

**DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTHERN IRAQ AND
TURKISH – IRAQI RELATIONS
1990 – 2005**

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTHERN IRAQ AND TURKISH-IRAQI RELATIONS

1990-2005

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This study is a historical analysis of Turkish-Iraqi relations from the Gulf War of 1990 up to the Iraqi elections of 2005 and the end of Transitional Administration Law (TAL) and prior to the permanent constitution. This study attempted to explain how Turkish-Iraqi relations entered into a new phase with the Gulf War of 1990. In this year, Iraq invaded Kuwait. Following this invasion, Iraq was attacked by coalition forces and at the end of this war, Iraq was nearly divided when a safe haven was created for the Kurds in northern Iraq. In this regard, this thesis paid attention to three factors that had significant impact on the foreign policy of Turkey towards Iraq: a *de facto* Kurdish state in northern part of this country and apprehension about the possibility of an independent Kurdish state, the existence of PKK in northern Iraq as a result of a power vacuum there and concerns about the future fate of Turkomans in Iraq and attempts to protect their rights. This study has demonstrated how Kurdish question has influenced Turkey's policy towards Iraq and restricted its options.

Key words: Turkey, Iraq, Gulf War, US, Northern Iraq, Iraqi Kurds, KDP, PUK, KRG, PKK, Turkomans, Kirkuk

ÖZ

KUZEY IRAK'TAKİ GELİŞMELER VE TÜRK-IRAK İLİŞKİLERİ 1990-2005

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Bu tez, 1990 Körfez Savaşı'ndan, 2005 Irak seçimlerine ve Geçici Yönetim Yasası'nın bitişi ve Daimi Anayasa'nın öncesine kadar Türk-İrak ilişkilerinin tarihsel bir analizidir. Bu çalışma ile 1990 Körfez Savaşı sonrasında birlikte Türk-İrak ilişkilerinin nasıl yeni bir aşamaya girdiği anlatılmaktadır. 1990 yılında Irak'ın Kuveyt'i istilasını takiben Irak, Koalisyon güçleri tarafından müdahale edilmiştir. Savaşın sonunda Kuzey Irak Kürtleri için bir güvenli bölge oluşturulması ile Irak, neredeyse bölünme durumuna gelmiştir. Bu açıdan, bu tez Türkiye'nin Irak'a yönelik dış politikasında önemli etkisi olan üç faktörü hesaba katmaktadır: ülkenin kuzeyinde oluşacak *de facto* bir Kürt devleti ve bağımsız bir Kürt devletinin kurulmasına yönelik endişeler; PKK'nın Kuzey Irak'taki iktidar boşluğu sonucu bölgede varlık göstermesi ve son olarak Irak Türkmenlerinin geleceğine ve haklarının korunmasına yönelik kaygılar. Bu tez, devlet-üstü bir konu olan Kürt Sorununun Türkiye'nin Irak politikasını nasıl etkilediğini ve Türkiye'nin seçeneklerini nasıl sınırladığını göstermiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkiye, Irak, Körfez Savaşı, ABD, Kuzey Irak, Irak Kürtleri, KDP, KYB, Kürdistan Bölgesel Yönetimi (KBY), PKK, Türkmenler, Kerkük.

To My Dearest Parents...

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INTRODUCTION

Turkey and Iraq as former parts of the Ottoman Empire, have had a history of good neighborliness, as a result of their mutual interests in the region. Iraq has the potential to exert influence over Persian Gulf; it is located on the intersection of the three continents of the world; it contains extensive reserves of crude oil and natural gas and it is an important transit route for Turkey's export to the Gulf countries. On the other hand, Turkey can influence the Eastern Mediterranean, the Bosphorus, the Black Sea and an important part of the Middle East. Therefore, Turkey is important for Iraq, because Iraq is nearly a land-locked country, as it does have a small outlet to the sea in the Gulf and its supply lines are extremely long and vulnerable. In this regard Turkey links the northern part of Iraq to the outer world via the Mediterranean through the Southeast Turkey. In the same context, Turkey is located on the shortest route linking Iraq to Europe. They have also historical and cultural bounds, as both countries were parts of the Ottoman Empire.

Turkish – Iraqi relations entered into a new phase with the Gulf War of 1990. In this year, the Iraqi regime invaded Kuwait. This event had an important effect on the future of Iraq and the whole region and as a result on the policy of Iraq's neighbours in general and specially Turkey. As a consequence of this invasion, Iraq was attacked by coalition forces and at the end of this war, Iraq was nearly divided when a safe haven was created for the Kurds in northern Iraq. This important development, in addition to new changes in international arena as a result of disintegration of Soviet Union led to new changes in Turkish policy, particularly in Turkish-Iraqi relations. Regarding Iraq, Turkey's concerns were: a *de facto* Kurdish state in northern part of this country and apprehension about the possibility of an independent Kurdish state, the existence of PKK in northern Iraq as a result of a power vacuum there and concerns about the future fate of Turkomans in Iraq and attempts to protect their rights.

Thus, this study examines Turkish-Iraqi relations from the Gulf War of 1990 up to the Iraqi elections of 2005 and the end of Transitional Administration Law

(TAL) and prior to the permanent constitution. I have divided this thesis into six chapters. The first chapter is a brief historical background of Turkish-Iraqi relations. As we know, Iraq, which was called “Mesopotamia” by the west, was part of Ottoman Empire from 1534, till the end of WWI. The area which constitutes Iraq today was consisted of three vilayets of Baghdad, Basra and Mosul. The Ottoman Empire was centralized but in some parts local autonomy was allowed. These decentralized policy in some parts of the Empire and its millet system of religious communities, offered the various religious sects and different nations of this empire autonomy in those parts. That is why we see that vilayet of Basra belonged to Shiis, Baghdad was populated by Sunnis and Mosul was populated overwhelmingly by Kurds who were ethnically different from Sunni and Shii Arabs. At the end of the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire began to re-centralize in an attempt to modernize itself and prevent the influence of West in the region, particularly the Britain.

The possibility of discovery of oil in Iraq caused this region to be a place of competition and conflict between the Ottoman state and Britain. When the influence of Britain increased in the northern parts of the Gulf and it objected the Ottoman sovereignty over there in the 19th century, the Ottomans tried to be closer to Germany. This competition was one of the reasons that the Ottoman Empire entered the First World War alongside with Germany against the Britain. The outbreak of World War I and the defeat of the Ottoman Empire brought about a new period for the region and new and small states were founded by dividing and partitioning Ottomans territories. The signing of the Mudros Armistice in October 1918 between the Allies and the Ottoman Empire opened the way for the Allies to redraw the borders according to their desires and interests, without taking into consideration the cultural, social and political factors of the people of the region. The Sèvres Treaty signed between the Allies and the Ottoman government in August 1920, formalized the division of the Empire and was considered as the final settlement.

The resistance movement in 1920 by the people of the region and under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal against the invaders caused the formation of an alternative government in Ankara to the Ottoman one based in Istanbul. By 1923 the Ankara government succeeded in expelling the occupying powers from the country

and obtained international recognition of Turkey's independence. Turkey rejected the Sèvres and after a long negotiation between Britain and Turkey, they reached to another peace settlement at Lausanne in which both sides gave each other some concessions and almost all problems were solved, except one, the Mosul question.

The Mosul vilayet was under the control of the Ottoman Empire continuously and even after creation of Iraq in 1920, there were some Ottoman soldiers in that region. Mosul was important for newly created Turkey for two reasons: oil and Kurdish issue. The possibility of discovery of oil persuaded Turkey to be more serious on his claims on Mosul, but the most important reason which was crucial for Turks, was the Kurds. Turkey wanted to assimilate the Kurds, but in Iraq, the British government seemed to make a homeland for Kurds by encouraging them to speak in their own language and enjoy their cultural and traditional rights in northern Iraq. Turkish government thought that if such an autonomy was given to Kurds, they may ask for association with their brothers in Turkey in future and that meant a lose of a big population and territory.¹

In 1926, Turkey and Britain agreed on the issue of Mosul and Turkey abandoned it. In this way, after 1926, friendly relations between Turkey and Iraq gradually started to improve. From this time up to 1958, both states cooperated with each other more on the security concerns rather than cultural, social and economic matters. The territorial integrity issue mutually became vitally important.

Turkish-Iraqi relations, both during military regimes and after that, during the Baath period was also a friendly one. This relations improved more, following the military coup of 1968, particularly with Iraqi-Turkish Protocol in 1974, which proposed to expand the scope of economic cooperation between the two countries in the field of oil, transit, transport and trade. Thus in this period we can say that for the first time economic links came to the fore.

Economic relations continued during the Iraq-Iran war. In fact, this war started at an appropriate moment for Turkey which had an economic crisis and had experienced its third military coup. The war enabled Turkey to act as a primary

¹ Robert Olson, **The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Skaikh Said Rebellion, 1880-1925** (US:University of Texas Press, 1989), p.145.

transportation route for both combatants and also export its own goods to them as these cheaper Turkish goods appeared increasingly attractive. By 1985, Turkish exports to Iraq reached to 961 million dollars or 12 percent of all Turkish exports. During the war, a second pipeline of Kirkuk-Yumurtalık was completed as well which had vital importance for Turkey's economy. On the other hand, this war had some negative impacts for Turkey as well. The lack of Iraqi government control in its northern part allowed the PKK in the 1980s to establish bases there and use the area against Turkey. Turkey and Iraq signed an agreement in October 1984 which allowed the armed forces of both states to enter each other's territory in hot pursuit of Kurds. In practice, only Turkey exercised this right up to the end of Iran-Iraq war in 1988.

The second chapter deals with Turkish-Iraqi relations during the Gulf Crisis (1990-1991). In 1990, we witnessed important developments. First one was the collapse of Soviet Union and the end of Cold War and the other one was the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait which had a significant impact on the future of Iraq and the whole Middle East and as a consequence on the policy of Iraq's neighbours in general and particularly Turkey. Turkish government for the first time made a decision against Iraq, by participating the coalition forces (indirectly, without sending troops) against that state. It was said that this decision was made by the then Turkish president, Turgut Özal, because we see that the foreign ministry, parliament, and the military were after preserving the neutrality. Immediately after the defeat of Saddam, Shiis in the south and the Kurds in the north rebelled against the Baath regime, but both collapsed. The collapse of the Kurdish rebellion at the end of March 1991 caused a mass flight of Kurds into Iran and Turkey and the coalition forces adopted the Resolution 688 and then launched the Operation Provide Comfort (OPC) in order to safeguard the Kurdish refugees.

Turkey played an important role in this operation, although reluctantly. The refugees were not allowed into Turkey for fear of the creation of a permanent, Gaza-type refugee implantation, the linkage of the two Kurdish communities and the economic burden of caring for so many refugees. OPC was the only way to convince the refugees to leave Turkey and return. In addition to this, the plight of Kurds had attracted worldwide attention to them in general, and the Turkish Kurds mobilized to

help their brothers. Towns in the southeast, despite their own impoverishment, raised funds, bought necessary supplies and organized relief convoys. Such a sympathy worried Turkish authorities and assisted the setting up of OPC.

The third chapter is about Kurds in northern Iraq and Turkish policy toward them. Developments in Iraqi Kurdistan subsequent to the 1990-91 Gulf War substantially reinforced Turkish sensitivity regarding Kurdish aspirations for self-determination. With the unilateral withdrawal of Baghdad's forces southwards in October 1991, the self-governing Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) zone was established and dominated by the two leading Iraqi Kurdish political parties, the KDP and the PUK. They held elections and declared federation as their goal within a democratic parliamentary Iraq. As soon as the idea of federation was raised, the Iraqi regime viewed it as an act of separatism while neighbouring countries including Turkey regarded it as a Pandora's box likely to have repercussions in their countries as well.

Turkish officials thought that developments in northern Iraq and the declaration of federalism would provide inspiration for the Kurds in Turkey. What Turkey supported was an autonomy for Kurds within a unitary Iraqi state. Even that arrangement could be a problem because some Kurds in Turkey might try to emulate the northern Iraqi model of autonomy within Turkey itself. It can be said, therefore, that Turkey wanted nothing for the Iraqi Kurds and Ankara perceived the Kurdish demands in northern Iraq as a major threat for its interests. That is why we see that they condemned the declaration of federalism and Turkey started to normalize its relations with Baghdad. Ankara also tried to cooperate with Iran and Syria which had the same problem and concerns. Their tripartite conferences continued during this period. Particularly after the death of Turgut Özal, Turkey forced the Iraqi Kurds to negotiate with Baghdad and also asked the US and UN to allow the reopening of the oil pipelines running from Iraq through Turkey and removing the sanctions on Iraq.

The fourth chapter explains the Kurdish fiasco or civil war. Turkey, Iran, Syria and the regime in Baghdad began to challenge the Iraqi Kurds and their fragile government. These challenges helped the re-emergence of Kurds's old divisions and their minor disputes escalated into a civil war. There are different views about the

causes of this rivalry between these two parties. Some people argue that the problem was that Barzani was from Bahdinani-speaking and Talabani from Sorani-speaking areas of the south; that Barzani was associated with the Sufi order of Naqshbandi and Talabani with Qadiri; that KDP is more hard-line on the nationalistic issue and is described as conservative, while PUK is considered as a leftists and a socialist-oriented party. Although, all these arguments, to an extent are correct, but the main reason was a rivalry for leadership and ultimate power. We can explain the situation in Iraqi Kurdistan during the civil war as the war of all against all. Iran, Syria and PKK helped the PUK. Turkey was in pursuit of the PKK. Turkey and Iran, in a competition, each tried to increase its influence in the region. Baghdad interfered against the Iranian forces and the PUK, in favour of and by the invitation of KDP. We can add Israel and the US to this list.

Finally, after the Washington agreement in 1998, up to now, Turkey continued its policy of considering the Kurds of Iraq as an enemy and their demands as a major threat for its interests. Turkey was well aware that only Iraq's unitary government based on dictatorship of Saddam Hussein can prevent the Kurds from demanding their rights as a separate nation and different from the Arab nation. Therefore, Turkey's relations with Baghdad improved and upgraded diplomatic representation in Baghdad to the ambassadorial level in 2000.

The fifth chapter involves with the developments in Iraq after its occupation by US and coalition forces in 2003 up to the elections of 2005 and the end of Transitional Administration Law (TAL) and prior to the permanent constitution. In fact, this occupation changed the circumstances and brought about a new and completely different situation in Iraq. Turkey's last minute decision on 1 March 2003, not to allow the passage of US troops through its territory, brought about a golden chance for the Kurds to play a unique and important role as an ally of US during the war against Saddam. Because of Turkey's rejection to help the US, the coalition forces had to launch the war without troops in northern part of Iraq. This put the burden of the ground fighting on the Kurdish *peshmargas*. The Kurds also left their habitual mode of fighting in the mountains and moved into the plain and captured the two major northern cities of Mosul and Kirkuk.

Turkey did not join the war against Iraq, because of the same reason and concern: the Kurds. There were other reasons and concerns such as: participating in such a war might affect Turkey's economy as it did before; it would hurt Turkey's relations with its neighbours and the Arab world and the European countries; considerations about Saddam's arsenal of chemical and biological weapons, but the main reason was Kurds. Turkish government thought that such an operation would likely result in partitioning of Iraq and was lead to the establishment of a federal state in northern Iraq. Such an event would fuel the separatist aims of Kurds in Turkey and as a result Turkey's unity would be threatened. On 1 March 2003, the Turkish parliament rejected to participate the war and it showed that the American policies toward Iraq contradicts Turkey's interests. This decision alienated Turkey's most important ally, the United States. Turkey believed that it could block the Coalitions effort to topple down Saddam's regime, but it ended up with this outcome: a furious US and Kurdish autonomy guaranteed in Iraq.

The following chapter deals with the PKK issue and its presence in northern Iraq and the issue of Turkomans as another factor in Turkish foreign policy towards Iraq. Up to the 1980s, Turkish state denied the Kurdish identity and used all means such as education, the census, the media and military service to forcibly assimilate the Kurds into an imagined Turkish nationhood based on Turkey's Kemalist project of constructing a homogenous nation state out of different ethnic groups. This hard measures caused the alienation of many Turkish Kurds and forced some of them to turn and listen to a radical programme such as the PKK's one. In fact, the aim of PKK was independence by using violence and terror or in other words, partitioning of Turkey. It was considered as a threat to the Turkish state and so, Turkey based its policy to eliminate the PKK inside and outside.

The PKK, in fact, had adopted the use of violence and terror not only against the military targets but also against innocent civilians, women and children as well. Turgut Özal, the then president tried to find a political solution for the Kurdish question but after his death in April 1993, the Turkish government's answer was military and the use of power and counterviolation. We can say that Turkey has been successful in weakening the PKK by incursions into northern Iraq and particularly

after the capture of its leader, Abdullah Öcalan in 1999. The Kurdish question, however, remains as an important issue for Turkey. In recent years, some reforms has been fulfilled, granting significant cultural rights to Kurds which can be regarded as important steps forward for Turkey in this direction.

Turkomans are another factor in Turkish foreign policy towards Iraq. The Turkomans of Iraq are one of the national minorities of that state. The official Turkish foreign policy towards Turkomans had been based on a near denial of their entity in Iraq up to the mid-1990s. Although the regimes in Baghdad kept Turkomans under severe conditions for many years and oppressed them, Turkey never reacted and remained indifferent. After the Second Gulf War, however, Turkey tried to strengthen the position of Turkomans and use them as an instrument against the Kurds in northern Iraq. Instead of engaging the Kurds of northern Iraq in a cooperative manner, Turkish political and security elites considered the Kurds as the enemies of Turkey and therefore tried to balance the influence of these enemies by giving all their support to the Turkomans, assumed to be the only relatives of Turkey in this region.

This study is a historical analysis of Turkish-Iraqi relations. I have tried to reflect different views and opinions of Turkish and Iraqi scholars as well as other resources by foreigners, not only one perspective. In some cases, when I produced and introduced a problem, I have mentioned my stand, directly and frankly, but at the same time, supported by necessary resources. In addition to resources written in English and Turkish, I tried to use other resources written in other languages such as Arabic and Kurdish, as far as I could.

This study argues that the Turkish officials neglected this fact that Iraq is not a coherent nation. There are two different communities in Iraq which are Arabs and Kurds whose nationalities are different. Kurds have their own culture, customs, language. Even religiously two thirds of the Kurds are Sunni Muslims of the Shafi'i school of law, in contrast to Arabs who adhere mostly to the Hanafi school. Only an oppressive system and a dictator like Saddam Hussein could keep them together by a cruelty rule. In a democratic environment they can have more freedom, and respect their characteristics. This is what the Ottoman Empire did centuries ago by keeping

them in three velayets of Basra, Baghdad and Mosul. Some might see this as a type of indigenous federalism, what Kurds nowadays ask in northern Iraq.

This study also argues that while Kurdish question in northern Iraq and inside Turkey has restricted Turkey's ability to play a more constructive and effective role on the wider regional and international arena Turkey and Kurds in northern Iraq can be allies as they had such an experience in 1991, because both sides have common interests. Iraqi Kurds are economically dependent on Turkey and under any political configuration would be eager to maintain good relations with a powerful neighbour at the doorsteps of the European Union. On the other hand, successful economic developments in northern Iraq and oil-wealth, can have positive spill-over effects on the economy of the Turkish Southeast. Having good relations with northern Iraqi Kurds can help Turkey to solve its Kurdish problem as well, because any rhetoric against Kurdish interests in northern Iraq merely serves to alienate Turkish Kurds. This study discusses that the best way for elimination of PKK as a terrorist organization and maintaining and promoting the rights of Turkomans as a national minority who have been oppressed for years by the Iraqi regime is having friendly relations with Kurds. So far, these opportunities have been lost.

CHAPTER 1

A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In this chapter Turkish – Iraqi relations before 1990 Gulf crisis will be examined under four historical period. Iraq during the Ottoman Empire will be the first step. Then the WWI and creation of Iraq and Musul Question will be explained. Next step is from 1926 to 1958 in which the stability and security concerns dominate the relations of two states. In the last part which includes the period of 1958 to 1990, I will try to explain these relations in which the economic interests come to the fore.

1.1. The Ottoman Empire and Iraq

Modern day Iraq which was called “Mesopotamia” by the West became part of the Ottoman Empire in 1935. Under the Ottoman rule it was divided into three Vilayets of Baghdad, Basra and Mosul. Although the Ottoman Caliphs were relying upon Islam and were considering Islam as their ideological reference, but the Ottoman State itself, was first of all a military-economic phenomenon. It had concentrated on expansion and collecting taxes and did not pay much attention to the social and cultural changes in its provinces.² Therefore the governors of these provinces were from the local people not from the central authority, particularly when the Empire’s strength declined in 17th and 18th centuries because of engaging in warfare on the Balkan and other fronts. This weak impact strengthened the influence of Britain who was working quietly for destroying the Empire from inside.

During the 19th Century, Britain made great efforts to establish firm relations with the leaders of Kurdish and Arab tribes, under the pretext of excavating historical monument or practicing commercial activities. Britain also worked to execute the project of Iraqi route gradually and gained privileges from the Ottoman State for operating two steamships on Euphrates river. In 1834 the Ottoman State tried to control the region by sending governors from the center, for example, in 1869,

² M.A. Dahham, “Turkish-Iraqi Relations: Tension and Prospects For Positive Developments”, *Turkish Review of Middle East Studies* (Annual 10, 1998), p.88

Mithat Pasha was sent to Baghdad as a new governor, but this action intensified the competition between the Empire and Britain and 95 percent of the trade in that region was under the control of Britain³.

