreover, the United States did not abstain from helping Saddam's regime to produce chemical weapons and it's used on Kurds when Kurds began to act together with Iran during Iraq-Iran War.

Saddam Hussein built important and big military power in the Middle East during the war against Iran and he waged a war against oil rich Kuwait after Iran. Thereupon, international coalition led by the United States ended invasion of Kuwait by defeating Saddam Hussein. In order to weaken Saddam's regime, Bush Administration encouraged Iraqi people to rise against the regime in Bagdad. Consequently, the Kurds in the north and Shia in the South had a simultaneously rising against regime in Iraq in March 1991. However, Saddam's regime began to massacre Kurds extremely and heavily. As explained in chapter two, the objectives of US Foreign policies dictated that Saddam's

regime should stay in power and the Shia and Kurdish resists were deserted by the United States and Saddam's troops and security apparatus had ruthlessly suppressed both rebellion. This another case which gives credence to our main argument in this thesis: Kurdish question in Iraq had peripheral significance to the US policies in Iraq. During this period, as explained above, KRG gained more significance in US foreign policy in Iraq because the US ties with Saddam's regime was at its lowest ebb.

Findings of our study as discussed in chapter three, the US foreign policy towards the Kurdish movement in post Saddam's Iraq, it's characterized by the central government gaining more sympathy in Washington and there is clear tilt in favor of the regime in Bagdad. The US Foreign Policy during this period towards the Kurdish movement is one of restraining and curbing separatist tendencies. This was manifested in US policy in support of central government which was reluctant to address issues relating of Article 140 of Iraqi constitution. The implementation of which with have helped KRG considerably. In addition, the fight against terrorism had a priority in US foreign policy and the Kurdish issue was subservient to the aims of this policy. Nevertheless, the United States tries to preserve KRG as strong de facto entity in order to counter-balance Iranian influence in Bagdad.

After ISIS' invasion of Iraq in 2014, the United States had tolerated temporarily peshmerga's control of disputed territories including oil rich Kirkuk province. This had encouraged KRG to make a bid for independence referendum in spite of American government instructions against it. Consequently, the KRG carried out so-called independence referendum of September 25. The US policy towards this KRG attempts for independence referendum is another striking evidence that the US foreign policy was devised in Iraq to protect the territorial integrity of Iraq and KRG separatism runs counter to the US foreign policies objective. To sum up, A study of US foreign policy as covered during the period of this study leaves no doubt that The US foreign policy towards the Kurds and KRG was subservient to its wider.

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