The Gulf and the Iraq of nowadays became the scene of important changes between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, because oil was found in the region and Britain tried to control the region, not only economically but politically as well, and it became a place of competition and conflict of Ottoman State and Britain. In order to decrease the influence of Britain, Ottoman Empire tried to be closer to Germany. Britain, for example objected the Ottoman sovereignty over the northern parts of the Gulf and in 1904, British government appointed a political representative to Kuwait. The Ottoman administration protested against this action, but to no avail.⁴ After this, the British influence over Kuwait and other parts of the region was to keep on growing until the outbreak of World War I and the defeat of the Ottoman Empire

1.2. The End of World War I and the Mosul Question

As we mentioned, the possibility of discovery of oil in southern parts of Mesopotamia and Iran further increased the importance of the Middle East. At the beginning, the competing interests of Britain, Germany and Russia were exploited by successive Ottoman governments which played off these states against each other. This helped to prolong the existence of the Empire. Britain remained committed to the integrity of the Empire even though it continued to lose territories to the newly-emerging Balkan countries and Italy. However, the Ottoman decision to enter the First World War on the side of Triple Alliance drastically changed this situation.⁵ At the end of the war, Ottoman Empire was defeated and the Allies decided the partition of the Empire.

³ Mustafa Sıtkı Bilgi, "Türk-Iraq İlişkilerinin Tarihsel Boyutu", in Ümit Özdağ et. al. **Irak Krizi, 2002-2003** (Ankara: ASAM Yayınları, 2003), p.214.

⁴ Salih Sadawi, "An Ottoman Report On the Kuwaiti Situation in 1918", **Studies On Turkish-Arab Relations** (Annual 4, 1989), p.123

⁵ Kemal Kirişçi and Gareth M. Winrow, **The Kurdish Question and Turkey: An Example of a Trans-state Ethnic Conflict** (London.Portland, Or:Frank Cass and Co.Ltd, 1997), p.68

The signing of the Mudros Armistice in October 1918 between the Allies and the Ottomans opened the way for the Allies to proceed and occupy their particular areas and they redraw the borders and established small and new states, according to their desires, without taking into consideration the social, political, cultural factors of the people of the region.⁶ Iraq was one of them which was occupied at first by Britain and then fell to its mandate. It was in the Sèvres Treaty signed between the Allies and the Ottoman government in August 1920, which formalized the division of the Empire and was considered at the time as the final settlement of the Eastern Question.

But then, a national resistance movement emerged under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal and in an attempt to survive, they fought against invaders and Greece forces and defeated them.⁷ Their aim was regaining all territory lost from Ottoman Empire, specially most of the European and Anatolian territory lost under the treaty of Sèvres. This resistance movement in 1920 formed an alternative government in Ankara to the Ottoman one based in Istanbul. Until this time the Mosul Vilayet was under the control of Ottoman government and on 1 May 1920, Mustafa Kemal, regarding Mosul said that it is inside our national frontiers.⁸ By 1923 the Ankara government succeeded in expelling the occupying powers from the country and obtained international recognition of Turkey's independence. Turkey rejected the Sèvres and after a long negotiation and tedious diplomacy between Britain and Turkey they reached to another peace settlement at Lausanne in which both sides gave each other some concessions and nearly all problems were solved except one, the Mosul question.⁹

As the Mosul question was a turning point in the relations between Turkey and Iraq, I want to examine it in a more detail. As I mentioned the Mosul Vilayat was

⁶ Mustafa Sıtkı Bilgi, **op.cit**,p.216

⁷ İsmail Soysal, "Seventy Years of Turkish-Arab Relations and an Analysis of Turkish-Iraqi Relations, 1920-1990", **Studies On Turkish Arab Relations** (Annual 6, 1991),p.24

⁸ İsmail Kurtçebe, "**Türk Dış Politikasında Mosul Sorunu**", wwwstradigma.com,No:2, Mart 2003,p.3; Hamza Eroğlu, **Türk İnkılap Tarihi** (İstanbul: 1982); Mim Kemal Öke, **Musul Meselesi Kronolojisi, 1918-1926** (İstanbul: Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Vakfı, 1987)

⁹ Marian Kent, "British Policy, International Diplomacy and the Turkish Revolution", **International Journal of Turkish Studies** (Vol.3, Winter 1985-1986),p.50

under the control of the Ottomans continuously, but after the creation of Iraqi state, Great Britain wanted to annex it to Iraq and Turkey protested such a decision and claimed that it is a part of Turkey and no compromise would be given on this territory in which the majority of its population was Kurds and this issue remained unsolved until 1926 and was the main problem between Great Britain and Turkey all those long years and many times it came to the direct conflict and war between these two states and as a matter of fact such conflicts during the years of 1922 and 1923 happened. The reasons of this disagreement and the importance of this region can be explained when we look at the political situation of the Middle East generally and then Turkey, particularly to understand the origins of this struggle.

Britain was responsible for the fate of Iraq as its mandate and Mosul had a significant value for Iraq, because it was a Kurdish populated territory who were Sunnis and for keeping the balance between Sunnis and Shiis in Iraq, Kurds were crucial for King to remain in power and to have enough Sunni representatives in the parliament.¹⁰ In addition to this, the discovery and possibility of oil in this region made the Britain determined to keep it under its control. Thus when some direct conflicts happened between their armies, the issue was brought to the League of Nations. Turkey, at first accepted the final decision of the League but then, when the League decided in favour of Britain, Turkey refused to accept the decision and accused the League of being an instrument in the hands of great powers and didn't participate the sessions.¹¹

Mosul was important for Turkey for two reasons: oil and the Kurdish issue. The possibility of discovery of oil persuaded Kemal Atatürk to be more serious on his claims on Mosul, but the most important reason which was crucial for Turks, was the Kurds. While the Atatürk policy was the assimilation of Kurds, the British government seemed to make a homeland for Kurds by encouraging them to speak in their own language and enjoy their cultural and traditional rights in northern Iraq. It

¹⁰ Robert Olson, "The Churchill – Cox Correspondence Regarding the Creation of the State of Iraq: Consequences for British Policy Towards the Nationalist Turkish Government, 1921, 1923", **International Journal of Turkish Studies** (Vol.3, No.2, 1985), p.127

¹¹ Peter J. Beck, "A Tedious and Perilous Controversy : Britain and the Settlement of the Mosul Dispute, 1918-1926, **Middle East Studies** (Vol.17, April 1981), pp.266-7

was unacceptable for Turks, because Turkish government thought that if such an autonomy was given to Kurds, in future they may ask for association with their brothers in Turkey and that meant a lose of a big population and territory, very valuable for Turkey which must be avoided and prevented in any price!¹²

So, in contrary with those who think that Turkey's concern was oil more than other matters, it was the possibility of an independent Kurdistan which constituted the most serious menace in sight to the Turkish government. This is clear from İsmet İnönü's speech who remarks that: "so long as any large number of Kurds are included in Iraq the Turkish Government would have perpetual trouble on their eastern provinces and trouble would arise automatically..."¹³

Until 1925 Turkish government argued that they had no problem with Kurds and both Kurds and Turks are the same and from the same race and they claimed that if a plebiscite would be held in Mosul, the majority would vote on favour of Turkey, but in reality it was not correct, because, at first, it was until the abolition of Sultanate, and after that, such a sentiment and sympathy of Kurds towards Turks didn't remain, secondly, if the Kurds wanted such an annexation, the reason was that the majority of their brothers lived in Turkey and they wanted to attach this part to their mainland. All the situation, however was changed by the Shaikh Said Rebellion.

As the Shaikh Said rebellion had a big effect in Mosul question, it is worth mentioning the origin and causes of it briefly. As we know the Treaty of Sèvres envisaged interim autonomy for the predominantly Kurdish areas of Turkey with a view to full independence if the inhabitants of these areas wanted this, including those falling within the British-occupied province of Mosul.¹⁴ Then Atatürk won the battle against Greece and Armenian forces. Many Kurds helped him in this task both for more territories from Armenians and the promise of Atatürk that they would share everything in a friendly way. But in Lausanne, Britain and Turkey gave each other some concessions and forgot the Kurds and except the Mosul everything was solved.

¹² Robert Olson, **op.cit**, p. 145

¹³ **Ibid**, p.141

¹⁴ Mesud Barzani, **Barzani ve Kürt Ulusal Özgürlük Hareketi** (İstanbul: Doz Yayınları, 2003),p.19

Kurds did not lose their hopes and although the Society for Elevation of Kurdistan which was established in 1918 had been dispersed by Atatürk but those leaders who remained in Turkey founded a new Kurdish organization, Azadi (Freedom) at the same year (1923). Their aims were: 1. a general uprising of Kurdistan was to take place, followed by a declaration of independence 2. It was generally felt that foreign assistance was necessary but no state answered their calls for aid. Throughout 1924 preparations for the uprising continued and with the abolition of the Caliphate (March 1924) the most important symbol of Turkish-Kurdish brotherhood disappeared and the circumstances were favourable for nationalistic propaganda and as we know in 1925 this uprising happened. The head of Azadi and the leader of this revolt was a charismatic Naqshbandi Shaikh with great local influence and his main and explicit aim was the establishment of an independent Kurdish state.¹⁵

There are some debates that whether it was primarily a nationalistic or religious movement and although it is not our purpose, here, to evaluate it but briefly we can say that although some Turkish scholars characterize the rebellion as religious, but the majority of Kurds and many foreigner historians such as Robert Olson, W.F. Tucker and antropologist Martin Van Bruinessen place it in the nationalist category.¹⁶ The Azadi organization and Shaikh as its head used religion instrumentally. Atatürk did the same thing in his war against foreigners and fought in the name of the Muslims of Anatolia.¹⁷

In fact Sheikh Said Rebellion was a turning point in Mosul question. This rebellion showed that Turks had problems with Kurds inside their borders and their claims about the similarity or friendship of Kurds and Turks was incorrect and it obligated Turks to come to an agreement with Britain.

The reason of compromising were several. One of the reasons was that Turkey couldn't rely on any foreign help. In spite of the early years of 1920-1923

¹⁵ Martin Van Bruinessen, **Mullas, Sufis and Heretics: The Role of Religion in Kurdish Society** (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2000), p.144

¹⁶ Robert Olson, **op.cit**, p.153

¹⁷ Munir Morad, **The Kurds: The Situation of Kurds in Iraq and Turkey** (London, New York: Routledge, 1992), p.119

that big powers disagreed on some issues and Turkey benefited from it, the relations among the big powers were improving day by day.

France had its problems in Syria with Druzes on one hand and on the other hand it was anxious of the claims of Turkey on Alexandretta and Aleppo, so it preferred to have good relations with Britain than with Turkey.¹⁸

Italy under a new leadership, not only didn't help Turkey but it was ambitious about Turkey's territories.¹⁹ Germany wanted to be accepted as a member of League of Nations and sought to have better links with West. So it couldn't help Turkey as well. Russia was also isolated like Turkey and needed the help of the West and it was unwilling to intervene in the relations between Britain and Turkey. Therefore, as we see there was no other way than compromising with Britain and coming to an agreement on Mosul.²⁰ The Turkish government also suspected of a British role in Shaikh Said rebellion, thus took it as a sign that it should back down.

Thus we see that Turkey had a very active diplomacy after the rebellion of Sheikh Said. The Turkish-Soviet Treaty in 1925 showed that both countries wanted to decrease their isolation. Turkey could be comfortable about its borders with the Soviet Union and could have an easier agreement with West as its aim from the beginning. Although some argue that Soviet may wanted to increase the tensions between Turkey and Britain indirectly but Atatürk was aware of that.²¹

As a process of state-building and state-consolidation Turkey signed a treaty of friendship with Iran in 1926. The reason was that Mustafa Kemal was anxious regarding the policy of Reza Khan in Kurdistan and was afraid that he may help the Ismail Agha Simko and Sheikh Mahmud. On the other hand Iran was worried about the Azeris and was afraid of encouragement of Azerbaijan by Soviet and Turkey to make problems. So, by this agreement both sides became more confident about their boundaries. The Soviet Union had proved that it prefers the existing regimes in Iran

¹⁸ Peter J. Beck, **op.cit**, p.270

¹⁹ **Ibid**

²⁰ Robert Olson, "The Emergence.." **op.cit**, pp. 136-39

²¹ **Ibid**,p.139

and Turkey and didn't help the opposition forces in Iran, for example, the Turkoman rebellion, led by the Sardar of Bujnird in 1925.²²

After these treaties with Iran and the Soviet Union, Turkey was completely ready to abandon Mosul and agree with Britain because it was the only way to normalize its relations with Britain and West generally and broke its isolation and be accepted as a member of League of Nations. Britain on the other hand, always wanted to have good relations with Turkey too, for the protection of its concessions in Straits and prevent Turkey from being a close friend of Bolsheviks.

So, when Kemal Atatürk realized that Britain is ready to give the guarantee, not to provoke Kurds and will respect the new borders forever and will not try to make an independent Kurdish state like what they did for Israelis in Palestine, they agreed and signed the treaty in 1926.

Therefore when we look at this process, we can say briefly that this agreement showed that Turks were determined to suppress Kurds and continue their policy to assimilate them, because if they had a good behaviour with Kurds and tried to give them their rights the rebellion of Sheikh Said would not happen.

1.3. Relations From 1926 to 1958

Amir Faisal Ibn Hussain of the Hashemite Royal Family, who had been briefly King of Syria from March till July 1920 until overthrown by the French, was proclaimed Hashemite King of Iraq in July 1920, and, after a plebiscite on his favour, was crowned Faisal I. In the same year, his brother Amir Abdullah was also proclaimed the Hashemite King of Transjordan. Incidentally both were the sons of Amir Hussain, the Sharif of Mecca and collaborator with the British, who was appointed by them as the leader of the Arab revolt against the Ottoman state. King Faisal visited Atatürk in June 1926, when some treaties, including the Mosul Treaty which delineated the border with Turkey, were signed. Atatürk, despite his ill-fated memories of Sharif Hussain and others' treason during the war, was genuinely hospitable to both his sons, when they came to visit him!²³

²² **Ibid**, pp.139-41

²³ İhsan Gürkan, "Turkish-Iraqi Relations: The Cold War and Its Aftermath" **Turkish Review of Middle East Studies**, (Annual 9, 1996-97), p.29

In this way, after the 1926, friendly relations between Turkey and Iraq gradually started to improve. In 1928, both sides opened legations in each other's capitals. In this period, both sides promised not to support Kurdish movements in both countries and it was a new page in their relations. Kurds were unrest in both sides. In Iraq Barzanis rebelled against British forces and they were oppressed by air forces and obligated to pass the borders and came to Turkey. Because of that, King Faisal visited Turkey on 6-8 July 1931 who was accompanied by Prime Minister Nuri Es-Said and other personalities. Atatürk attached much importance to this visit and said: "... Turkey wishes to improve her relations with all neighbours and other nations; especially with Iraq with whom, besides neighbourliness and common economic interests, we share the same policy of internal and international peace."²⁴

Iraqi government had realized that it can not solve the internal problems, particularly the problem of Kurds without the help of Britain, and on the other hand, there was strong opposition by nationalists in Iraq to the concessions granted to Britain under the terms of the treaty signed by Nuri Said. Accordingly, King Faisal and his Prime Minister sought to counterbalance their dependence on Britain and simultaneously to reinforce the security of their country by starting the process of establishing diplomatic ties with their neighbours who had the same problems and concerns, namely Turkey and Iran.²⁵ They believed that the best way to achieve this aim would be to conclude a non aggression pact with each of them, and in particular with Iran. This initiative may be considered the first step towards the Saadabad Pact which was later concluded between Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan. While Turkish-Iraqi relations were improving rapidly, Turkey concluded a Treaty of Non-Aggression, Neutrality and Good Neighbourly Relations with Iran in 1931; meanwhile the Shatt al- Arab border dispute continued between Iran and Iraq, giving rise to sporadic skirmishes between them.²⁶

²⁴ Mustafa Sıtkı Bilgi, **op.cit**, p.219

²⁵ İsmail Sosyal, **op.cit**, p.219

²⁶ İsmail, Soysal, "1937 Saadabad Pact", **Studies on Turkish-Arab Relations** (Annual 3, 1988),pp.133

Iran claimed that the frontier drawn by the 1913 Istanbul Protocol, at a time when Iraq was an Ottoman province, was not equitable and that it should be re-drawn according to the Thalweg principle in international use.²⁷ The case was to be examined by the League of Nations in the autumn of 1934, together with other questions such as, in particular, the support given by Iran to Iraqi Kurds, the Sunnite-Shia dispute and the controversies over the Iranian pilgrims to the Kerbela shrine or their transit passage to Mecca. In order to resolve these problems, Iraq wanted to conclude a political treaty with Iran and relied on Turkey's friendship and mediation for its conclusion. Therefore, the Iraqi government approached Iran with a proposal for a pact of non-aggression and neutrality in the autumn of 1933 which was welcomed by Iran as a step to ensure peace and security in the region and also in the hope of deriving from it certain advantages in the Shatt al-Arab dispute.²⁸

All these long drawn negotiations between the three neighbours, notably with the encouragement of Atatürk himself, eventually led to the conclusion of a pact. A jointly prepared text was initialled in 1935. However, because of some Iraqi reservations mostly stemming from the influence of other Arab countries, the Pact could only be finalized in 1937.²⁹ Britain supported this pact and these countries. At a time when Hitler in Germany on the one side and Mussolini in Italy on the other, were planning to change the *status quo* in Europe, Great Britain was in need of friends in striving to prevent war and preserve the *status quo*.³⁰ For that reason, she wanted to be in good terms with Turkey and tried to be of help to Ankara in solving its problems (The 1936 Treaty of the Straits, the 1937-38 Hatay agreements). In particular, she showed great understanding towards Iraq and was anxious to keep on friendly terms with Iran and Afghanistan. Therefore in the middle of 1936, Britain was in favour of the signing of this agreement.

Finally four countries concluded the pact on 18 July 1937 at Saadabad, a summer palace, in Tehran. The parties engaged not to interfere in the internal affairs

²⁷ **Ibid**

²⁸ Ismail Soysal, "**Seventy Years....**", p.42

²⁹ Mustafa Sıtkı Bilgi, **op.cit**, p.220

³⁰ Ismail Soysal, "**1937 Saadabad....**", p.135

of each other (Article 1); to respect the inviolability of their common frontiers (Article 2); to hold consultations in connection with international disputes in which their common interests are involved (Article 3); not to attack each other either singly or in common with other countries (Article 4).³¹

Atatürk died in 1938 and succeeded by İsmet İnönü. One year later, in 1939 King Ghazi who was the King of Iraq since 1933 after the death of his father King Faisal, died in a traffic accident to be succeeded by his 4-year old son (Faisal II), and his cousin Prince Abdulillah as regent.³² No change happened in the relations, instead it developed positively along a stable line strictly unparalleled among other Arab countries, perhaps with the exception of Turkish-Jordanian relations which still follow, the same exemplary line. This friendship continued during the Second World War, although the Saadabad Pact became ineffective, because Iran was occupied, Afghanistan and Turkey remained neutral and Iraq attended the war. In Iraq, Reshid Ali Geilani came to power and persuaded a policy in favour of Germany.³³ As a consequence, Britain occupied Iraq immediately and the monarchy came back to power and Geilani was defeated.

The Second World War ended in 1945 and it was the beginning of bipolar system and Cold War in the World. In Turkey, the vast majority of Turks considered the Soviet Union as a threat and rejected Communism as a form of Russian imperial ideology. Thus, this perceived Soviet threat brought Turkey closer to the West and made reliance on the latter to prevent Soviet expansionism and it became a pillar of Turkish foreign policy.³⁴ Therefore, because of this threat and some other factors such as Kurdish question and Syrian provocations about Hatay, Turkey tried to find friends in the region as well and Iraq was one of them. It was perceiving similar threats.³⁵ Molla Mostafa Barzani had fought against the central government of Iraq and was defeated only by the help of British forces. After his defeat, he went to Iran

³¹ İhsan Gürkan, *op.cit*, p.31

³² *İbid*, pp. 30-31

³³ Chriss Birdwood, *Nuri As-Said: A Study in Arab Leadership* (London: Cassell and Company Ltd., 1959), p.180

³⁴ Ara Sanjian, "The Formulation of the Baghdad Pact", *Middle East Studies* (Vol.33, No.2), p.228

³⁵ Gerald De Guarry, *Three Kings in Baghdad: 1921-58* (London: Hutchinson Ltd., 1961), p.131

to help the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad. After the collapse of Kurdish Republic he did not submit and went to the Soviet Union with his 500 *peshmargas*. Iraq had concerns that he may come back by the support of Soviet Union.³⁶ Iraq also was in a competition with Egypt for leadership of the Arab world. Therefore, it was in a search to have good relations with neighbouring countries, specially with Turkey. It was in this condition that İnönü invited Prince Abdulillah and Nuri es-Said in Summer 1945. Turkey attached much importance to this meeting and saw it as a support of Britain and Iraq against the Soviet Union.³⁷ It had a positive conclusion and finally on 29 May 1946 a treaty of Friendship and Good-Neighbourhood, consisting of several protocols, was signed. Some of protocols were as follow: Protocol About the Regulation of Waters, of Tigris and Euphrates and their Support; Protocol of Mutual cooperation in the Security Field; Protocol Concerning Economic Affairs; and, Protocol on Borders; in addition to the agreement for Judicial, Civil, Penal and Commercial Cooperation, and Agreement about Delivering the Criminals.³⁸

Good relations continued until 1949 when Turkey recognized Israel. This recognition made a negative impact on the relations of two countries but it did not last for a long time and with Democrat Party's coming power in Turkey, relations again improved and in 1955 reached to a peak, when Baghdad Pact was signed.³⁹ Turkey considered the Soviet Union as the main threat, thus it tried to improve its relations with West. Turkey realized that American influence in the Middle East was growing rapidly and therefore began to shift some of their friendship and loyalty to Washington and as a consequence, it became a member of NATO in 1952. Turkey at the same time tried to be the leader of an agreement in the Middle East in order to increase its importance in the eyes of West and achieve more support from them, of course, by the encouragement of US. In 1952, therefore Turkey hastened its diplomatic activities with Middle Eastern states. While Iran and Iraq supported

³⁶ Chriss Birdwood, **op.cit**, pp.201,210

³⁷ Mustafa Sitkî Bilgi, **op.cit**,p.221

³⁸ M.A. Dahham, **op.cit**,p.90

³⁹ Mustafa Sitkî Bilgi, **op.cit**,p.221

Turkey, other countries had conditions such as withdrawal of Britain from Egypt and solving the Palestine question. Iraq was encouraged more and more after the confrontation in Iran in the summer of 1953 between the conservative forces loyal to the Shah and their radical-nationalists of Mossadeq and left-wing (Tudeh) opponents.⁴⁰ The Iraqi government had been shocked in seeing the Shah being forced to leave his country temporarily and had feared, for a while, that the coming to power in Iran of the radical-leftist Tudeh (Masses) Party might have serious consequences in Iraq, as well as other Arab states.

In fact the US was determined that a defence organization should be set up in the Middle East against the Soviet menace. In this way on 24 February 1955, Baghdad Pact was signed by Turkey and Iraq and by the support of US. Within that same year, the adherence of Britain, Pakistan and Iran was to endow the Pact with a regional significance while the US were to maintain a position of *de facto* member of the Pact.⁴¹ In fact the purpose and aim of the members, particularly Turkey by the support of US was encouraging all states of the region to participate in the pact but some obstacles and reasons such as the entrance of Britain, competition and struggle between Iraq and Egypt for leadership, the impacts of Arab nationalists and negative attitude of Jamal Abdul-Nasser destroyed all hopes.⁴² As a result of those reasons mentioned above, the Hashemite Kingdom of Iraq was bloodily overthrown by a military coup in 1958, by Abdul Kareem Qassem. Iraq became a republic and next year it withdrew from the Baghdad Pact. However the Pact, although it lost considerable strategic and political consistency, managed to survive under the new title, Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), to affect the containment of the Soviet Union, however to last only till the 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution.

1.4. Relations From 1958 to 1990

It was expected that Abdul Kareem Qassem would pursue a policy in favour of the Soviet Union, In fact Iraq was increasingly came under the influence of Moscow during this period. Iraq accepted the support of Communists at first and its

⁴⁰ M.A. Dahham, *op.cit*,p.90

⁴¹ İsmail Soysal, "Seventy Years.....,p.54-55

⁴² İhsan Gürkan, *op.cit*, p.38-39

government quit the Baghdad Pact. This attitude made serious concerns in Turkey and shocked it to a degree that, Adnan Menderes, then considered to make a military intervention for re-establishing the monarchical regime. Britain and US prevented Turkey from such an action because they were afraid of the reaction of Soviet Union and as a result of instability in the region. However, one year later, Iraq's attitude towards Egypt and Syria and refusing to join the United Arab Republic, formed by these two countries which Baath leaders persuaded Nasser to form and also, Iraq's tendency to make friendly relations with Turkey, caused the improvement of links between Turkey and Iraq.⁴⁴

Qassem promised to grant the rights of Kurds. He allowed the Kurdish leader Molla Mostafa Barzani to return home from exile in the Soviet Union after 12 years staying there. However the relations with the Kurds, before long, began to deteriorate as Qassem refused to grant autonomy to the Kurds in Northern Iraq and the fighting resumed. His war against Kurds, creating dispute between Kurds and Turkomans, the prohibition of pro-Nasser parties in Iraq weakened him.⁴⁵ Under these circumstances pro-Nasser unionists and the leaders of Baath Party, conspired to rig a coup to overthrow Qassem and on 8 February 1963, they actually toppled and executed him. The leader of the group Abd al-Salam Arif was appointed Chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council. The Baathists seized all the key positions of the administration. The war between Kurds and Iraqi government who promised to grant the rights of Kurds and then refraining from realizing it did not let the Iraq to strengthen its position. The Baathist coup in Damascus on 8 March 1963, reinforced the power of the Baathists in Baghdad. In April 1966 Abd al-Salam died in a helicopter crash and was replaced by his brother Abd al-Rahman Arif. However on 17 July 1968 General Arif too, was overthrown by a military coup and was replaced by Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr.

⁴³ Ayşegül Sever, **Soğuk Savaş Kuşatmasında Türkiye, Batı ve Orta Doğu, 1945-1958** (İstanbul: Boyut Yayınları, 1997), pp.213-215

⁴⁴ William Hale, **Turkish Foreign Policy, 1774-2000** (London: Frank Cass, 2000), p.143

⁴⁵ İhsan Gürkan, **op.cit**,p.40-41

The Baath Party was able to solidify its authority smoothly. Saddam Husain, the Party's assistant secretary general of the regional Command, began to take a more visible role, particularly with respect to the Kurdish question.⁴⁶ They realized that the Kurdish conflict affected not only the Kurds but also threatened the country as a whole and it would be impossible to proceed with the country's economic and social programmes unless the Kurdish problem was resolved. Therefore on 11 March 1970 Iraqi government announced that the autonomy will be granted to Kurds. Fearing the impact among its own Kurds, Turkey condemned granting self-rule to the Iraqi Kurds. Turkey had closed its borders to the insurgents during the fighting and had taken a strong stand against some of its own Kurds who had supported Barzani. Within four months of the signing of the agreement, signs of growing Kurdish nationalist activities were emerging in Turkey. As a result, the Turkish government passed a firearms control law and conducted extensive searches in the Kurdish areas of eastern Turkey.⁴⁷

Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr signed a National Act Treaty on behalf of the Baath Party with the Communists to grant them a legal status. Iraq also concluded a Friendship and Cooperation Treaty with the Soviet Union on 9 April 1972.⁴⁸ The rise of oil prices in 1973 and Soviet's military support of Iraqi government made the Iraqi government determined to solve the problem of Kurds by force in 1974. Iraqi government was not ready to include oil-rich area of Kirkuk inside the Kurdish autonomy. War started again and eventually Kurdish movement was defeated in 1975, when Iran and Iraq made the Algiers Agreement by the mediation of Turkey, Jordan, Egypt and Algeria.⁴⁹ Iraq accepted the demarcation of Shatt al-Arab river frontier according to the Thalweg Line and in return, Iran cut off aid of US to Kurds through Iran.

⁴⁶ Edmund Ghareeb, **The Kurdish Question in Iraq** (US: Syracuse University Press, 1981), p.82

⁴⁷ **Ibid**, p.91

⁴⁸ Haim Shemash, **Soviet – Iraqi Relations, 1968-1988- In the Shadow of the Iraq-Iran Conflict** (London:Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1991), p.70

⁴⁹ Dilip Hiro, **Neighbors, not Friends: Iraq and Iran After the Gulf Wars** (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p.7

Regarding the Turkish-Iraqi relations, both during the military regimes and also during the Baath periods was a friendly one. This relations improved more, following the military coup of 17-30 July 1968 in Iraq. This also created a positive impact in the Turco-Arab relations that became much amicable. For example, Turkey continued its relations with Egypt which was re-established in 1965. Consequently, Egypt changed her attitude regarding the Cyprus Question and supported Turkey's position. Moreover, during the war of October 1973, Turkey granted Syria using the right of one of its harbors for receiving the aids from the Third World countries, besides granting the Soviet Union the flight right to the latter's aircrafts over skies and prevented the United States from utilizing her bases in Turkey for supporting Israel.⁵¹

These relations between the two sides was more improved with Iraqi-Turkish Protocol in 1974, which proposed to expand the scope of economic cooperation between the two countries in fields of oil, transit, transport and trade.⁵² Afterwards the execution of Iraqi-Turkish oil pipeline, towards the Mediterranean Sea (from Kirkuk to Yumurtalık), which ensured providing Turkey with petroleum and realized for her an income reaching round 700 million dollars per year. Likewise Iraq took the second rank, in the list of countries importing from Turkey and since the year 1976, the road of İstanbul – Ankara – Musul – Baghdad – Basra – Kuwait - Damman – Muscat, became a unique transit region route of which each point completed the other, especially under the shade of consumption boom stemmed from rise of oil prices.

As a matter of fact, in the field of economy, the Kirkuk Yumurtalık Oil Pipeline added more dynamism to the relations which continued during the Iran-Iraq War in 1980-88 and until 1990 when it was closed in August of that year, that is when the Second Gulf War began. Some reasons behind the agreement to construct the pipeline can be mentioned as follows: The length and the degree of shallowness

⁵⁰ M.A. Dahham, *op.cit.*, p.91

⁵¹ **Ibid**

⁵² Ramazan Gözen, **Amerikan Kışkacında Dış Politika: Turgut Özal ve Sonrası** (Ankara; Liberte Yayınları: 2000), p. 53

of the essentially extremely short Iraqi coastline in the Gulf; the length and vulnerability of the Gulf route; the very low number of Iraqi oil ports opening to the Gulf and their exposed position and vulnerability to Iranian and Kuwaiti hostile acts; the historic good relations between Iraq and Turkey and the short length of the proposed pipeline from the northern fields to the Eastern Mediterranean through South-east Turkey.

The work of this pipeline began in 1975 and in 1977 the first line was opened for operation. Its total length was 981 kms, with 641 km, in Turkey and 340 kms in Iraq. It had five pumping stations, three in the Turkish section, and two in the Iraqi territory. The initial capacity of the first pipeline was 800.000 barrels/day capacity, which at the end of 1984 was raised to 1m.b./d. A second line with 500.000 b/d, was opened for operation in 1987. The amount of oil shipped and the passage fees paid to Turkey from the beginning till August 1990, that is when the Second Gulf War began, are as follows:⁵³

Table 1. The amount of oil shipped and passage fees from 1978 to 1990.

Years	Amount of oil shipped (million metric tons)	Passage Fees (Million US \$)
1978	13,5	38.5
1979	27,6	80
1980	20,2	58.6
1981	27,8	80.6
1982	31,7	92
1983	33	100
1984	36,3	120
1985	38	130
1986	47,7	214.5
1987	59,2	173.5
1988	78,5	222.4
1989	82,9	231.6
1990 (Until the system was closed in August)	45,8	139.2
Total	542.2 m.ton	1.680.090.000 US Dollars

Source : Mustafa Sıtkı Bilgi, *op.cit*, p.224.

⁵³ *ibid*, p.53-54

Ahmad Hasan Al-Bakr resigned both from the party and state positions on 16 July 1979, because of continuing internal strife, the Shiite agitation, supported by Iran and most importantly the Kurdish issue and Algiers Accord which was a shame for him. His deputy Saddam Hussain al-Tikriti replaced him and started a tougher and relentless Baath rule. In the meantime, still early in power, he launched a feverish rearmament program encompassing weapons of mass destruction. Saddam was envisioning not only becoming the superpower of the Gulf, but also, aiming the leadership of the Arab world.⁵⁴ The Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979 and its foreign policy of exporting the revolution to neighbouring countries gave a pretext to Saddam to intervene Iran. He brought the Algiers Accord of 1975 to the agenda and as he was not essentially reassured with the accord, in order to exploit the confused situation and apparent weakness which followed the revolution and to redress the balance, first renounced the 1975 Algiers Accord unilaterally. Then he attacked on 22 September 1980 without a declaration of war. There were other reasons for such an attack, for instance to stop Iran's instigation of the Iraqi Shiites in the south, the reversal of the Shat al-Arab agreement, "the liberation of Arabistan", or in other words, the occupation of the oil-rich regions of Iran and the overthrow of Ayatollah Khomeini.⁵⁵

During the war, Turkey maintained its neutrality and refrained from militarily supporting any warring party. In fact the outbreak of this war helped Turkey in two ways. Firstly, it prevented a political confrontation with Iran because, traditionally western oriented Turkey, being in favour of *status quo*, was confronted with a revolutionary and ambitious state next door. Iran's policy of exporting revolution and its confrontational discourse with the west made a clash between Iran and Turkey unavoidable, but now, Iran was totally engaged in the war. Secondly, it also served Turkey's economic interests, accounting for a nearly five-fold growth in trade with

⁵⁴ M.E. Yapp, **The Near East Since the First World War: A History to 1995** (London: Longman, 1996), pp. 428-431

⁵⁵ Haim Bresheeth and Nira Yuval-Davis, **The Gulf War and the New World Order** (London, New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd. 1991), p.53

the Middle East, particularly from 1982 to 1987, mostly with Iraq and Iran and its trade volume with these two states exceeded the level of \$ 2 billion.⁵⁶

After 8 years, both sides had to accept the UN proposal and the resolution 598, at last, for cease-fire, first Iran and then Iraq on 20 August 1988. For the Iraqi people this war meant enduring eight horrific years during which a quarter of a million Iraqis were killed and over a million injured to invade and use chemical weapons, against a neighbouring people with whom they had strong cultural and historical ties.⁵⁷

The war against Iran also left the Iraqi economy under heavy debt, estimated at between 80 to 200 billion dollars. Saddam himself admitted owing 40 billion dollars, excluding aid given to Iraq, but still recorded as loans by some Arab countries. So, the war increased the regime's dependence on oil as almost the sole source of income. Agriculture and industrial production, despite the country's enormous potential, formed a very small proportion revenue for the regime. And with the fall of oil prices down to about 12 dollars per barrel the economy of the regime faced a true disaster. We can add the domination of ruling elites on the mercantile sectors as another negative impact to the economy. Inflation soared to more than 100 percent.⁵⁸ As war-related jobs vanished, unemployment rose rapidly with friction, rising between imported Egyptian workers estimated at a maximum of two million and soldiers returning from the war. In short, one of the region's wealthiest countries was facing bankruptcy and a population suffering severe economic hardship. As a consequence, this situation heightened the regime's internal isolation from a population ruled by the most extreme forms of fascist repression and terror and I think that gassing of the Kurdish people of Halabja is a vivid example. Therefore, in such a circumstances, it was not surprising for a dictator and bully as Saddam to make another adventure and this time the target was Kuwait.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ İhsan Gürkan, **op.cit**,p.46

⁵⁷ Haim Bresheeth and Nira Yuval-Davis, **op.cit**,p.53

⁵⁸ **Ibid**, p.70

⁵⁹ Phebe Marr, "Iraq's Future, Plus Ça Change... or Something Better", in İbrahim İbrahim, ed., **The Gulf Crisis: Background and Consequences** (Washington DC, Georgetown University: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, 1992), p.156

CHAPTER 2

TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS IRAQ DURING THE GULF CRISIS (1990 – 1991)

In 1990, two major events happened. First one was the collapse of Soviet Union and the end of Cold War which affected the whole world. The other one was the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait which had a significant impact on the future of Iraq and the whole Middle East and as a consequence on the policy of Iraq's neighbours in general and particularly Turkey. In this chapter I will try to examine the causes of Iraq's occupation of Kuwait and its results and at the same time its impact on the relations between Iraq and Turkey.

2.1. Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Iraqi regime was unstable at home, because of eight years of war with Iran. Therefore it was not surprising for a dictator and bully as Saddam to make another adventure, although his decision to invade Kuwait on August 2, 1990 took friend and foe by surprise. In order to understand the reasons of such an adventure, we should look at the Iraqi regime's pretexts and excuses against Kuwait.

One of these pretexts was, historical and territorial claims that Iraq had over Kuwait. We know that the borders of present day Iraq and Kuwait are the product of the colonial powers. In 1922, the British High Commissioner for Iraq, Sir Percy Cox, delineated the modern borders of Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. He gave Kuwait a coastline of 310 miles, leaving Iraq a mere 36 miles. Although this angered the Iraqis, they did little to alter that reality because Iraq was under varying degrees of British influence. In 1958, the pro-Western monarch in Iraq was overthrown in a military coup led by Major General Abdul-Karim Qasim and when in June 1961, Kuwait declared its independence, Qasim laid claim to Kuwait and threatened to annex it by force. British forces rushed to Kuwait deterred an Iraqi invasion. On 8

February 1963, Qasim was overthrown and Iraq's Ba'ath party, subsequently recognised Kuwait's independence on 4 October 1963 in exchange for a large payment from Kuwait.⁶⁰ On the eve of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Iraq accused Kuwait of violating its territorial integrity. They complained that Kuwaiti government had systematic advance toward Iraqi territory by setting up military establishments, police posts, oil installations and farms on Iraqi territory.

Another excuse was Kuwait's refusal to lease two strategic islands in the Gulf to Iraq. In its quest for a deep sea port in the Gulf, Iraq requested from Kuwait, in the early 1970s, control over the two islands of Warbah and Bubiyan.⁶¹ These islands overlook the approaches to Umm Qasr, one of Iraq's two ports on the Gulf. In 1975, Kuwait rejected an Iraqi proposal to cede Warbah island and lease half of Bubiyan island to Iraq for 99 years. Shortly after the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war in 1980, Kuwait refused a similar Iraqi request. And in 1989, after the end of the Iran-Iraq war, Kuwait refused another requests to lease the two islands. Iraq viewed Kuwait's refusal to accommodate its needs with regard to a deep sea port as unfriendly.

Another issue was Iraq's anger over Kuwait's pumping of huge quantities of oil from the Rumaila field which lies underneath both countries. Despite Iraq's recognition of Kuwait's independence in October 1963, the two governments did not settle their dispute over ownership of the huge, 50 - mile-long Rumaila oilfield. About 90 percent of the banana-shaped field, which is estimated to contain 30 billion barrels of oil, is in Iraq.⁶² Nevertheless, Iraq claimed that during the 1980s, Kuwait pumped over 10 billion dollars worth of oil from the field that should have gone to Iraq, without any agreement between the two countries. As a significant portion of Iraq's debt was owed to Kuwait, this claim was important.

⁶⁰ Mohammed Heikal, **Illusions of Triumph, An Arab View of the Gulf War** (Britain: Harper Collins Publishers, 1993), p.182

⁶¹ Omar Ali, **Crisis in the Arabian Gulf, An Independent Iraqi View** (London: Praeger Publishers, 1993), p.33

⁶² Lester H. Brune, **America and the Iraqi Crisis 1990-1992, Origins and Aftermath** (Claremont, California: Regina Books, 1993), p.37

Kuwait's refusal to forgive Iraq's debt incurred during the Iran-Iraq war, was another excuse.⁶³ Saddam Hussein viewed Iraq's war with Iran as having been fought on behalf of all Arabs, helping to protect them from Khomeini's Islamic revolution. He, therefore, expected Arab countries, particularly those in the Gulf region, to be grateful for his role in checking the spread of Khomeini's Islamic revolution. Iraq's war with Iran, cost Iraq about 500 billion dollars. Iraq emerged from the conflict with debts exceeding 80 billion dollars, including at least 30 billion dollars in short-term debt that had to be repaid to Europe, Japan, and the United States in dollars or other hard currencies. About half of Iraq's debt was owed to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. But, in February and July 1990, Iraq demanded money from the Arab states in the Gulf, and both times, it was turned down.

Another accusation was that Kuwait had waged economic warfare against Iraq. Kuwait not only refused to forgive the debt, it deliberately, according to Iraq, flooded the oil market in violation of OPEC production quotas agreed to by the major oil producers.⁶⁴ This Kuwaiti overproduction depressed the price of oil and, in turn, hurt Iraq, which was already short on funds. As we know, Iraq badly needed funds to rebuild its shattered economy, devastated by years of war with Iran. One of the ways that Saddam Hussein had maintained internal support for his policies was by spending generously on goods and services even through the bleakest moments of the war. Now that the war with Iran had ended, the Iraqi population's expectations for a better standard of living were on rise. The rulers of Iraq were aware of that and strived to cope with these rising expectations. This created tremendous pressures to try and get Iraq's debt forgiven and to increase the income generated from the sale of oil.

That was why, during the Baghdad Arab summit which was held at the end of May 1990, Iraqi President claimed that every one dollar drop in the price of a barrel

⁶³ Amatzia Baram, "Calculation and Miscalculation in Baghdad, in Alex Danchev and Dan Keohane, **International Perspectives on the Gulf Conflict, 1990-1991** (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), p.27

⁶⁴ Lester H. Brune, **op.cit**, p.37-8

of oil meant a loss of 1 billion dollars a year for Iraq. He then added, that in Iraq's present economic state of affairs, this overproduction amounted to "an act of war".⁶⁵

In addition to all grievances or pretexts, it can be argued that Saddam's personality played a key role in his decision to embark on such a disastrous venture. As I mentioned before, he viewed himself as one of the great leaders of history, ranking himself with Nasser, Castro, Tito, Ho Chi Minh, and Mao Zedong. He had been consumed by dreams of glory, and he identified himself with Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylonia who conquered Jerusalem in 586 B.C, and Salah ad-Din who regained Jerusalem in 1187 by defeating the Crusaders. He believed that there could be only one supreme Arab nationalist leader, and he was the one.⁶⁶ He was driven by what he perceived as his mission to lead the Arab world. So, when he deemed certain unthinkable actions to have been in his favour or better than the existing alternatives, he carried out the unthinkable.⁶⁷

All these points were domestic or regional causes. If we look at the international environment, we see that in 1990 the Soviet Union collapsed and the Cold War ended and it gave the signals for ending the old order and emerging a new one. This new period and conditions meant that the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, no longer face each other in an ideologically motivated confrontation. The Gulf crisis of 1990 demonstrated this change had taken place in the international policies of the Soviet Union. As we know, during the 1961 Iraqi-Kuwaiti crisis, the Soviet Union had taken the side of Iraq when its leader, Abdul-Karim Qasim, claimed that Kuwait is an integral part of Iraqi territory.⁶⁸ On two occasions the Soviet Union used its veto power as a permanent member of the UN Security Council to block the admission of the nearly independent Kuwait to the ranks of the UN General Assembly. But in 1990, the policy of the Soviet Union was

⁶⁵ **Ibid**; Shahram Chubin, "Regional Politics and the Conflict", in Alex Danchev and Dan Keohane, **International Perspectives on the Gulf Conflict, 1990, 1991** (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), p.3

⁶⁶ Shahram Chubin, **Ibid**, p.18

⁶⁷ Amatzia Baram, **op.cit**, p.50

⁶⁸ Yelena S. Melkumyan, "Soviet Policy and the Gulf Crisis", in Ibrahim Ibrahim, **The Gulf Crisis: Background and Consequences** (Georgetown University, Washington, DC 20057: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, 1992), p.81

completely different. In the United Nations, it supported American-initiated resolutions condemning Iraq, legitimating the use of force against the occupying Iraqi army if it did not leave Kuwait.⁶⁹ China's behaviour was almost the same as the Soviet Union.⁷⁰

Another characteristic of this new situation was that the bipolarity that had dominated the world system was coming to an end and it changed to multipolarity and according to some, uni-polarity. What is certain is that, with this, came more instability in the world system. During the cold war Iraq was in the Soviet camp and it helped Iraq militarily and was also in a position to constrain Saddam not to threaten the region and Soviet and world interests.⁷¹ The decline of superpower contention, offered a local bully like Iraq free rein for adventure and also eliminated the former Soviet patron's ability to impose constraints on the dictator. Therefore, the Gulf Crisis was an example of the local-bully syndrome born of the new post-cold war situation as well.

This new situation helped the emergence of US as the unique superpower. The collapse of Soviet tyranny added several new dimensions to the US status. One of the consequences was that the US became more free than before to use force, the Soviet deterrent having disappeared. The second consequence was that there were now prospects for the "Latin Americanization" of much of the former Soviet empire, that was, for its reversion to a quasi-colonial status, providing resources, cheap labour, markets, investment opportunities, and other standard Third World amenities. The third one was that, now, new pretexts were needed for Third World intervention,

⁶⁹ James Gow, "The Soviet Involvement", in James Gow, **Iraq, the Gulf Conflict and the World Community** (London. New York: Center for Defence Studies, Brassey's (UK), 1993), pp.121-37; Vladimir Nosenko, "Soviet Policy in the Conflict", in Alex Danchev and Dan Keohane, **International Perspectives on the Gulf Conflict, 1990, 1991** (New York: St Martin's Press, 1994), pp.136-44

⁷⁰ Xiaxing Han, "China and the Gulf Crisis: A New Phase of Sino-Arab Relations", in Ibrahim Ibrahim, ed., **The Gulf Crisis: Background and Consequences** (Georgetown University, Washington DC 20057: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, 1992), pp.92-106

⁷¹ G. Allison and R. Blackwill, "America's Stake in the Soviet Future", **Foreign Affairs** (Vol. 70, Issue 3, Summer 91), p.77

including the Middle East as the most sensitive and vital area in the world for the interests of US.⁷²

According to this interpretation we see that the US considered Saddam as a threat to her interests, because of its military power. Therefore it can be said that the Kuwaiti behaviour towards Iraq was encouraged and even dictated by the US, on the other hand, provoking Iraq to take a military action against Kuwait by sending out the wrong signals to the Iraqi government that Washington would not oppose any invasion of Kuwait, because US considered it as a domestic problem between two Arab states.⁷³ In this way it could have a pretext, necessary for intervention in the region. Therefore it is interesting to see that, while Iraq was searching to find pretexts in order to invade Kuwait, the US also was waiting for such a miscalculation.⁷⁴

Although it is not possible definitely to know whether or not Iraq was lured into this invasion, if we look at oil events, it is interesting to see what actions the US president took either to avoid or to force war. After the Iraqi invasion, but prior to the US bombardment of Iraq, in a period when the oil markets were panicking, the president refused to take any actions to calm them. Most significant was his refusal to release crude oil supplies from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve which had been stockpiled for just such a contingency. In contrast to this, the day after the US bombed Iraq, the president announced that he would release emergency stockpiles to calm the situation in the oil markets, and overnight the price of oil fell by a third.⁷⁵ Thus, looking at actions rather than words, in the earlier period the effect of the administration's lack of action was to keep oil prices high and volatile and the oil

⁷² Noam Chomsky, "After the Cold War: US Middle East Policy", in Phillis Bennis and Michel Moushabeck, eds., **Beyond the Storm, A Gulf Crisis Reader** (New York: Olive Branch Press, 1991), p.75

⁷³ Mohammed Heikal, **op.cit.**, p.353; Lester H. Brune, **op.cit.**, p.51

⁷⁴ Laurie Mylorie, "Saddam Hussein's Invasion of Kuwait: A Premeditated Act", in Wolfgang F. Danspeckgruber and Charles R.H. Tripp, eds., **The Iraqi Aggression Against Kuwait** (USA: Westview Press, 1996), pp.41-3; Faleh Abd al-Jabar, "Roots of Adventure, The Invasion of Kuwait: Iraqi Political Dynamics", in Victoria Brittain, ed., **The Gulf Between Us, The Gulf War and Beyond** (London: Virago Press, 1991), p.37

⁷⁵ Michael Tanzer, "Oil and the Gulf Crisis", in Phillis Bennis and Michel Moushabeck, **Beyond the Storm, A Gulf Crisis Reader** (New York: Olive Branch Press, 1991), pp. 263-67

market in a panicky state. In this way, they tried to convince everyone that sanctions were not working and war could be associated with peaceful oil markets.

Saddam Hussein did not know, or didn't want to know that his war against Iran was different from this one, and that the US would not abandon Kuwait.⁷⁶ There is a joke that: why do the US and Kuwait need each other? And the answer is: because Kuwait is a banking system without a country, and the US is a country without a banking system, and like many jokes it is not a joke. Saddam seriously and persistently continued to miscalculate and even after that invasion did occur, he failed to realize that the coalition of forces amassed against him would soundly defeat his forces in a very short period of time. It was clear that there was an international coalition against this act of aggression. Yet in spite of many resolutions of UN Security Council such as 660, 661, 662, 664, 665, 666, 667, 669, 670, 674, 677, Iraq was not convinced to withdraw voluntarily from Kuwait.

Saddam had some misperceptions, not to withdraw voluntarily from Kuwait. First one is that, given Saudi Arabia's long-standing sensitivity to the presence of foreign troops on its soil, Saddam assumed that the Saudis would not ask, or be convinced, to accept US and other foreign, particularly non-Muslim, troops to help defend their country and liberate Kuwait.⁷⁷ But he was wrong. Second one was that Saddam overestimated the level of support he would have in the Arab world. He assumed that the Arab world would be happy with the demise of oil-rich Kuwait. He was surprised by the opposition to his occupation of Kuwait by even those who were closest to him, such as Jordan and the Palestine Liberation organization.⁷⁸

Third miscalculation was that, Saddam Hussein believed that the United States would not interfere militarily if he were to occupy Kuwait. When the United States decided to send troops to defend Saudi Arabia and liberate Kuwait, he thought

⁷⁶ Lester H. Brune, *op.cit.*, p.54

⁷⁷ Amatzia Baram, *op.cit.*, p.30

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.35; Michael Simpson, "The Palestinians and the Gulf Crisis", in Ibrahim Ibrahim, **The Gulf Crisis: Background and Consequences** (Georgetown University, Washington, DC 20057: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, 1992), pp.247-74; Anoushiravan Ehteshami, "Palestinian Perspective on the Conflict", in Alex Danchev and Dan Keohane, eds., **International Perspectives on the Gulf Conflict, 199-1991** (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), pp.80-105

that the US was bluffing and would not wage a war against Iraq because of the former's Vietnam complex-the fear of being entangled in a long drawn-out war in a distant land.⁷⁹ He felt that, even if the US did attack Iraqi troops, the low tolerance of the American public to US casualties would force the US to end the war and negotiate an acceptable agreement with Iraq.

Fourth reason was that, Saddam Hussein was determined to attack Israel if a war erupted. He believed that Israel would then retaliate, leading to the collapse of the Arab, and in this way, the international alliance against Iraq. But when attacked, Israel opted not to retaliate and reaped enormous benefits for its restraint.⁸⁰

The last reason was that Iraq considered its war against Iran as a victory and the end of that war, unleashed an unrealistic level of confidence in the Iraqi military's capabilities. Iraq emerged as the fourth largest army in the world-an army that was well-equipped, and battle-hardened. Saddam miscalculated by assuming that this army would or could put up a fight against the US and other Western armies.⁸¹ More importantly, the Iraqi leader miscalculated when he assumed that his troops were committed to fighting for the sake of retaining Kuwait.

Eventually, the Security Council authorized the use of force against Iraq, acting under Chapter 7 of the United Nations charter, through resolution 678 adopted on 29 November 1990. In late February 1991, the fighting (Desert Storm) started and in less than two days, the Allies broke the enemy's military position and in 25 February, when it had become clear that Iraqi forces were routed, Saddam Hussain announced the withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait and in February 27, Iraq announced that it would comply with all twelve UN resolutions. At that time the US had the option of continuing the attack against Iraqi forces and overthrow the Iraqi regime or at least weakening Iraq's Republican Guard or calling the ceasefire. The

⁷⁹ Ametzia Baram, *op.cit.*, pp.44-5

⁸⁰ Bernard Reich, "Israel and the Persian Gulf Crisis", in Ibrahim Ibrahim, eds., **The Gulf Crisis: Background and Consequences** (Georgetown University, Washington, DC 20057: Center for Contemporary Studies, 1992), pp.228-46; Avi Shlaim, "Israel and the Conflict", in Alex Danchev and Dan Keohane, eds. **International Perspectives on the Gulf Conflict, 1990-1991** (New York: St. Martin's Press; 1994), pp.59-79

⁸¹ Shahram Chubin, *op.cit.*, p.4

president of US agreed to a cease-fire approximately 100 hours after the ground war had begun. Because of many reasons US did not march on to Baghdad and Saddam remained in power. Reasons like fear of the reaction of Arab world and Arab allies, or losing international support or serious casualties or lack of an alternative for Saddam Hussein. But at least they could support uprisings against Saddam which had begun immediately after the war in both south by Shiis and the north by Kurds.⁸²

2.2. Turkish Foreign Policy During the Second Gulf War

In 1990, Turkish government for the first time made a decision against Iraq, by participating the coalition forces against that state.⁸³ On 8 August 1990, the Turkish government announced that the pipeline would be closed and all other commercial transactions with Iraq and occupied Kuwait would be suspended, and the Habur port of entry on the Iraqi border would be closed and the transit shipment to northern Iraq from the port of Mersin will also be stopped.⁸⁴ Some people in Turkey believed that these decisions were somewhat premature, as Saudi Arabia and Jordan complied with the UN decision later than Turkey. They argued that the decision was taken by president Turgut Özal, based on his personal day to day communication with president George Bush and without prior consultation with the cabinet. But Özal thought that this decision is beneficial to Turkey which he frankly expressed as “To put one and get three”. On the other hand, the foreign ministry, parliament, and most of all the public were after preserving, at least for some time, the neutrality.⁸⁵

In spite of the opposition and uproar in the country, in September 1990 the Turkish Parliament passed a law to allow government to send troops abroad and receive foreign troops in Turkey. However though some NATO contingents were deployed in south east Turkey, no Turkish troops were sent abroad.

⁸² James Ciment, **The Kurds: State and Mimority in Turkey, Iraq and Iran** (New York:Facts on File, Inc., 1996), p.161

⁸³ Heinz Kramer, **A Changing Turkey: The Challenge to Europe and the United States** (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), p.119

⁸⁴ William Hale, “Turkey, the Middle East and the Gulf Crisis”, **International Affairs** (Vol. 68, No.4, 1992), p.684; Philip Robins, **Turkey and the Middle East** (London: Pinter for Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1991), pp.69-70

⁸⁵ **Ibid**

While Turkey's role in the execution of the embargo was essential, it turned out that it was not sufficient. The Turkish government in continuous contact with the Bush administration, considered some alternative actions like sending combat troops and combat ships to the theater; allowing the Allies to utilize Turkish airbases and possibly opening a second front along the 331 km Turkish-Iraqi border. Özal seemed to be wanting all, but he faced strong opposition and resistance from media and the public. Even Özal's own Motherland Party voiced opposition and Özal was unable to send Turkish troops to the theatre.⁸⁶

When the Parliament finally passed a decision to give war powers to the government, under Article 92 of the Constitution, it was with a condition that it could only apply if Turkey is attacked. The reaction intensified with calls from all sectors of the population. In October 1990, the minister of Foreign Affairs resigned and this was followed by an unprecedented event in the Turkish Republic's history, the resignation of the chief of the General Staff, on the grounds of disagreement with the President about Gulf policy in particular.⁸⁷ General Necip Torumtay remarked that "President Özal habitually declaring his personal and uncoordinated interpretations and views, to the world public, in complete disregard of the view of responsible state organizations, began to shape the Gulf policy all by himself, which in actual fact had to be evolved by the government..."⁸⁸

On 29 November 1990 the Security Council authorized the use of force to expel Iraq from Kuwait, if it fails to evacuate Kuwait by 15 January 1991. This was the final deadline, Turkish Parliament renewed its war powers vote, which included the use of İncirlik NATO base and other air bases against Iraq. When Iraq did not evacuate Kuwait before the deadline, the Allies started a strategic air/missile campaign (Operation Desert Shield) on 18 January 1991, mainly from İncirlik air base, that may be taken to amount to opening a second front in Turkey against Iraq, however for air operations only. Although Turkish troops were not involved directly

⁸⁶ Malik Mufti, "Daring and Caution in Turkish Foreign Policy", **Middle East Journal** (Vol.52, No.1, Winter 1998), pp.48-49

⁸⁷ **Milliyet**, 9 October, 12-13 October, 1990; **Milliyet**, 7 December, 1990; **Milliyet**, 3 December, 1993

⁸⁸ **Ibid; Orgeneral Torumtay'ın Anıları** (İstanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1993), pp.115-16

in the action, for the first time an Arab country was bombed from Turkish soil.⁸⁹ In the meanwhile a Turkish force about 120.000 strong with armour, air, and transport support had been deployed to South East Turkey facing the Iraqi border as a deterrent which pinned down eight Iraqi divisions in the north.⁹⁰

The Second Gulf War and the decisive defeat of Iraq created the first serious tension between Ankara and Baghdad. This time Ankara, contrary to its traditional policy of neutrality, which it observed correctly in the First Gulf War, was allied with the US and other Western powers, along with principal and lesser Arab states of the region, including Egypt and Syria. There have been different comments regarding Turkey's Iraq policy during the Gulf War of 1991. Some commentators argue that Turkey's exclusive cooperation with the West, more particularly the United States, against Iraq during the Kuwait crisis, a policy pursued under the 'Single-handed' leadership of the Turkish president Turgut Özal was completely wrong and was a fundamental alteration of Turkey's traditional 'balanced' regional policy dating back to the 1960s.⁹¹ These critics maintained that the failure of the US to act to remove Saddam Hussein from power was the biggest trick the Western world played on Turkey in the wake of the Gulf War.⁹²

While these arguments still enjoy wide popularity in Turkey, certain observers of Turkey's foreign policy seem to have a perception that is essentially opposed to these arguments. According to them, Turkish foreign policy during the Kuwait crisis was not, in fact, a deviation from Turkey's traditional foreign policy of maintaining a balance between the requirements of Turkey's membership in the Western alliance and those of preserving friendly relations with its neighbours.⁹³ Compared with previous major regional crises in the Persian Gulf since the Soviet

⁸⁹ İhsan Gürkan, **op.cit**, p.53

⁹⁰ **Ibid**

⁹¹ Sabri Sayari, "Turkey: The Changing European Security Environment and the Gulf Crisis", **Middle East Journal** (Vol.46, No.1, Winter 1992), pp.13,16,17; Nur Batur in **Milliyet**, 31 March 1991, p.19; Sedat Ergin in **Hürriyet**, 25 March 1991, p.10

⁹² Sabri Sayari, "Turkey...", **op.cit**

⁹³ Mahmut Bali Aykan, "Turkey's Policy in Northern Iraq, 1991-95", **Middle Eastern Studies** (Vol.32, No.4, October 1996), pp.344-45

invasion of Afghanistan and the revolution in Iran in 1979, the Kuwait crisis stood out as an exception. During this crisis the Western and non-Western countries of the region united their efforts, for the first time since 1979, to secure the withdrawal of the Iraqi occupation forces from Kuwait. This cooperation was based upon a perception of a clear-cut common threat, namely Iraq's occupation of Kuwait. This occupation threatened a specific regional common interest, that is, the protection of the regional *status quo*. This was why all the Western and other states had the political will to coordinate their policies within the framework of the United Nations. Thus during the Kuwait crisis Turkey did not cooperate with the West only, but with a United Nations of which the West, particularly the United States, given its capability and readiness to head the anti-Iraq international coalition, acted as the jointly accepted leader.

2.3. Turkey and Operation Provide Comfort

After the defeat of Iraq's military power, many people thought that Saddam Hussein would be removed from the power, as the Americans encouraged Iraqis to fight against the regime. Yet in the end the US preferred not to interfere in domestic issues of Iraq, because of many reasons. It was in this situation that the uprising of Shia in Southern Iraq and Kurds in the north were crushed by Iraqi military. The collapse of the Kurdish rebellion against Saddam Hussein's regime at the end of March 1991 caused a mass flight of Kurds into Iran and Turkey, ahead of the advancing Iraqi army. The climatic and topographic conditions awaiting these refugees, coupled with the fact that the sheer size of the mass influx overwhelmed local resources for relief assistance, created one of the most tragic refugee disasters.⁹⁴

Turkey played an important role in the adoption of Resolution 688 and the launching of Operation Provide Comfort. Turkish decision makers were seriously concerned over the consequences of a mass influx of Kurdish refugees on the security of an area which was already suffering from separatist Kurdish agitation. "Many Turks were concerned that the presence of Iraqi Kurdish refugees on Turkish soil would intensify feelings of Kurdish nationalism and separatism among Kurds of

⁹⁴ Anthony H. Cordesman and Ahmed S. Hashim, **Iraq, Sanctions and Beyond** (USA: Westview Press, 1997), p.78

Turkey.”⁹⁵ Operation Provide Comfort was seen as a means of a speedy resolution of the refugee crisis which would help to solve this security problem.

In fact, at the outset of the 1991 crisis, in April, the Turkish government decided not to repeat what they saw as their mistake in 1988.⁹⁶ As we know, the last year of the Iraq-Iran war was the beginning of Saddam’s aggressive use of chemical warfare. Thereafter, the Ba’ath systematically used chemicals against the Kurdish civilian population. On March 16, the Iraqi air force dropped chemical bombs on the Kurdish-occupied city of Halabja, an ancient cultural center in eastern Kurdistan.⁹⁷ UN and Western governments only condemned the action but no sanctions against Baghdad were imposed. Halabja was yet the beginning.

Like so many of his previous governments in Iraq, Saddam was determined to find a final solution to his Kurdish problem just after the Iran-Iraq war. It was called ‘anfal’, the Koranic word for the ‘spoils of war’ and it was the cleansing of Kurdistan, the removal of hundreds of thousands of Kurds from their mountain lands and the destruction of their homeland. They were taken to concentration camps in the Iraqi desert. Women and children were raped and tortured and males were shot or dumped into mass graves and buried alive. According to Human Rights Watch, 4.000 villages were destroyed and 50.000 to 100.000 dead.⁹⁸ Approximately 100.000 Kurds escaped this nightmare and they found themselves in another refugee camp in Turkey. The Turkish government was caught in a dilemma at that time. For the sake of public opinion among Turkey’s allies in the West, Prime Minister Turgut Özal wanted to find a solution. But he also feared the Iraqi Kurds might infect his own Kurdish population with the nationalistic ideas. Eventually, the government arrived at a compromise solution. The refugees would be kept in armed camps in isolated areas.

⁹⁵ G.Fuller and I.Lesser, **Turkey’s New Geopolitics** (Westview Press/A Rand Study, Boulder, 1993), p.42

⁹⁶ **World Refugee Survey 1991** (US Committee for Refugees: Washington, DC, 1992), p.82

⁹⁷ Middle East Watch, **Genocide in Iraq: The Anfal Campaign against the Kurds** (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1993), pp.71-73

⁹⁸ Kanan Makiya, “The Anfal: Uncovering an Iraqi Campaign to Exterminate the Kurds”, **Harper’s Magazine** (May 1992), p.61. Kanan Makiya is also the writer of “The Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq”, under the name of Samir al-Khalil.

Journalists, human rights organizations and other observers were kept out. Fearful of drawing any international attention to the Kurds generally, the Turks tried to cover up evidence of chemical attacks, listing the symptoms under headings such as “pneumonia”, “exhaustion” and “injuries due to sudden flight”.⁹⁹ eventually, when the Iraqi government was convinced of Anfal’s success, it issued a general amnesty on September 6, 1988 and Kurds returned to Iraq. These events became a major source of conflict between Turkey and Western Europe. Many West European states, at the time, criticized the inadequate facilities and the refusal to permit greater international assistance and protection. Although, the Turkish government and a large part of the media, in turn, had accused the West of employing double standards-demanding from Turkey a treatment they were themselves unwilling to extend to these refugees.¹⁰⁰

In 1991, therefore, the suffering of the Kurds in the mud and snow in the mountains was witnessed almost daily by millions of TV viewers in every part of the world and Turkey turned away the flow of refugees. While the allies requested that Turkey open its borders and set up camps, Özal’s government insisted on international aid first, arguing that it did not have the resources to handle such a flood of refugees. It was not correct. The government may not have had the resources, but the Turkish Kurds did, and, as in the 1988-1989 crisis, they were more than willing to help. Turkish Kurds indeed aided Iraqi Kurds on the border in the initial days of the flight. Turkey’s reluctance to permit the establishment of refugee camps on its soil was more likely motivated by fears of PKK infiltration and most importantly, the possible influence of rebellious Iraqi Kurds on the Turkish Kurd population.¹⁰¹

It was a combination of the above considerations that paved the way for a decision to close the borders and activate the Security Council to mobilize an international response. This decision was also accompanied with a clear threat that

⁹⁹ James Ciment, “The Kurds...”, **op.cit.**, pp. 161-64; Middle East Watch, **op.cit.**

¹⁰⁰ Ihsan Gürkan: Turkish-Iraqi....., **op.cit.**, p.57; Sami Kohen, **Milliyet**, 4 April 1991

¹⁰¹ Kemal Kirişçi and Gareth M. Winrow, **The Kurdish Question and Turkey: An Example of a Trans-state Ethnic Conflict** (London: Frank Cass, 1997), p.158.

Turkey would consider a military intervention along its border, if not in a larger area. This, in fact, occurred to a limited extent as the Turkish military penetrated into Iraqi territory in an effort to keep the refugees out as well as bring humanitarian assistance.¹⁰² The Coalition, hoping to placate Turkey, then pushed a resolution through the UN Security Council condemning Iraq for its actions against its own population.

We have to mention the positive role of France. In fact, the French government was among the first to respond to the crisis. They believed in the idea of adopting a radical answer to the problem. This was reflected in the French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas's conviction that "Just as Germany's murder of Europe's Jews brought about the concept of a 'crime against humanity', so Mr. Hussein's mistreatment of the Kurds called for the recognition of a 'duty to intervene' to prevent gross violations of human rights".¹⁰³ It was this attitude that motivated France to call for amendments to the cease-fire Resolution between Coalition allies and Iraq that was being negotiated at the Security Council.

The failure of this attempt and the fact that Resolution 687 establishing a cease-fire between Iraq and the UN Coalition did not make any reference to take matters into their own hands, on April 5, a critical meeting of Turkish diplomats with their West European counterparts was held in Ankara. During this meeting a draft version of the eventual Resolution 688 seems to have been discussed and agreed upon. Later in the day, the French submitted this resolution to the Security Council where it was adopted by a vote of 10 for, 3 against (Cuba, Yemen, Zimbabwe) and two abstentions (China, India).¹⁰⁴

As a matter of fact, at the end of the Cold War, for the first time, UN revised the conventional method for dealing with the world's refugees. It was thought that instead of being reactive and waiting until refugees had crossed an international frontier, it is better to be proactive which means to get inside the country of origin

¹⁰² *Milliyet*, 4 April 1991

¹⁰³ Kemal Kirişçi and Gareth M. Winrow, *op.cit*, 159

¹⁰⁴ Kemal Kirişçi, "Türkiye ve Kuzey Irak'taki Kürt Güvenlik Bölgesi", *Avrasya Dosyası*, (Vol.3, No.1, Spring 1996), p.11

and to prevent refugee flows before it happened. The first test for this ‘safe haven’ idea was for this exodus of Iraqi Kurds in 1991.¹⁰⁵ It was after this resolution that the US began air drops of food on April 7. Finally, on April 8, president Bush established an airlift called Operation Provide Comfort.

For the Turkish government the Resolution 688 was important. Firstly, the situation of refugees was defined as a threat to international peace and security. This meant, for the Turkish government and Allies, that a need would eventually arise to establish a safe haven and create a military force to protect it. Secondly, the resolution insisted that Iraq allow immediate access to humanitarian assistance to those in need. This was to enable the Turkish government to argue its case for bringing the refugees from the mountaintops down to the Iraqi side of the border, which was topographically more suitable for extending relief assistance to the refugees.¹⁰⁶

Turgut Özal, the President of Turkey at the time, had played a central role in the initial introduction of the idea of a safe haven. He explained to Bush that Turkey was being overwhelmed, and that he expected to see the United States come to the support of a NATO ally that had proved its loyalty during the Gulf War.¹⁰⁷ What Özal seemed to have in mind was the creation of a safe zone along the Iraqi border. Thus, the beginning of Operation Provide Comfort, on 8 April, marked a turning point, because Bush, not only ordered US military airdrops to reach the mountaintops, but also sent Secretary of State James Baker to visit the border area.¹⁰⁸

The idea of a safe haven was taken by the British Prime Minister John Major to a European Community meeting in Brussels particularly convened to discuss this crisis. Özal’s initial idea of a safe zone, large enough to ensure the return of the refugees to their villages and towns from where they had been uprooted, was found to be problematic. Western governmental officials feared that this might create a

¹⁰⁵ Bill Frelick, **Unsafe Havens** (Harvard International Review, Vol.19, Issue 2, Spring 1997), p.40

¹⁰⁶ Kemal Kirişçi, “Türkiye ve Kuzey Irak’taki”, **op.cit.**

¹⁰⁷ **Newsweek**, 29 April 1991

¹⁰⁸ **Ibid**

‘Gaza Strip’ like situation.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, when European efforts to create a UN sanctioned safe haven failed as a result of Soviet, Chinese and Indian objections, and at the same time, Iraqi government repeated its attacks on the Kurds, President Bush warned Iraq not to operate any aircraft or engage in any military operation above the 36th parallel and announced that US troops would enter northern Iraq to create a safe area. This safe haven and a no-fly zone, north of the 36th parallel allowed the UN to station 500 security guards (Operation Poised Hammer) to protect relief operations, and with the possibility of renewal.

By the end of May 1991 the military wing of Provide Comfort grew to more than 20.000 troops from 11 countries. Operation Provide Comfort, with the accompanying safe haven, generated a strong sense of security and protection that was needed to ensure voluntary repatriation and refugees gradually returned. It is said that the Turkish government had decided that the emergence of some sort of a Kurdish enclave in northern Iraq would be a little less dangerous than the arrival of millions of Kurds inside Turkey itself.¹¹⁰ However, this safe haven, created by the support of US and independent of the UN was completely different from the one envisaged by Turkish government and Turgut Özal. In the first days of the Iraqi invasion, Turkey’s first concern was the Kurds and Özal feared that the US might back them, but American officials assured him that US would not contact the Kurdish opposition within Iraq and when the crisis evolved, Americans did the Operation Provide Comfort for the sake of Turkey more than for the sake of Kurds, but in the end US contacted Kurdish parties and supported them and this was not expected by the Turkey.¹¹¹ I think that the first deviation from Turkey’s traditional foreign policy happened when, Turgut Özal, in a typical u-turn, decided to invite the Kurdish leaders to visit Ankara secretly, something which was not imaginable at the beginning of the Gulf War.

¹⁰⁹ **Ibid**; **Time**, 22 April 1991; **The Economist**, 13 April 1991, p.14

¹¹⁰ **Turkish Daily News**, 6/7 April 1991

¹¹¹ James Ciment, **op.cit**, p.181

In the end, we saw that a safe haven was established for the Kurds under the protection of coalition forces and Operation Provide Comfort, according to Turkish government, while alleviating a major concern, triggered the emergence of another one. It was the establishment of a Kurdish regional government in northern Iraq.

CHAPTER 3

TURKEY AND KURDS IN NORTHERN IRAQ

At the end of the 1991 Gulf War, the Kurds who had fled to the borders of Iran and Turkey were able to return to their homes in northern Iraq. There they began to build a *de facto* government. This was accomplished largely under the aegis of the allied Provide Comfort Operation and no-fly zone. The unprecedented 1991 United Nations Security Resolution 688 also played an important symbolic role by condemning the repression of Kurds. In addition, limited but important Turkish cooperation and protection played a part. From this point on, Turkish foreign policy towards Iraq focused more on northern Iraq. Turkish northern Iraq policy also had three dimensions: Iraqi Kurds, PKK in northern Iraq and Turkomans. In this chapter, I will try to analyze Kurds in northern Iraq and Turkish foreign policy toward them.

3.1. Why Kurdish Regional Government?

When the Iraqi Kurds returned in the late spring of 1991, they came under the Coalition's protection. With a UN-sponsored no-fly zone established above the 36th parallel and 11,000 Coalition troops on the ground, Operation Poised Hammer made sure Baghdad's remaining forces could not attack northern Iraq. In this circumstance, negotiations between the Kurds and Baghdad began. Although Barzani was cautious about negotiations with the central government, Talabani who had always been the Kurdish leader most amenable to cooperating with Baghdad, was determined and met with Saddam Hussein. He was photographed hugging and kissing Saddam. The immediate motivation for the visit was to understand Saddam's idea about an autonomy agreement. Barzani, who, as a rule, prefers not to leave his enclave in northern Iraq, took a wait-and-see attitude, though he sent his nephew to the talks.¹¹²

¹¹² *Christian Science Monitor*, May 8, 1991, p.8

At that time, Kurds and particularly Talabani were seeking an agreement with Saddam Hussein, because the safe haven idea had only recently been established and the Coalition commitment to it had not yet solidified. Then Massud Barzani also pursued to negotiate with Saddam. While the two sides discussed a wide range of issues, including all- Iraq elections, there was, in fact, only one real point of contention according to Barzani: The southern border of the autonomous zone. The Kurds wanted Kirkuk to be included, but Baghdad refused.

As the negotiations failed, in mid-July, fighting broke out again between Iraqi central government and the Kurds. On July 20, Kurdish forces under the command of Talabani's PUK launched an attack on the region around Sulimaniye, the center of the PUK's sphere of influence before the Gulf War. Although Sulimaniye was below the 36th parallel, the attack seemed to go almost unopposed by Saddam Hussein. Baghdad blamed it not on the Kurds but on Iranian infiltrators. Suspicions arose that the whole thing had been arranged between Baghdad and the PUK. According to this theory, the seizure of Sulimaniye was arranged to allow Talabani to reassert his authority over the major city in his sphere of influence, in exchange for some concessions to Baghdad in future. If there was such a deal, it had fallen apart by the autumn. In early October, Saddam Hussein launched an offensive against Sulimaniye, but failed to seize the city. Frustrated at the negotiating table and on the battlefield, but fearing Coalition interference if he launched a new military assault, Baghdad tried a new tactic; economic pressure.¹¹³

Iraqi regime resorted to a strategy of sowing starvation, fratricide and chaos in Kurdistan. It calculated that the continuing economic blockade on the region in October 1991, combined with ongoing international sanctions against Iraq, and the Kurds' extreme economic dependence on the center, would bring the Kurds to their knees. The regime's internal blockade, combined with the ongoing external one, was expected to put the Kurds at the government's mercy, weaken their leadership and bring them to the negotiating table at a disadvantage. An additional motive was to divert much-needed commodities from the Kurds to more loyal sectors, especially

¹¹³ James Ciment, *op,cit*.p.149

the Sunni Arabs in the center of Iraq. Integral to this policy was the pressure it brought to bear on Kurdistan's civil servants to leave for government-controlled areas in order to weaken the Kurds and break their administrative apparatus. When most of them rejected this demand, the regime stopped paying salaries and government services –especially health care, the supply of water and sanitation – were severely curtailed.¹¹⁴

Similar results were expected from an administrative and political withdrawal of the regime from Kurdistan. The absence of central government from Iraqi Kurdistan was expected to bring about such chaos that the regime would be seen as a saviour by the Kurds themselves and, more importantly, by neighbouring countries that feared a spillover of Kurdish separatism into their own Kurdish populations. The regime, in fact, hoped that Iraq's neighbours would undertake its task by containing the Kurds in Iraq and controlling their national aspirations.¹¹⁵

Another plan was the regime's decision to withdraw all its military forces from the area and station them outside the safe havens zone. Saddam Hussein explained the withdrawal as a means of fostering enough chaos to provoke the Kurds to request the regime's return. Another explanation was that ground forces without air support which Iraq could not use in the safe havens zone, were ineffective in the mountainous Kurdistani region, and could themselves become an easy target for Kurdish forces. In an attempt to fill this military vacuum and halt outside support for the Kurds, the regime sponsored the acts of sabotage through its Kurdish collaborators, aimed not only at the Kurds, but also at UN personnel and representatives of humanitarian organisations. The most important of these was a failed attempt on the life of Danielle Mitterrand, during a tour of Kurdistan in July 1992.¹¹⁶

The regime also attempted to drive a wedge between the two Kurdish parties by luring Masoud Barzani, to the negotiating table. In spite of Barzani's inclination

¹¹⁴ Chris Hedges, "Kurds' Dream of Freedom Slipping Away", **New York Times**, 6 February 1992, p.1

¹¹⁵ **Ibid**

¹¹⁶ **Al-Jumhuriyya**, 24 November 1992; **al-Thawra**, 12 March 1992

to negotiate, he suspended talks in February 1992 and conditioned their resumption on an end to regime's economic blockade. Repeated attempts by the government to resume negotiations with either of the two failed.

In fact, the regime's strategy against Kurds failed because Kurds were determined to protect their freedom. Kurds had not forgotten the Ba'ath policy of genocide against them. Secret Iraqi government documents seized by the Kurds during their March 1991 uprising revealed the essentials of the Anfal operations; demolished villages, transfer points, poison gas, firing squads, mass graves. According to the captured documents, of which Kurds claim there are tons truckloads, it was possible that a Kurd might be arrested for belonging to one of the Kurdish political parties, or for being overheard by an informer to be criticizing Saddam Hussein, or for aiding the enemy during the Iran-Iraq war.¹¹⁷

Handwritten listed numbers of eliminated villages whose inhabitants are referred to as the lost ones of the Anfal. Almost certainly they are dead, probably buried in mass graves dug in south-western Iraq. A typical example printed presidential stationary and marked secret and personnel relates how 2,532 people and 1,869 families were captured during "a heroic Anfal operation" and sent to a camp. Their fate was described in crude Tikriti slang by Ali Hassan al-Majid, Saddam's cousin and at that time defence minister; "Taking care of them means burring them with bulldozers. That's what taking care of them means". Given revelations such as these, it is not surprising that, to many Kurds, the Baghdad regime had lost its moral right and legitimacy to rule them.¹¹⁸

Therefore, they didn't want to go under the control of Baghdad again, but because of regime's policy there was a vacuum of authority. Thieves stole food stocks and vehicles; corrupt Kurdish officials carried anything they could over the frontier to sell in Iran.¹¹⁹ Local militia commanders ran their areas as personal fiefs. Each member of the Kurdish Front exercised a veto power, with the result that few decisions were made. Cigarette factories in Arbil and Sulaymaniyah lay idle because

¹¹⁷ Middle East Watch, **op.cit**, pp.71-73

¹¹⁸ Kanan Makiya, **op.cit**, p.58

¹¹⁹ Chris Hedges, **op.cit**, PP.1-10

a local leader had commandeered a warehouse full of filters and was attempting to sell them in Iran. When a PUK official tried to intervene, he was told that PUK party needed this corrupt leader in the coming elections and therefore could not afford to offend him.

Masud Barzani said some local commanders had misused their power and there had been problems with corruption, especially at the local level. In order to help solve these problems, for the first time, the KDP leader, Masud Barzani proposed elections for both a legislative council and a supreme Kurdish leader and added; “There is crisis within the Kurdistan Front – a decisionmaking crisis... In order for there to be a decisionmaking center and for this center to enjoy legitimacy, we decided that elections must be held... to determine which party, or parties, enjoy the masses’ confidence”.¹²⁰ All parties accepted this proposal. Celal Talabani also hoped that the elections proposed by Barzani will result in the establishment of a legitimate, constitutional, and legal entity embodied in a council that will represent the Kurdish people and will be the political decisionmaking body in Iraqi Kurdistan.

For the election, it was decided that the legislature would have a total of 105 members, one for every 30,000 people. In order to win seats in this body, it would be necessary to gain at least 7 percent of the vote, a provision that proved to shut out all but the KDP and PUK. Many parties participated in the elections; the Socialist Party of Kurdistan in Iraq (SPKI) of Rasul Mamand and Mahmud Uthman and the Kurdish Socialist Party (PASOK) had united one month earlier. The names of the Front’s parties were listed in alphabetical order and according to a special colour: 1) Yellow for the KDP; 2) green for the PUK; 3) blue for the SPKI and PASOK; 4) black and blue for the Kurdistan Popular Democratic Party (KPDP) of Sami Abdulrahman; 5) White with a red star for the Kurdistan Toilers Party; 6) red for the Kurdistan Section of the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP); 7) indigo for the Assyrian Democratic Movement.¹²¹ In addition to these parties, various Islamic parties participated.

¹²⁰ **Al-Hayat**, 22 December 1991

¹²¹ Michael M. Gunter, “A *De Facto* Kurdish State in Northern Iraq”, **Third World Quarterly** (Vol.14, No.2, 1993), p.298

It is worth mentioning that the Iraqi National Turkoman Party (IMTP), which was not a member of the Kurdish Front, decided not to participate in the elections, because, according to them, it would mean a *de facto* recognition of Kurdistan and acknowledgement that the Turkmen were part of it and probably would provoke Iraqi harassment of the Turkmen since the Turkmen were living in a concentrated way in the province of Kirkuk which was under Iraqi control.¹²² Muzaffer Aslan, the leader of the IMTP, also declared his party would not take part in an election which threatens Iraq's territorial integrity. As the IMTP was headquartered in Ankara, Turkey, it presumably reflected Turkish fears on this issue.

The election was held on 19 May and the results showed that, in the parliamentary voting, the KDP won 51 percent and the PUK which had united with the Kurdistan Workers Party won 49 percent of the vote. These figures apparently represented the distribution after the votes of those parties that had not received a least 7 percent of the vote were eliminated. Therefore, these smaller parties, which failed to win any seats in the new parliament, raised protests of widespread double voting and usage of forged identifications. It was correct that there were a number of charges of voting fraud but generally speaking, there were many people who pronounced the results as free and fair.¹²³

In the end, however, we saw that the KDP decided to share seats equally with PUK and each be given 50 seats in the National Council. The remaining five would be given to the Christian minority with four of them going to the Assyrian Democratic Movement. The decision of KDP to compromise the results, in spite of its win in the election was a surprise for everyone. It seems that KDP did so, in order to prevent a conflict with PUK and safeguard the unity of Kurdish ranks and to portray the Kurds as civilised people before the world.

As part of the agreement, it was decided that the chairman of the National Council would be from the KDP, while his deputy would be from the PUK. Conversely, the chairman of the Executive Council would be from the PUK and his

¹²² Ismet G Ismet, "Further Reportage on Kurdistan Elections", **Turkish Daily News**, 8 May 1992, pp.1-12

¹²³ Michael M. Gunter, "A De Facto..." , **op.cit**, p.299

deputy from the KDP. In the elections, a supreme leader had to be elected as well. The results showed that Barzani won 466,819 votes and Talabani 441,057, with two other candidates receiving less than 40,000. As Barzani did not win a decisive majority, a second round of voting was necessary to choose the leader, but for practical reasons such as holding another election and so on, this would not be possible in the near future and it remained for the next election.¹²⁴

When the compromise had been reached, Barzani and Talabani announced that the elections were a victory for everyone. Barzani admitted that due to the fact that this had been their first election, they had had some technical and other problems but he claimed that they would overcome those shortcomings in future elections and he declared that those elections had been positive and a major step for them. The PUK leader also argued that he personally believed that the elections proved that the Kurdish people are worthy of freedom and capable of engaging in democracy and the electoral process, despite the lack of experience.

This free legislative elections held on 19 May 1992 was an important expression of Kurdish self-rule. In theory, the Iraqi Kurds had had their own elected assembly since 1974, but the members of the assembly had all been government nominees. This time several factors combined to facilitate genuine elections. The administrative vacuum left by the regime provided both opportunity and justification. Another factor was the need to gain the goodwill of the West by conducting elections along democratic lines, because the military umbrella provided by the West was crucial for them. The elections in Iraqi Kurdistan alarmed the Iraqi regime. The regime's fears about the elections were that, they were a first step towards a separate Kurdish state; and that the West would make use of this domestic achievement to grant recognition to such a state. Therefore, the Iraqi regime ridiculed the elections, denounced them as a plot aimed at splitting up Iraq, and declared them 'illegitimate' and 'unconstitutional'¹²⁵

The elections were important on various levels: they gained a degree of international recognition. In the past, no Kurdish leader or official was permitted to

¹²⁴ **Ibid**

¹²⁵ **Alif Ba**, 27 May 1992, p.6

meet a Western official openly on the grounds that the Kurdish issue was a humanitarian problem and not a political one. Behind this excuse, of course lay the West's fear of antagonising Iraq and other countries with Kurdish population. Since 1992, however, Barzani and Talabani and other Kurdish officials were accepted in several Western capitals as political persons. Related was the Kurdish leadership's access to the international media including the Arab media, for the first time. Another measure of this changing attitude was the introduction of Kurdish broadcasts by the Voice of America for several hours a day in April 1992.¹²⁶

Another result of elections was that the Kurds conferred a measure of legitimacy on the Kurdish leadership which the Iraqi government did not have because the regime was not democratically elected. They eliminated minor Kurdish groupings, forcing them to merge into a single party and they provided a basis for Kurdish administration. Another important development that stemmed from the elections was the realisation by the two major parties – Kurdistan Democratic Party and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan-that as they shared the power equally, they should end the chronic struggle between them.¹²⁷ However, what emerged was a dual leadership that lacked a clear division of power between the two groups, causing renewed friction and bloodshed that I explain it in the next pages.

Another important result was reformulating Kurdish goals as the most important item on the Kurdish political agenda after the elections. Until the Gulf of 1991, autonomy had been the declared aim of the Kurdish mainstream, but on 4 October 1992, after much deliberation, this aim was elevated to federation.¹²⁸ A decision by the Kurdistan National Assembly unanimously committed Iraqi Kurdistan to its goal of federation [al-ittihad al-fidrali] within a democratic parliamentary Iraq. As soon as the idea of federation was raised the Iraqi regime viewed it as an act of separatism while neighbouring countries regarded it as a

¹²⁶ Ofra Bengio, "The Challenge to the Territorial Integrity Of Iraq", **Survival** (Vol. 37, No.2, Summer 1995), pp.80-81

¹²⁷ Mehrdad R. Izady, **The Kurds** (Washington DC: Crane and Russak, 1992), pp.212-15

¹²⁸ Ofra Bengio, **op.cit**

Pandora's box likely to have repercussions in their countries as well. One of this neighbouring countries was Turkey.

3.2. Turkey's policy towards KRG in Northern Iraq

While Turkey was against the Kurdish movement in Iraq in 1980s, we see that, after the second Gulf War, it nearly became an ally to Kurds. We know that in the 1970s Turkey tried to solve the problem between Iraq and Iran in order to prevent any positive development on the side of the Kurdish nationalist movement in Iraq led by the legendary Kurdish leader, Mustafa Barzani. Iraqi and Iranian diplomats met in Istanbul in August 1974 for that reason. On 8 August 1974, Saddam Hussein, the Vice-President of Iraq at that time, assured Turkey that it would continue to receive cheap oil from Iraq due to its collaboration with his country on the Kurdish question.¹²⁹

During the Iran-Iraq War, Turkey remained neutral. Both Iran and Iraq helped and used their Kurdish parties respectively during the war. Turkey was closely following the situation in order to maintain the *status quo* in the region. During the war, Turkey, warned the warring countries that by arming the Kurds they risked destabilizing the region. When the balance began to change in favour of Iran and the anti-Iraqi Kurds, Turkey threatened to cut off trade with Iran if Iran continued aiding the Iraqi Kurds.¹³⁰

But after the second Gulf War this policy was changed. With the support of senior diplomats from the Foreign Ministry, the then Turkish President, Turgut Özal, took the first step in establishing relations with the Kurds of Iraq in March 1991.¹²⁹ Kurdish officials were invited to Ankara to hold talks with Turkish officials, including Turgut Özal. These contacts went as far as issuing Turkish diplomatic passports to Massoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani to enable them to travel abroad,

¹²⁹ Sheriff I. Vanly, "The Kurds in Syria and Lebanon", in Philip G. Kreyenbroek and Stefan Sperl, eds., **The Kurds: A Contemporary Overview** (London: Routledge, 1992); Muhittin Ataman, "The Kurdish Question and Its Impact on Turkey's Foreign Policy: From 1923 to 2000", **Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies** (Vol.XXIV, No.2, Winter 2001), p.41

¹³⁰ Muhittin Ataman, *Ibid*, p.42; Nader Entesar, **Kurdish Ethno-nationalism** (Boulder, co; Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992)

¹²⁹ M.A. Birand, **Apo ve PKK** (İstanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1992), p.265

particularly to the United States.¹³² Özal seemed keen to support the Kurds in northern Iraq against Saddam Hussein and gave the two Kurdish groups the permission to open offices in Ankara.

On 8 March 1991, Ambassador Turgay Özçeri, undersecretary of the foreign ministry, met in Ankara with Talabani and Mohsin Dizai, an envoy of Massoud Barzani. A second meeting between Özçeri and Dizai occurred on March 22. Celal Talabani declared that a new page had been turned in relations between Turkey and the Kurds of Iraq. Talabani continued, “the most significant result... was Turkey’s lifting its objection to the establishment of direct relations between the Kurdish front in Iraq and the United States... Turkey has for years been putting forth effective and significant obstacles to the struggle we have been waging in northern Iraq... I believe that we were able to convince them that we do not pose a threat to Turkey”.¹³³

When Talabani travelled to Turkey in late 1991, he concluded that Turkey must be considered a country friendly to the Kurds. By the time he met with Turkish Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel in June 1992, the Turkish leader was referring to the PUK leader as his dear brother Talabani.¹³⁴ Talabani even went so far as to suggest that the Iraqi Kurds might want to be annexed by Turkey. Turkish President Turgut Özal also declared that “it must be clear that those in the Iraqi Kurdish area are relatives of Turkish citizens. So the borders are to some extent artificial, dividing people into two sections”.¹³⁵ For the leader of a state that until recently had not even recognized that Kurds lived in Turkey and had been fighting an increasingly serious insurgency against some of its own Kurdish population as represented by PKK, this statement illustrated how greatly Turkey’s thinking on the Kurdish issue was changing.

¹³² G.Fuller, “The fate of Kurds”, **Foreign Affairs** (Vol.72, No.2, Spring 1993), p.114; Kemal Kirişçi, “Turkey and the Kurdish Safe-Haven in Northern-Iraq”, **Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies** (Vol.XIX, No.3, Spring 1996), p.30

¹³³ Michael M.Gunter, “The Foreign Policy of the Iraqi Kurds”, **Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies** (Vol.XX, No.3, Spring 1997), p.8

¹³⁴ **Ibid**, p.11

¹³⁵ ⁵ **Al-Hayat**, 15 December 1991, p.5

There were a variety of reasons why Turkish officials now sought to protect and, in effect, promote the Iraqi Kurds. Firstly, if the Iraqi Kurds were dependent on Turkish goodwill, Turkey might be able to influence them from establishing their own state which could conceivably have a dangerous demonstration impact on the Kurds in Turkey. Secondly, an unfriendly Iraqi Kurdish state might begin aiding the PKK or even make territorial claims on Turkey's Kurdish region. On the other hand, by supporting the Iraqi Kurds, Turkey might influence them to be pro-Turkish and thus help to solve its own Kurdish problem more readily.¹³⁶ Thirdly, if Saddam were to crush the Kurds again, Turkey might have to face Kurds refugees once more. Fourthly, being looked upon as a protector of the Iraqi Kurds would win Turkish respect and support in the West where Turkey sought eventual membership in the European Union.¹³⁷

We have to mention that most Turkish officials, particularly Turkish military didn't think as Turgut Özal. When they gave their support for establishment of a safe haven, they had not imagined that the situation would lead to such a direction. Turkish diplomacy had systematically expressed its opposition against any development that could constitute a violation of Iraq's territorial integrity. Although Kurdish leaders reaffirmed that they do not want separation from Iraq, Turkey didn't believe them. Therefore, Turkish military frequently bombed northern Iraq as if they were bombing PKK camps, but in fact it resulted in Iraqi Kurdish deaths.¹³⁸ Massoud Barzani felt so strongly about this issue that in October 1991 he almost broke off the Turkish connection. The need for Turkish support outweighed this problem, however, and relations continued.¹³⁹

Kurdish election in 1992, increased the Turkish suspicion. After the election of 1992, Kurdish leaders reaffirmed that they do not want to be separated from Iraq. Massoud Barzani maintained that their goal is not to set up an independent state. He

¹³⁶ Kemal Kirişçi, "Provide Comfort or.....", *op.cit.*, p.52

¹³⁷ Mahmut Bali Aykan, "Turkey's Policy....", *op.cit.*, p.347

¹³⁸ "DPK Lodges Protest Over Turkish Air Raids", **Turkish Daily News**, 2 June 1992, p.2

¹³⁹ William Hale, "Turkey's Time: Turkey, the Middle East and the Gulf Crisis", **International Affairs** (Vol.58, No.4, October 1992), p.690

continued that “The situation in the world today is such that it will not permit any changes in regional borders. Nor will it stand for any partitioning”.¹⁴⁰ Therefore, he argued that the Iraqi Kurds should not swim against the international tide and that they should act with wisdom and bear in mind that there was a wide gap between their wishes and their rights on the one hand, and what they could achieve on the other.

These words didn't convince Turkish officials. Despite Barzani's and Talabani's words to the contrary, Turkey believed that the Kurds preferred an independent state and would probably declare one when they deemed the time propitious. The reason for Turkey to be suspicious was Kurds' behaviour rather than their words. Visiting northern Iraq just after the Kurdish elections in May, a Turkish reporter noted how the moment you step into Iraq from the Habur border, the slogan 'welcome to Kurdistan' greets everyone. The same reporter explains that when he arrived to northern Iraq, everyone sees the same sign which was: 'Welcome to liberated Kurdistan'. While during his visit to northern Iraq a few month earlier, no such slogans had existed.¹⁴¹ Everywhere the Iraqi flag had been replaced by the yellow and green banners of the KDP and PUK. The only visible remnants of the Iraqi government were the currency and postage stamps. In addition to these, the declaration of a federated state by Kurds was interpreted as another step towards independence.

After the declaration of a federation for Iraqi Kurdistan by the Iraqi Kurdish parliament on 4 October 1992, Massoud Barzani argued that a federation is a more advanced concept than autonomy but it is inside the framework of Iraq. When he was asked if federation would not amount to secession from Iraq, he responded that “what leads to partitioning Iraq is the use of chemical weapons, genocide campaigns, racial discrimination and similar racist and chauvinistic measures.”¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Michael Gunter, “A *De facto*...”, **op.cit**, p.300

¹⁴¹ **Ibid**, pp.8-18

¹⁴² Michael Gunter, **op.cit**,p.309

Nevertheless, Turkey immediately declared that: “We do not approve of such an action that may result in the division and partition of Iraq”.¹⁴³ Süleyman Demirel explained that a federated state is a stage on the way to an independent state. The fear, of course, was that such a state would hold an unwanted demonstration effect for Turkey’s own Kurds. Demirel showed understanding, however, when he explained that there is a very complicated situation here with the people of northern Iraq that does not fit into the black-white synthesis. In reference to the alternative of Saddam’s return to northern Iraq, he then made a very striking statement for a Turkish leader: “Shouldn’t we prefer their being called federated to being called dead?... Okay, I’m not comfortable calling them federal, but I would have felt worse if they had died.”¹⁴⁴

Other Turkish leaders were not so generous. The leader of the Democratic Left Party Bülent Ecevit contended that the Iraqi Kurdish federation was a part of the American plan and said this state will next ask for territory from Turkey. Ulku Gokalp Gunay, the Motherland Party (ANAP) assembly group deputy leader, described the establishment of a Kurdish state as a dangerous development. Necmettin Erbakan, the leader of the Welfare Party, asserted that this is a US-Israeli plan and that “the declaration of a federal state does not conform with the national interests of Turkey”.¹⁴⁵ Turkish military was also uncomfortable regarding the developments in northern Iraq and its attacks and bombing continued. After more Turkish attacks, a spokesman for the KDP declared that the Turks were breaking their commitment not to attack civilian villages and added: “It is very clear the Turkish military is not interested in the political dialogue we are having with their civilian government”.¹⁴⁶

3.3. Ankara Tripartite Conference

Only 40 days after declaration of federation by Kurds, the foreign ministers of Turkey, Iran and Syria came together in Ankara to discuss this issue. It was not

¹⁴³ **Ibid**

¹⁴⁴ **Ibid**, p.310

¹⁴⁵ **Ibid**

¹⁴⁶ **Turkish Daily News**, 2 June 1992

their first meeting and would not be the last one as well. Over the years the major regional states in the Middle East containing Kurdish population have joined together to maintain their territorial integrity against possible Kurdish attempts to create their own state. Thus, the Treaty of Saadabad in 1937 and the Bagdad Pact in 1955, are few examples that obligated Turkey, Iraq and Iran to cooperate on the Kurdish issue. This collaboration included measures to prevent cross-border communication and support among the Kurds and, in general, sought to prevent any joint, transnational Kurdish action that might challenge their current international boundaries.¹⁴⁷

The three states warned the Iraqi Kurds against partitioning Iraq and creating a Kurdish state. The Turkish Foreign Minister Hikmet Çetin explained that “it was necessary for the countries of the region to consult with one another in connection with the region’s *status quo* and developments in northern Iraq in particular”.¹⁴⁸ Syrian foreign minister Faruq al-Shar explained: “There is currently a *de facto* situation in the form of a Kurdish federal state. This must be prevented. This is, in fact, the main goal of this meeting”.¹⁴⁹ Ali Akbar Velayati, the Iranian Foreign Minister, also said the same thing and termed the situation in northern Iraq as chaotic and declared that it could “affect the national security of all our three countries”.¹⁵⁰

It must be mentioned that both the Iraqi Kurds and Iraqi National Congress (INC) wanted to attend this meeting, but were not invited. As a result, Hoshiyar Zibari, a member of the KDP Political Bureau, expressed deep concern and declared that “we fear regional collusion designed to suppress the Kurdish experiment.”¹⁵¹ The Iraqi Kurdistan National Council (parliament) addressed a text to the parliaments of the three tripartite conference participants. In it the Iraqi Kurds admitted that they do not conceal their desire for those states to solve their problems with their Kurdish

¹⁴⁷ Michael Gunter, **The Kurds in Turkey: A Political Dilemma** (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990), p.98; Nader Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, **op.cit**, p.54; Sheriff I Vanly, “Kurdistan in Iraq”, in G. Chaliand, ed., **People Without a Country: Kurds and Kurdistan** (London: zed Press, 1980), p.163

¹⁴⁸ Michael Gunter, “A *De Facto*...”, **op.cit**, p.312

¹⁴⁹ **Ibid**

¹⁵⁰ Chris Hedges, “Kurds in Iraq Warned by Turkey, Iran and Syria”, **New York Times**, 15 November 1992, p.9

¹⁵¹ **Al-Hayat**, October 31, 1992, pp.1-4

brothers in the spirit of the age, with a civilised, democratic mentality. They sought to reassure their neighbours that an Iraqi Kurdish state would not make territorial claims against them or support their Kurds in rebellion. Kurds maintained that they do not interfere and will not permit interference in the internal affairs of the neighbouring states in any way. The relations of these states with members of the Kurdish people in their territories are their affair.¹⁵²

In fact, the death of Turgut Özal in April 1993 intensified the relations and cooperation of Turkey with Iran and Syria, as well as its relations with Saddam Hussein. Turgut Özal during his rule (1984-1993) had started an active, confident and high profile style foreign policy.¹⁵³ Ideological taboos such as communism, Islam and the Kurdish question were rescinded. The acceptance of the Kurdish ethnicity by officials and the abolishment of the law that was prohibiting the Kurdish language in 1991 were major steps taken towards the political solution of the Kurdish problem. Foreign policy issues became more popular during the Özal period. According to him, “Turkey should leave its former passive and hesitant policies and engage in an active foreign policy”.¹⁵⁴ That is why he assumed an active role in the alliance against Iraq during the Gulf War. He had a moderate policy towards the Kurds. Özal strongly desired to change Turkey’s image in the world. He allowed the establishment of a *de facto* autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq because he had played a central role and have initiated the introduction of the idea of a safe haven.

Unfortunately, after his death, Turkish leaders ended the liberal policies of Özal in general and those towards the Kurdish people in particular. Süleyman Demirel, the then Turkish President, and Tansu Çiller, the then Prime Minister started to improve Turkey’s relationship with other host countries, and they achieved a certain cooperation. They knew that without the collaboration of the other host

¹⁵² Nader Entessar, “Kurdish Conflict in a Regional Perspective”, in M.E. Ahrari, ed., **Change and Continuity in the Middle East, Conflict Resolution and Prospects for Peace** (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), p.67

¹⁵³ Sabri Sayari, “Turkey: The Changing European...”, **op.cit**, pp.9-21

¹⁵⁴ Philip Robins, “Turkish Foreign Policy and the Gulf Crisis”, in Clement Dodd,ed., **Turkish Foreign Policy: New Prospects** (Great Britain: The Eothen Press, 1992)

countries, it is almost impossible to solve Kurdish question. Turkey's relations with Baghdad also improved in 1993, a trend that gathered momentum throughout 1994 and early 1995. While Özal seemed more willing to take risks and argued that Saddam Hussein should go, the new government came to base its policies on acceptance that Saddam was there to stay and that Turkey had to live with Iraq as its neighbour led by Saddam.¹⁵⁵ As early as December 1992, Bülent Ecevit, the Democratic Left Party (DLP) leader, conducted talks with Iraqi leaders in the Iraqi capital. This is the Ecevit who announced on 1 August 1994 that "the fundamental goal of the US was to create an autonomous region in southeastern Turkey."¹⁵⁶ In April 1993, Ankara established diplomatic relations with Iraq at the level of charge d'affaires with ambassadorial rank. Economic, business and even military delegations, both official and unofficial, came and went continuously between the two capitals in 1993, 1994 and early 1995. Even the assassination of Çağlar Yücel, administrative attaché of the Turkish embassy, in Baghdad on 11 December 1993 did not affect developing relations between the two governments.¹⁵⁷

By early 1994 both governments in Ankara and Baghdad were pressing the UN and other governments, including the US, to allow the reopening of the two oil pipelines running from Iraq through Turkey. Prime Minister Tansu Çiller pushed hard in her talks with US officials during her October 1993 visit to Washington to allow the pipelines to be reopened under some formula allowed by the UN sanctions. It was obvious that these negotiations to open the oil pipelines will undoubtedly lead to better cooperations between the two countries regarding the Kurdish question. This policy was a measure to force the Iraqi Kurdish leaders to negotiate with the Iraqi government and remove the UN sanctions against Iraq in order to weaken the position of the Iraqi Kurds.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ Koray Düzgören, "Türkiye Kürtleri ve Kuzey Irak", *Avrasya Dosyası* (Vol.3, No.1, 1996), p.298; Koray Düzgören, "Pazartesi Dosyası", *Yeni Yüzyıl*, April 3, 1995.

¹⁵⁶ *Hürriyet*, August 1, 1994

¹⁵⁷ Robert Olson, "The Kurdish Question and Turkey's Foreign Policy, 1991-1995: From the Gulf War to the Incursion Into Iraq", *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* (Vol.XIX, No.1, Fall 1995), p.14

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p.16

In addition to these actions, the internal opposition from political parties and the media (from Ecevit's party and other nationalist groups) toward Operation Provide Comfort and Poised Hammer increased. Many hardliners, both inside and outside the government saw the OPC as a western ploy to set up an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq. The most outspoken opponents of OPC were the leaders of the Democratic Left Party, Bülent Ecevit, and of the Islamic Welfare Party, Necmettin Erbakan.¹⁵⁹ Ecevit saw the extending of OPC mandate as a suicide for Turkey. Their other accusations were that there had been reports from time to time to the effect that allied coalition forces in Turkey held contacts with the Kurds of northern Iraq without notifying Turkish authorities; that the helicopters which take off from İncirlik to conduct reconnaissance flights in northern Iraq had done so without the knowledge of the Turkish authorities; that transport aircraft belonging to the allied forces have dropped aid supplies where PKK militants were known to be active; that arms have been transported from İncirlik to Armenia under the guise of medicines and medical equipment and so on.¹⁶⁰

It appears that the repeated extensions of the mandate of the Poised Hammer force was the result of a rational calculation by Turkish statesmen of the benefits for Turkey of keeping this force on Turkish soil and the perceived disadvantages explained above. There seems to have been a consensus among Turkish civilian and military leaders to the effect that the benefits outweigh the disadvantages. One of the advantages was that Poised Hammer could prevent Saddam from another attack on Kurds. The deployment of more than 200 SAM missiles in northern Iraq by Iraqi regime targeting Turkey have worried Turkish statesmen, who have concluded that Saddam Hussein could be preparing a military attack with the help of the reported 20 divisions deployed next to the 36th parallel, resulting in one million Kurds on Turkey's border again. Therefore, according to Turkey, the Poised Hammer force could both deter Saddam Hussein from initiating such a move and also if this

¹⁵⁹ **Turkish Daily News**, December 29, 1994; **Milliyet**, June 28, 1995

¹⁶⁰ Baskın Oran, "Kalkık Horoz: Çekiç Güç ve Kürt devleti", **Avrasya Dosyası** (Vol.3, No. 1, Spring 1996), pp.165,68; Ferruh Sezgin, "Kürt Devletinin Hamisi: Çekiç Güç", **Avrasya Dosyası** (Vol.3, No.1, 1996), pp.141-48

deterrence failed, Turkey would not be left to stand alone to cope with the consequences. Another bloody suppression of the Iraqi Kurds would also cause unrest on the part of Turkey's own Kurdish population as relatives of the Iraqi Kurds.¹⁶¹

The second reason for the Turkish decision to extend the mandate of the Poised Hammer force was related to the perceived conformity of this decision to the rules of international solidarity and cooperation. Turkish officials believed that if Turkey refused the extension of OPC its image in the world would be gravely distorted.¹⁶²

Another reason was that, the Turks felt that after the removal of the Poised Hammer force from Turkish soil future Turkish military operations against the PKK in northern Iraqi territory would implicate Turkey in the violation of international law. OPC brought a certain degree of immunity from US criticism of its cross-border raids into northern Iraq as well as its human rights violations in the Kurdish areas inside Turkey.¹⁶³ It seems that Turkish decision makers thought that as long as Turkey can continue to cooperate with US and extend the presence of Poised Hammer in Turkey, the US will refrain from exposing its opposition to hardline responses such as the horrific violation of Kurdish human rights, evacuation and destruction of Kurds villages and a policy of assassinating Kurdish nationalist activists.¹⁶⁴

Finally, Turks calculated that the removal of the Poised Hammer force would not eliminate the possibility of the establishment of an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq, because it could be replaced in another place. The departure of the force would deprive Turkey of an important bargaining chip in contacts made with both the Iraqi Kurdish leaders and the Western states with a view to discouraging the establishment of an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ **Ibid**

¹⁶² Mahmut Balı Aykan, "Turkey's Policy...", **op.cit.** p.355

¹⁶³ Henry J. Barkey, "Hemmed in by...", **op.cit.** p.117

¹⁶⁴ Henry J. Barkey, "Turkey's Kurdish Dilema", **Survival** (Vol.35, No.4, Winter 1993), p.52

¹⁶⁵ Mahmut Balı Aykan, "Turkey's Policy...", **op.cit.** p.356

So, as we see that Turkey's dilemma was that its economic and trading ties to Europe, its military alliance with the United States (Turkey's defence industries' dependence on the United States is about 75 percent), its membership in NATO and its membership in European, Western and international organizations and bodies, hindered it from seeking a harder measure against Kurds.

Another challenge to Iraqi Kurds in northern Iraq and their fragile government came from Iran. Although Iran had same dilemmas and problems posed by the Islamic revolution such as the lack of a determined and potential successful strategy of development and enormous economic and social problems as well as varying degrees of regional and international isolation, but it is not deterred from taking actions against the Kurds because of its international commitments or as a result of Western economic and military ties as Turkey. Iran's greater freedom to manoeuvre was clear throughout the summer and fall of 1993 when it shelled and bombed towns and villages located both below and above the no-fly 36th parallel. Iran bombed positions of both the Mujahidin-e Khalq, a non-Kurdish Iranian opposition group, as well as elements of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI), an Iranian Kurdish nationalist organization, members of which had sought refuge in territories in Iraq under the control of KRG forces. In early June, Kala Dizza, Ranya were shelled, some up to 12 times and around 50 houses were destroyed and many civilians were killed.¹⁶⁶

In addition to these hostile behaviour posed by Turkey and Iran, Iraqi regime continued its enmity towards Kurds. As Saddam couldn't intervene directly by military means, he fought them by economic embargo. The internal, government-imposed embargo highlighted the economic vulnerability of landlocked Kurdistan and its total dependence on the goodwill of Baghdad or of neighbouring countries. Kurdish officials acknowledged that Kurds' main problem is economic and that the regime in Baghdad knows only too well to exacerbate it.

¹⁶⁶ Robert Olson, "The Kurdish Question and Geopolitic and Geostrategic Changes in the Middle East after the Gulf War", *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* (Vol.XVII, No.4, Summer 1994), p.58

A good example of Iraqi regime's pressure on northern Iraq and its policy toward the Kurds was the currency crisis which occurred in May 1993. On 5 May 1993, the Iraqi government withdrew the 25 denomination Iraqi Dinar (ID) note from circulation in an attempt to strengthen the value of photocopied IDs printed after the 1991 Gulf War. The Iraqi government prohibited movement between the Iraqi Kurdistan and Iraqi-controlled areas for five days to limit the amount of 25 ID notes that could be redeemed for photocopied IDs. This action resulted in an immediate increase in foodstuffs by 25 percent; diesel fuel rose 30 percent and gasoline 57 percent.¹⁶⁷

One objective of the currency manipulation on the part of the Iraqi government was forcing Iraqi Kurds to negotiate with Baghdad and showing them that they had no other choice. Another objective was undoubtedly to increase the pressure on the UN and three of its principal members, the US, Great Britain and France, to lift the economic sanctions against Baghdad. It is not surprising that the Turkish policy toward Kurds was the same as the Saddam's policy; forcing Kurds to negotiate with Baghdad and attempt to remove the economic sanctions against Baghdad as I mentioned before. We see this coordination as the Turkish central bank did not take action that would have allowed Turkish Lira to play the role the 25 ID note had played in the economy of northern Iraq or that the 10 and 5 ID notes play.¹⁶⁸

Hafiz al-Asad, the Syrian president also refused to allow the Syrian pound to be used as legal tender currency, when Syria was invited by Jalal Talabani.

The lack of US financial help created more anxieties among the Kurdish leadership. While they saw that the newly created Palestinian entities in Gaza and the West Bank were announced to receive 3-5 billion dollars in aid from various sources, much of it from the West and from the United States, Kurdish leaders wondered why aid for the people in northern Iraq, with nearly twice the population of Gaza and the entire West Bank and with territory four times greater in size, has been so little. It meant, to Kurds, that the US and Europe were not committed fully to a politically autonomous KRG with a workable currency, improving economy and developing

¹⁶⁷ **Ibid**, p.53

¹⁶⁸ **Ibid**, p.55; **Hürriyet**, 15 May, 19930

infrastructure. Massoud Barzani, stressed the plight of the Kurds as a result of the attitude of the United States and the West toward the currency crisis when he stated that as a result of a fruitless two-month effort to raise funds in the US, Europe and Saudi Arabia the Kurds had only two options, “either we become refugees again in Iran and Turkey or we surrender to Saddam Hussein.”¹⁶⁹

The situation in northern Iraq can be completely understood by the observations of Danielle Mitterrand the wife of the French president at that time:

One wonders how a democracy can flourish in a country abandoned to the bombing of their Iranian and Turkish neighbours and to the destructive intrusions of the Iraqi army with all the exactions, the withdrawal of the currency, power cuts, deportation of the population living in the unprotected part of Kurdistan, the double embargo imposed by the Iraqi government, a complete lack of energy supplies, the burning of the crops, and the daily tragedy of anti-personnel mines.¹⁷⁰

As mentioned above, democracy did not flourish in northern Iraq and old divisions emerged again between Kurdish parties and fighting that began as minor disputes escalated into a Kurdish civil war.

¹⁶⁹ **Ibid**, p.56; **Washington Post**, 22 June, 1993

¹⁷⁰ Micheal M. Gunter, **The Kurdish Predicament in Iraq, A Political Analysis** (New York: St.Martin's Press, 1999), p.74

CHAPTER 4

THE KURDISH CIVIL WAR

As I mentioned in previous pages, the two main parties-KDP and PUK-split power equally between themselves in a coalition. By the end of 1992, Talabani declared that “cooperation... has been strengthened to the extent that opinions have developed within their ranks, even at leadership levels, calling for unifying these two parties”.¹⁷¹ Barzani also added that “it pleases me to assert that all affairs are managed now as if two were a single party”.¹⁷² But this cooperation did not last long and in May 1994, their old divisions emerged again and their minor disputes eventually escalated into a civil war for achieving ultimate power. In order to understand their long-standing rivalry we should look at their backgrounds.

4.1. Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)

The KDP which is the preeminent party in modern Iraqi Kurdish history, was established in 1946 in response to the earlier creation of the Iranian KDP of the Mahabad Republic. At its first congress in Baghdad, on 16 August 1946, Mustafa Barzani, the most famous Kurdish leader in the twentieth century, was elected president and Hamza Abdullah as secretary-general. Mustafa Barzani was in Iran at that time. He had led a rebellion against the Iraqi government and the British, who had reoccupied Iraq. Iraqi government and British forces with the help of Jashs (progovernment Kurdish militia) drove Barzani into Iran in the fall of 1945. There, Barzani joined forces with Qazi Mohammad, leader of the independent Kurdish Republic of Mahabad.¹⁷³ When Mahabad fell a year later, Barzani and his *peshmargas* (those who stare death in the face) fought their way across hundreds of miles of hostile territory-which is known as “retreat of the Five Hundred” in Kurdish

¹⁷¹ **Al-Hayat** (London), 11 December 1992

¹⁷² **ibid**

¹⁷³ William Eagleton, **The Kurdish Republic of 1946** (London: Oxford University Press, 1963)

history-eventually reaching in the Soviet Union. Barzani and his followers lived in the Soviet Union for the next 12 years until 1958.¹⁷⁴

Because of the lack of the leadership of Barzani, KDP of those years, was more of a social and cultural gathering than a well-defined political party.¹⁷⁵ During these years, an intraparty struggle developed between supporters of Hamza Abdullah and Ibrahim Ahmad, who was a leftist Kurd and at first headed the Iraqi branch of the Iranian KDP. In 1953 Ahmad replaced Abdullah, who was in prison for his political activities. After Barzani's return from Soviet Union, Abdullah briefly replaced Ahmad as secretary – general in 1959 with Barzani's support. However, Abdullah grew too close to the Iraqi Communist Party, and even proposed transferring various KDP organizations to its control. Therefore, he was permanently removed from the KDP leadership and Ahmad came to his place.¹⁷⁶

After H. Abdullah, Ahmad began his rivalry with Barzani and intra-Kurdish split was set between Barzani and Ahmad and his son-in-law, Jalal Talabani. Talabani joined the KDP in 1947. He was a lawyer and graduated in 1959. He was a young and active leftist Kurd. In February 1953, he secretly helped to establish the Kurdistan Student Union-Iraq and became its secretary- general.¹⁷⁷ In 1959, he served as commander of a tank unit in the Iraqi army until he joined Barzani's revolt against the Baghdad government in 1961 and represented the KDP and Barzani, in several diplomatic meetings in Europe and the Middle East.

Their opposition to Barzani had various reasons but the most important reason was that they wanted to be the leader of Kurds and the only obstacle was Barzani with his charisma who was the symbol of Kurdish unity and had brought all the ranks of Kurdish people from different tribes, cities and regions under his leadership and not only inspired the Kurds of Iraq, but also of Turkey, Iran and Syria. Some people argue that the problem was that Barzani was from Bahdinani-speaking

¹⁷⁴ Ismet Sherif Vanly, "Kurdistan in Iraq", in Chaliand Gerard, ed., **A People Without a Country: The Kurds and Kurdistan** (New York : Olive Branch Press, 1993), p.149

¹⁷⁵ Sa'ad Jawad, **Iraq and the Kurdish Question, 1958-1970** (London : Ithaca Press, 1981), p.20

¹⁷⁶ David McDowell, **Modern History of the Kurds** (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), p.304

¹⁷⁷ Micheal M. Gunter, "The Kurdish Predicament in Iraq", **op.cit**, p.24

areas and Ahmad and Talabani from Sorani-speaking areas of the south; that Barzani was associated with the Sufi order of Naqshbandi and Talabani with Qadiri; that KDP is more hard-line on the nationalistic issue and is described as conservative, while PUK is considered as a leftist and a socialist-oriented party.¹⁷⁸ Although, all these arguments, to an extent are correct, but the main reason as I described, was a rivalry for leadership.

Ahmad-Talabani wing considered themselves as reformist and town-bred intellectuals and accused Barzani of being the man of the tribes. The conflict intensified in 1964, when Barzani signed a cease-fire accord with Baghdad. Talabani argued that this accord was not in favour of Kurds and both sides expelled each other from the party, but Barzani defeated them by driving them over the Iranian frontier. Iranians supported Talabani as divide and rule policy which is always used by neighbouring countries, but they abandoned their support and Talabani rejoined KDP and Barzani forgave them.¹⁷⁹

Talabani's loyalty did not last long and again he broke away and accusing Barzani as "reactionary", "tribal" and "feodal", the words which is used by most leftists against their rivals. They developed close ties with the Iraqi Ba'thists this time. Baghdad, made a deal with Talabani that allowed him to control the Sulaymaniyah-Kirkuk region. Talabani and his supporters fought alongside the government's troops against Kurds and KDP.¹⁸⁰ This led to Kurds' characterization of Talabani as "66 traitor" and an "agent for everybody". At the time Ahmad was living in Tehran and then later returned to Baghdad, therefore adding more credence to Kurds' and Barzani's accusations.

The Ahmad-Talabani group, in cooperation with the Ba'thists, challenged Barzani's leadership of the KDP and attempted to expand into his northern, mountainous homeland. Nonetheless, Kurdish *peshmarga*'s number increased day by

¹⁷⁸ Serhat Erkmen, "Türkiye'nin Körfez Savaşı Sonrası Kuzey Irak Politikası", in Ümit Özdağ and Others, eds., **Irak Krizi, 2002-2003** (Ankara: Asam Yayınları, 2003), pp.271-72

¹⁷⁹ Micheal M. Gunter, "The KDP-PUK Conflict in Northern Iraq", **Middle East Journal** (Vol.50,No.2, Spring 1996), p.228

¹⁸⁰ Edmund Ghareeb, **The Kurdish Question in Iraq** (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1981), p.183

day and they fought for freedom and defeated Iraqi forces in many fronts. As a result, the Iraqi government decided to negotiate with Kurds and abandon Talabani. Both Ahmad and Talabani were forgiven by Barzani again, and returned to the KDP.¹⁸¹ The promise of the March 1970 manifesto on Kurdish autonomy, however, was not realized. Armed with Soviet Union's weapons, Baghdad fought with Kurds again and when it realized that Kurds will not be defeated by military means, Iraqi government, by cooperation with Iran and Arab world, other neighbours and the help of US defeated Kurds. Barzani, went to exile in Iran and then in Washington, DC, where he died four years later.

4.2. The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)

The PUK of Jalal Talabani represented what was to become the other faction of the KDP of Mulla Mustafa Barzani. Shortly after the KDP was defeated by Baghdad in March 1975, Talabani who was the KDP representative in Lebanon, went to Damascus. In June 1975, he announced the formation of the PUK in Syria. Although the PUK adopted the same slogan 'autonomy for Kurdistan, democracy for Iraq' as the KDP, but it advocated Marxist principles and denounced Barzani as 'reactionary' in its first declaration and added that the defeat of 1975 was not the defeat of Kurds, but the defeat of KDP and Barzani who cooperated with imperialist powers of US and Israel.

At first, Barzani supported Talabani to reorganize the Kurdish movement and sent some of his supporters to help him in Syria.¹⁸² When PUK declared its establishment and accused Barzani, however, Idris and Mesud Barzani joined a former associate of their father, Sami Abd al-Rahman to form the KDP/provisional Command and their reorganization attempts were completed in August 1976.

Celal Talabani was determined to defeat the KDP and its new organization which was called KDP/PC and wanted to be the only party by using power. They forced all KDP members in Soran region, either to join them or to die. Many KDP members were forced to join Iraqi forces and many of them were captured in 1977 and 1978. In this way KDP had no *peshmarga* or organization in Arbil, Sulaimanya

¹⁸¹ Micheal M. Gunter, "The KDP-PUK....", **op.cit**, p.229

¹⁸² M. Sıraç Bilgin, **Barzani'nin Son Yılları** (İstanbul: Berfin Yayınları, 1993), p.46

and Kirkuk. Now, it was time for Bahdinan region. Talabani sent a letter to Kurdish parties in Turkey and explained that they had been able to clean Soran region and they were coming to Bahdinan region to do the same task under the pretext of bringing arms and supplies from Syria and that they need the help and cooperation of them in Turkey.¹⁸³ The KDP, feeling threatened, fought Talabani's forces who were more than 1000 guerrillas and dealt a bitter defeat to the PUK, whose fighters did not know the terrain. Ali Askari, who was one of Mulla Mustafa's capable commanders and many other prominent members of the PUK, were killed in this intra-Kurdish bloodletting. During the succeeding years, PUK seemed to fight against the KDP and other Kurdish parties as much as against the Iraqi government.¹⁸⁴

Early in 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini overthrew the Shah and established an Islamic republic in Iran. This new regime either did not or could not, enforce the provisions of the Algiers Agreement of 1975 between Iraq and Iran on preventing cross-border Kurdish activities which had begun immediately after 1975. Only one year after the defeat of Kurdish people, exactly on 26 May 1976, KDP/PC *peshmargas* attacked Iraqi forces.¹⁸⁵ This challenge continued and after the Iranian Revolution, the KDP began to establish bases in Iran, a situation that helped to lead to the Iran – Iraq War of 1980-1988.

The KDP supported Iran from the start and saw the war as an opportunity to magnify its armed opposition to Baghdad with Iranian aid. The PUK, on the other hand, by the pretext that, having been weakened by the war, Iraqi government would be more willing to negotiate a favourable deal with the Kurds, began to negotiate and cooperate with Iraq.¹⁸⁶ As the combined Iranian – KDP offensive forced the PUK out of its sanctuary in the northern area of Bradost, near the Iranian frontier, and deeper into Iraq, the PUK, with the help of Baghdad's Iranian Kurdish ally, the Iranian KDP of Abd al-Rahman Ghassemlou, signed a so-called Comprehensive Political and Security Agreement with Saddam.

¹⁸³ **Ibid**, p. 129

¹⁸⁴ Micheal M. Gunter, "The Kurdish Predicament....", **op.cit**, p.26

¹⁸⁵ M. Sıraç Bilgin, **op.cit**, p.69

¹⁸⁶ David McDowall, **op.cit**, p.28

Neither Baghdad nor the PUK viewed their negotiations as anything more than a way to gain time and a more advantageous position. Although they continued to talk until October 1984, the PUK finally terminated the dialogue at the beginning of the following year, and began to reconcile itself with the KDP. In November 1986, Talabani travelled to Tehran where he began to explore a new beginning with Massoud Barzani. This led to the eventual creation of the Iraqi Kurdistan Front, which was announced formally in Tehran in June 1988, with the addition, over the next several years, of several smaller groups.¹⁸⁷

4.3. Conflicts in 1994

The problems between PUK and KDP restarted in 1993. The 50/50 principle that split power equally between the KDP and the PUK in each ministry had paralyzed the KRG's initiative while fueling partisanship. In March 1993, there was an important shift in government positions as the PUK introduced some of its senior leaders into the cabinet, when Kosrat Rasul a leading member of the PUK politburo, replaced Fuad Masum as the prime minister and tensions began to rise as the government became more partisan.

In addition to this partisanship, another change was that, in the summer of 1993, the Kurdistan Unity Party led by Sami Abdurrahman – an alignment of three smaller parties that had previously all been members of the Iraqi Kurdistan Front – joined the KDP. According to the KDP, this unification changed the balance of Kurdish politics in favour of the KDP. Therefore the PUK felt that it could not win the elections scheduled for May 1995, and instead opted for a military coup.¹⁸⁸ It is worth mentioning here that like all parties in the Middle East, PUK thought that if it loses the election and becomes an opposition party, it means not an electoral loss and a political set back, but as a complete loss.¹⁸⁹ In other words, the PUK feared that a KDP victory would be permanent and would mean the PUK's ultimate destruction.

¹⁸⁷ Micheal M. Gunter, "The KDP-PUK.....", *op.cit*, p.231

¹⁸⁸ Sayar Mohammad Salih, "Khwendnawayaki Shari Nawkhoy Kurdistan Iraq" (A Review of Civil War in Iraqi Kurdistan), *Santari Brayati* (Hawler: No.2, September 1997), pp.19-29

¹⁸⁹ Nisan Mordechai, *Minorities in the Middle East: A History of Struggle and Self – Expression* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 1991), p.22

The PUK thought that what it could not win with election, it would have to win with the gun.

The first fighting occurred in December 1993, when a socialist group headed by Hama Haji Mahmoud, who had ostensibly joined the KDP the previous summer, attacked a KDP base in Sulaymaniyah. This action resulted in dividing the KDP and PUK over how to respond. Then on 20 December 1993, the day that a strategic agreement establishing a presidential council including both Barzani and Talabani had been declared, fighting broke out between the PUK and the pro-Iranian Islamic Movement of Kurdistan (IMK).¹⁹⁰ PUK collected the customs and tariffs on trade with Iran which was substantial, because Iran did not participate in the international sanctions against Iraq. IMK, as devout Muslims, refused to collect customs and they refused to let PUK collect them. PUK refused to implement Barzani's orders as a member of the newly created presidential council to calm the situation, and instead it launched strong attacks against the IMK. By the end of the month, the PUK announced the capture of all the Islamic movement's bases in Kurdistan, the detention of Mulla Othman Abdul Aziz, the head of IMK, the arrest of 200 members of the group and the confiscation of all its arms.¹⁹¹ Masud Barzani resigned from the KRG's leadership council. In his resignation statement, Barzani accused Jalal Talabani of pursuing a unilateral policy. Barzani implied that the PUK wanted to crush the IMK in order to bolster its own position in the struggle for power in the Kurdistan, including against the KDP.¹⁹²

It was correct. PUK was determined to establish its hegemony by force. On 1 May 1994, a local problem over a piece of land in Qala Diza, northeast of Sulaymaniye, between the supporters of KDP and PUK quickly escalated into major fighting between the two parties. By the beginning of June more than 600 civilian and military deaths had occurred in fighting throughout much of Iraqi Kurdistan

¹⁹⁰ Micheal M. Gunter, "The Kurdish Predicament.....", *op.cit*, p.75

¹⁹¹ **Watha'iq al-idana** (Condemning Documents) (Damascus: manshurat al-ittihad al-watani el-Kurdistani (PUK Publications), 1994), pp.5-24, 241

¹⁹² Robert Olson, "The Kurdish Question and Geopolitic and Geostrategic Changes in the Middle East after the Gulf War", *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* (Vol.XVII, No.4, Summer 1994), p.63

including the cities. In late May, PUK forces seized the Kurdish parliament building in Irbil. This fighting threatened the continuation of much – needed international aid.

Several attempts were done to arrange a cease-fire. On 21 May 1994, an operations room was formed in an attempt to supervise a cease-fire, disengage the forces and normalize the situation, but a permanent end to the fighting remained elusive. The two parties also met at the invitation of the Turks in Silopi, Turkey, on 30 May 1994. The PUK negotiators came to Turkey from Syria. Talabani himself was abroad until 2 June, a situation that led to much speculation about what meaning to attribute to his absence. Finally, on 5 June, Barzani and Talabani met in Irbil for the first time since the fighting began. On 13 June, the two Kurdish leaders met again, this time in Silopi, Turkey. They conferred yet again in Irbil on 27 June. Nevertheless, sporadic clashes continued.¹⁹³

4.3.1. The Paris Agreement

Another attempt to arrange a cease-fire came from the France. From 16 to 22 July 1994, representatives of the two parties met in Paris at the invitation of the French government and the Paris-based Kurdish Institute headed by Kendal Nezan, a Turkish Kurd living in exile. Observers from the American and British embassies in Paris were also present. In this meeting two sides agreed that Iraqi Kurdistan shall be administered by a democratic system that will guarantee pluralism, respect for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the rights of the national and religious minorities. In addition, the two sides agreed to take a population census and then hold elections by May 1995.¹⁹⁴

In spite of the agreement, heavy clashes between the two sides continued in August and early September 1994. On 20 and 24 December 1994, again, large scale fighting erupted in Shaqlawa just north of the Kurdish capital in Irbil. Hundreds of fighters and civilians were reported killed within the first ten days of the renewed hostilities, which quickly spread to central and eastern Kurdistan. Citizens staged angry demonstrations against it in Irbil and Sulaymaniyah, while 17 other Kurdistan parties also issued a statement condemning the violence. This time the PUK not only

¹⁹³ Micheal M. Gunter, “The Kurdish Predicament...”, *op.cit*, p.76

¹⁹⁴ **Turkish Daily News**, September 11, 1994

seized the Kurdish parliament building, but the entire city of Irbil.¹⁹⁵ Both sides accused each other of imposing economic blockades, stealing millions of dollars from the KRG, sabotaging electrical installations, cultivating narcotics, and having secret relations with Baghdad and various foreign powers. The KDP also accused the PUK of having planted the terrorist bomb that killed some 96 people and injured another 141 in Zakho at the end of February 1995.

US President Bill Clinton sent a message to both Barzani and Talabani in late January 1995 in which he warned that they would no longer cooperate with the other countries to maintain security in the region if the clashes continued.¹⁹⁶ Barzani maintained that PUK evacuation of Irbil had to be the first step for any agreement, but PUK argued that the withdrawal from Irbil was tied to an immediate accord on the some \$ 150,000 per day of custom revenue the KDP was collecting from the Habur border crossing with Turkey. In answer to this demand KDP declared that this issue must be left to be determined by a new government. Therefore they reached to no agreement and heavy fighting once again resumed in early July 1995.

4.3.2. Dublin – Ireland Agreement

This time, the United States tried to play a mediatory role similar to the one carried out by the French a year earlier in Paris. US sent Robert Deutsch, the director of the office of Northern Gulf Affairs in the State Department in order to persuade both parties to meet in Drogheda, a suburb of Dublin, Ireland. In this meeting, from 9 to 11 August 1995, in the presence of senior US officials and participation of INC and Turkish observers, they agreed on many important points such as; maintaining a cease-fire, media attacks, demilitarization of the city of Irbil, a return of legitimacy of parliament immediately after the demilitarization of Irbil and consideration of Turkey's legitimate security concerns regarding the PKK.¹⁹⁷ The main point in this agreement was demilitarization of Irbil which was under the control of PUK. Talabani had expelled the KDP from half of northern Iraq and established its

¹⁹⁵ Sa'di Berzenci, "Irak Kurdistanında Mevcut Durum", **Avrasya Dosyası, Kuzey Irak Özel** (Vol.3, No.1, Spring 1996), p.198; Muhammad Ihsan, **Kurdistan we Dewam el-Harb** (Irbil: Aras, 2001), p.104

¹⁹⁶ Micheal M. Gunter, "The Kurdish...." **op.cit**, p.81

¹⁹⁷ Sa'di Berzenci, "Irak Kurdistanında", **op.cit**, p.199

jurisdiction over two-thirds of the population living in Kurdistan. But it did not have corresponding resources to administer the territory under its control. Therefore, the PUK wanted its share of revenues collected by KDP from the trade with Turkey in the Habur border to strengthen its position in Irbil. The KDP, on the other hand, asked for demilitarization of Irbil at first and then sharing the revenues. So, while the PUK enjoyed political and demographic superiority, it lacked financial resources to administer the area under its jurisdiction. And the reverse was the case with the KDP, whose leader, Barzani, could not reconcile himself to the loss of Irbil, the largest city in the region, with a population of 7-800.000.

Another issue was the PKK. Late in August 1995 the PKK launched attacks against the KDP. When the talks in Dublin appeared to be leading to a settlement of the KDP-PUK infighting, as well as to security guarantees for Turkey, the PKK accused the KDP as Turkish collaborator and attacked it. The PKK also sought to build on its region in Iraqi Kurdistan by establishing some type of government-in-exile. The PKK, in fact, was encouraged by Syria and Iran, as well as the PUK. These two states did not want to see their US enemy bring an end to the KDP-PUK fighting and possibly establish an Iraqi Kurdish state, while Talabani sought to open a second front against the KDP.¹⁹⁸

In this way, the second round of the Dublin talks from 12 to 15 September 1995, failed. Talabani argued that the reason for the failure of the talks was the position of the Turkish delegation. According to him, Turkey wanted to impose the issue of the PKK which was not an Iraqi issue. He also accused Turkey of arming his KDP enemy.¹⁹⁹ He also argued that the KDP had relations with the Iraqi government and received arms from Saddam Hussein. As the fighting between the KDP and PUK continued, Baghdad offered to conciliate between them, but it was not accepted. Iran, whose contacts with both parties dated back to the first Gulf War, also tried and failed. US also tried to mediate by sending Robert Deutsch in mid-November 1995 to meet Barzani and Talabani, but it also failed.

¹⁹⁸ Micheal M. Gunter, "The Kurdish...", *op.cit*, p.84

¹⁹⁹ **Turkish Daily News**, September 20,1995

Talabani who was determined to defeat the KDP, sought to make contacts with Iran. Administering an area with a long border with Iran, he realized that his only source of arms was Iran. In July and August 1996, with the PUK's support, some 2000 Iranian Revolutionary Guards, drove 250 kilometers into Iraqi Kurdistan and attacked the Iranian Kurds sheltering there. With this, relations between Talabani and the Islamic Republic warmed and Iran gave a great amount of arms and ammunition to the PUK.²⁰⁰

Talabani, now, had enough arms and support from Iran, So, he planned an offensive to dislodge the KDP from its stronghold of Haj Omran near the Iranian border. On 17 August, when KDP leaders were busy celebrating the founding anniversary of their party, the PUK attacked. Barzani announced that Iran was supporting the PUK and warned Washington that since the US was not responding politically, he might approach Baghdad for help, because the only option left was the Iraqis. The United States did nothing to respond and its low-key efforts failed to stop the fighting. Barzani who was increasingly desperated turned to Saddam for help.²⁰¹

The KDP leader rationalized this alliance with Baghdad as necessary to preserve Iraqi territorial integrity being threatened by Iran and argued that US did not listen and help him, so he was forced to agree with the central government to end this foreign threat. It is said that the attempt by Turkish government and its prime Minister, Necmettin Erbakan to reach a broad anti-US front with Iran, Syria, and Iraq also influenced Barzani's decision.²⁰² However, the primary reason for his alliance with Saddam was merely the necessity as he had no one else to turn to. Regarding Saddam, it was a god-sent opportunity to poison KDP-PUK relations to an irreparable degree and to reinject himself into Iraqi Kurdistan, in spite of the opposition of the US. He knew well that since he was acting to block the expansion of Iran's influence in the region, Washington would not retaliate against him.

²⁰⁰ Andrew Cockburn and Patrick Cockburn, **Out of the Ashes: The Resurrection of Saddam Husein** (New York: Harper Collins, 1999), pp.237-8

²⁰¹ **Ibid**

²⁰² Micheal M. Gunter, "The Kurdish....", **op.cit**, p.86

On the morning of 31 August 1996, the Iraqi government attacked Irbil and forced the PUK out of it. Saddam's forces used the few hours they had in the city before they were withdrawn to capture and execute ninety-six soldiers of the US-financed Iraqi opposition (INC) and also to capture sensitive equipment and files belonging to it.²⁰³ On September 2-3, Baghdad began withdrawing its forces. In an attempt to show that he was doing something, on September 3, President Clinton announced an extension of the no-fly zone, from the 32nd Parallel to the 33rd Parallel and also bombed Iraqi military targets in the south. However, this action was so ridicule that some commentators joked that the Americans got the Iraqi map wrong way up, by hitting targets in the south whereas the problem was in the north.

The KDP, not only regained Irbil but took Sulaymaniyah a week later as well. PUK claimed that Iraqi soldiers dressed as KDP *peshmargas* and with heavy weapons helped KDP to fight against it and to take Sulaymaniyah, but it was not correct. Talabani's supporters were frightened by the PUK radio and television when they announced that the Iraqi army was pouring into Kurdistan. Talabani's forces retreated to the Iranian border. The KDP established a new government, immediately which was composed of the KDP, the Islamic Movement, the Kurdistan Communist Party, the Kurdistan Islamic Union, the Turkomen, and the Assyrians, as well as independent figures. But, Barzani's victory didn't last for a long time. On 10 October 1996, the PUK, armed with the troops, artillery and rockets from Iran launched a counter offensive and retook Sulaymaniyah on 13 October, in addition to the much of the territory they had lost a month earlier, except Irbil.²⁰⁴

4.3.3. Ankara Peace Process

I think the developments in northern Iraq was a failure for US policy. Americans opposed any intervention by Iraqi government, but when they could not pursue an appropriate policy towards the Kurdish conflict, Saddam was invited by one of two main Kurdish parties to Iraqi Kurdistan which was not in favour of the

²⁰³ Dilip Hiro, *Neighbors, not Friends*, **op.cit.**, p.111; Jonathan C. Randal, "Iraqi Opposition Describes Mass Execution Near Irbil", **Washington Post** (September 2, 1996), p.A20; Jeffrey Smith, "CIA Operation Fell with Iraqi City", **Washington Post** (September 8, 1996), p.A28

²⁰⁴ Micheal M. Gunter, "The Kurdish....", **op.cit.**, p.87

policy persuaded by US. Those developments also showed that the intra-Kurdish conflict could spark a renewal of the Iran-Iraq War of 1980s, with Iraq supporting the KDP while Iran helped the PUK. Another point was that the instability in northern Iraq also served the Turks to be more effective there by establishing a security zone ten miles inside the border in order to prevent the PKK from striking Turkey. Finally, the immediate implications for Operation Provide Comfort and its offer of protection by the United States remained uncertain.

As a result, at the end of October 1996, another attempt for peace was initiated by the United States, Britain, and Turkey, which was called Ankara peace process. These new series of talks based on a joint statement of 22 articles. The main points of these articles were as follow; “(1) formation of an interim coalition government from the KPD and the PUK, other Kurdish parties and representatives from the Turkomen and the Assyrians; (2) normalization (neutralization) of the city of Irbil, now held by the KDP; (3) transfer of the Kurdistan region’s revenues, including those from the Habur border crossing, to the Kurdistan central bank, and (4) setting of a date for general elections.”²⁰⁵

Another attempt to improve peace was creating a Peace Monitoring Force (PMF) composed of some neutral 200 Turkomen and Assyrians to monitor the cease-fire line. It was another sign of Turkey’s attempts to use this force to further interfere in the region’s affairs, so the agreement could not be so effective as expected²⁰⁶. Another obstacle was that over 70,000 Kurds had been forcibly deported from their homes by the two parties. The deportations appeared to be a way of maintaining the civil war despite the cease-fire and showed that the Ankara peace process failed to force the two main antagonists toward any meaningful agreement but at least it stopped the bloodshed.

The KDP was in a better position now, both politically and economically. The estimates were that the trade in Iraqi oil products earned the KDP \$ 800.000 a day and customs duties and service charges brought in another \$ 250.000 per day. The money was deposited in the regional bank in Irbil, and controlled by the Kurdistan

²⁰⁵ **Ibid**

²⁰⁶ **Ibid**

parliament with a KDP majority. While the KDP accepted responsibility for paying the salaries of civil servants working in the PUK zone, Talabani demanded a joint committee to collect and distribute the customs revenue which was rejected by Barzani²⁰⁷. The PUK also demanded the establishment of a coalition government with equal representation from both sides, but the KDP insisted that the PUK must accept the results of 1992 elections which was rejected by PUK.

When relations deteriorated again, the PUK began assisting the PKK by providing it with shelter in the area under its control. The PKK began hitting KDP targets and then withdrawing into the PUK-administered territory. On 14 May 1997, the Turkish military staged a major incursion into northern Iraq with 15,000 soldiers, with an air cover, to push back the PKK from the frontier area, and destroy its stored supplies of food and ammunition in the mountains to stop it launching raids in winter. The KDP *peshmargas* helped the Turkish soldiers on the ground. The Turks did not fully withdraw this time, after completing their mission but maintained a military presence which could be regarded as an unofficial security zone.²⁰⁸

Talabani thought that the *status quo* was working against him, and also possibly he believed that Barzani had been weakened by the latest round of fighting between the KDP and PKK that had been occurring since 25 September 1997. Therefore, as the Turkish army, operating in Iraqi Kurdistan since May, began withdrawing, the PUK, backed by the PKK, on 13 October 1997, attacked the KDP on three fronts, one of them near the Iranian border and the other near Shaqlawa on the strategic Hamilton Road. Some of the heaviest fighting of the entire KDP-PUK civil war ensued and left 1,000 Kurds dead and thousands displaced.²⁰⁹ The PUK even attacked the KDP headquarters at Sarirash just outside of Salahaddin and used GRAD missiles which were Russian-made surface-to-surface missiles, that were the most destructive weapons used yet in the civil war.

²⁰⁷ Dilip Hiro, "Neighbors", **op.cit**, p.133

²⁰⁸ Micheal M. Gunter "The Kurdish...", **op.cit**, p.88

²⁰⁹ **Ibid**, p.89

After the PUK made significant initial gains, around 10 November, while the world attention was focused on the rising tension between the United States and Iraq over inspection of presidential sites, the Turkish army and air force joined the KDP in a counter – offensive against the PUK, and regained the territory the KDP had lost a month earlier.

4.3.4. Washington Agreement

At the end of the latest battles, the KDP still controlled the provinces of Duhok and Irbil, while the PUK only had the province of Sulaymaniyah. The PUK had realized that the KDP could not be defeated by fighting and on the contrary it becomes stronger. Therefore, at the end of 1997, Talabani sent a letter to Barzani proposing that they make peace. Barzani replied positively and this letter become a beginning for further steps to reconcile. By the end of July 1998, 20 meetings had been held, but only minor agreements on technical matters had been reached. The substantive divisions remained, including the attempt to reestablish a united Kurdistan Regional Government.

First meetings were not so positive. Most of the issues discussed by the parties were marginal and the real underlying causes of conflict were not being addressed. But thanks to the tireless efforts of US assistant secretary of state, David Welch, on 8 September 1998, the Clinton administration was able to announce good news about Iraqi Kurds and declared that both Barzani and Talabani had made positive statements on political reconciliation and that the US would continue to mediate in order to reach a permanent peace. Then, David Welch led a delegation of US state department officials and met with both leaders.²¹⁰ Although no substantive agreement was reached, Welch invited both Kurdish leaders to Washington for talks. Barzani and Talabani finally met personally and shook hands for the first time since May 1994, and announced that they had reached an agreement.²¹¹ This accord set forth a timetable for re-establishing a unified regional administration, contained provisions for regional elections by the summer of 1999 and for revenue sharing

²¹⁰ **Washington Post**, september 18, 1998

²¹¹ Gizli Kürt Anlaşması, **Hürriyet**, October 2, 1998

based on the needs of the population, and, in a gesture toward Turkish fears concerning the PKK, provided for the security of the Iraqi Kurdish borders.²¹²

Madeleine Albright, US Secretary of State, announced Kurdish leaders' accord before some 40 guests gathered in the Treaty Room of the US State Department. She also made general promises of US support for the Kurds. Albright's pronouncement of protection, in contrast to Nixon's and Kissinger's covert promises of a quarter of a century earlier, was a public declaration. Therefore, it was important in the sense that they could not be easily ignored. That was why, all Kurds and both Kurdish leaders gave more significance to it. Barzani and Talabani claimed that Albright made even stronger promises of protection to them verbally.²¹³

Kurds were more confident now. They became sure that coalition forces continue to protect them by maintaining Operation Provide Comfort forces which had been replaced by Operation Northern Watch in 1997. In addition, the situation improved economically because of UN 986 Resolution. The Security Council adopted Resolution 986 in April 1995 which would have permitted the sale of a certain amount of Iraqi oil in return for the purchase of food and medicine and this decision was put into force in 1996, UN Security Council, through the Resolution 1153 of 20 February 1998 dramatically increased the permitted amount of oil sales to \$ 5.256 billion every six months. The Kurdistan region received 13 percent of the funds from the sale of this oil without any interference from Baghdad. This fund was spent for many different purposes such as; food and medicinal supplies, health and restoring electricity and water services, agriculture, education and resettlement of displaced persons.²¹⁴

During the years of 1999 and 2000, meetings between KDP and PUK continued and both sides were optimistic for peace prospects. As a result of a terrorist attack, Fransua Hariri, a senior member of KDP was killed on 18 February 2001. This event brought these two parties together more and their reapproachment

²¹² "Barzani Türkiyesiz Olmaz", **Radikal**, November 8, 1998; "Talabani ile Yeni Dönem", **Radikal**, November 10, 1998

²¹³ Muhammad Sadiq, "Interview with Mas'ud Barzani", **Al-Sharq al-Awsat**, September 19, 1998

²¹⁴ Micheal M. Gunter, "The Kurdish...", **op.cit**, p.99

and coordination increased.²¹⁵ Therefore, in April, 2001, the members of both KDP and PUK came together in a parliamentary meeting and the PUK had accepted the results of 1992 elections in which the KDP won 51 percent and the PUK won 49 percent of the votes.²¹⁶ Many people argued that the competition (not fighting) between the KDP and the PUK has enabled the development of a nascent democratic and pluralistic system as opposed to the one-party model of the Baath.

The election of George W. Bush to the US presidency and the 11 September 2001, attacks enhanced US determination to get rid of Saddam. United States accused Iraq of developing weapons of mass destruction and having links with the al-Qaeda network and President George W. Bush implied Iraq as a second target, while his national security advisor Condoleezza Rice openly warned Iraq. These new developments also were another factor for a closer and better cooperation among Kurds.

4.4. Turkey and Kurdish Civil War

Turkish officials were well aware that the activities and developments of the northern Iraqi Kurds may provide guidance and inspiration for the Kurds in Turkey. Turkish government was apprehensive about the possibility of an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq or the creation of a real federal structure in Iraq which had been declared by the Iraqi Kurds in 1992. What Turkish officials supported was an autonomy for Kurds within a unitary Iraqi state. That form of autonomy was given to the Iraqi Kurds in 1970, but in practice, the Kurds had enjoyed little or no autonomy. However, even that arrangement could be a problem because some Kurds in Turkey might ask to emulate the northern Iraqi model of autonomy within Turkey itself. So, it can be said that Turkey wanted nothing for the Iraqi Kurds and Ankara perceived the Kurdish activities in northern Iraq as a major source of instability in the area.

When armed clashes broke out between PUK and IMK and then between PUK and KDP, it will be very normal if we think that Turkish officials were in favour of such a development. However, Turkey was apprehensive about this conflict

²¹⁵ **El-Zaman**, February 19, 2001

²¹⁶ **Brayati**, April 3, 2001

as it provided an opportunity for the PKK to extend its influence in Iraqi Kurdistan as it had still been able to use there as a logistical base to launch attacks against Turkey. That is why we saw Turkey trying to bring the two parties together in June 1994 in the border town of Silopi.²¹⁷

After Silopi meeting, in July 1994, the Kurdish leadership came together in Paris with the presence of Western observers and declared that they would hold an election in 1995 and also merge their *peshmarga* forces. Turkey saw these developments as an attempt to create a Kurdish state and as a threat to Iraq's territorial integrity. So, the Turkish government reacted to this development and the then newly appointed Foreign Minister, Mümtaz Soysal announced new decisions to restrict access to northern Iraq for Western NGOs to make sure that Iraq's territorial integrity would not be threatened in any way.²¹⁸ Turkey was suspicious about the activities of these organizations in northern Iraq and perceived them as a threat to the territorial integrity of Iraq. Turkey also intervened with the French government and prevented the holding of a second Paris-type meeting.

Ambitions of the PUK leadership flared up again in December 1994 and they occupied not only the parliament but the entire city of Irbil. This inter-Kurdish fighting lasted through the spring of 1995 and provided Turkey with a golden opportunity to move military into northern Iraq. As I noted in previous pages, Turkey was happy about the continuation of tensions between the KDP and the PUK, particularly this time as the Kurdish administration and parliament became paralysed by the PUK. This pushed Turkey to interfere in the northern Iraq.²¹⁹ The KDP and PUK both condemned this intervention because, unlike the situation in 1992, they were not informed about this operation. Instead, Turkey called on the Kurds to begin a dialogue with the Iraqi authorities.²²⁰ The KDP objected to this Turkish pressure.

²¹⁷ Kemal Kirişçi, "Provide Comfort or Trouble; Operation Provide Comfort and Its Impact on Turkish Foreign Policy", *Turkish Review of Middle East Studies* (No.8, 1994-1995), p.54; Mazin Hasan, "Irak Kürtlerinin Bitmeyen Kavgası", Ümit Özdağ and Others, eds., *Irak Krizi, 2002-2003* (Ankara: Asam Yayınları, 2003), p.67

²¹⁸ *Turkish Daily News*, September 11,13 and 19, 1994

²¹⁹ *Turkish Daily News*, 10 March 1995; *Turkish Daily News*, 13 March 1995.

²²⁰ Serhat Erkmen, "Türkiye'nin Körfez....", *op.cit.*, p.284

Sami Abdulrahman, a KDP official at that time, noted: “We see the solution of the Kurdish problem within the framework of Iraq, naturally a democratic Iraq, and on the basis of federation. Not autonomy”.²²¹

It seems that both Iraq and Iran were informed about this operation as none of them objected such an intervention. Turkey had started to normalize its relations with Iraq. Iraqi Deputy Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz was invited by Turkish Foreign Minister Mümtaz Soysal to visit Turkey in late December, although it was cancelled because of Soysal’s resignation and his replacement by Murat Karayalçın. But, then Iraqi Foreign Minister Muhammed Sa’id al-Sahhaf visited Turkey from 9-11 February 1995. This was the first visit by an Iraqi foreign minister to Turkey since the Gulf War. Both foreign ministers emphasized their desire for better relations. Karayalçın reiterated Turkey’s support for Iraq’s territorial integrity. Editorials in the Turkish press stressed that after four years, US had not brought peace to the area and that only Iraq and Turkey would be able to do so.²²²

Turkish-Iranian relations also improved, particularly after the then Turkish President Suleyman Demirel’s visit to Tehran in July 1994, at the time that Kurdish leaders came together in Paris. It seems that they agreed to take the same measures against the developments taken place in northern Iraq. That is why we see that Tehran did not criticize the Turkish military intervention in northern Iraq. Both countries shared the same fear about the disintegration of Iraq and its effect on regional security and complicating the Kurdish question in their own countries.²²³

This massive Turkish military intervention in northern Iraq in March 1995, not only was condemned by Kurds, but also provoked international criticism and led to calls for an immediate withdrawal. On 5 April 1995, the European Parliament condemned both PKK and the Turkish military operation and asked the member governments for imposing a military embargo on Turkey. Erdal İnönü, the then newly appointed Foreign Minister travelled to the major European capitals to explain

²²¹ **Ibid**; **Turkish Daily News**, May 8, 1995

²²² Robert Olson, “The Kurdish Question and Turkey’s Foreign Policy, 1991-1995: From the Gulf War to the Incursion Into Iraq”, **Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies** (Vol.xix, No.1, Fall 1995), pp.17-18

²²³ **Yeni Yüzyıl**, 30 March 1995; **Turkish Daily News**, 17 April, 1995

that Turkey would pull out within a short period.²²⁴ The US administration also reacted to the news of the Turkish military intervention. They condemned the PKK as a terrorist organization, but they stressed that the operation should be of short duration and utmost care should be given to protect the civilian population. It seems that Tansu Çiller, the then Prime Minister, on a visit to the United States had assured President Clinton that the operation would be of limited scope and duration.²²⁵

Instead of intervention, Western countries accepted and assured Turkey to negotiate with it about any development in northern Iraq. That is why, we see that during the Dublin negotiation, the delegation of Turkey was also present. The Dublin process produced some good results for the Turks. It produced joint statements referring to the Western allies' understanding of Turkey's concerns regarding certain developments in northern Iraq. Furthermore, both Barzani and Talabani confirmed their commitment to the preservation of Iraq's territorial integrity as well as promising that they would not encourage any constitutional agreement that fails to reflect the will of the whole people of Iraq.²²⁶ Although these joint declarations were regarded as a diplomatic achievement for the Turks in this sense that allied powers supported the Turkish stand on the northern Iraqi issue, but it had some negative effects for Turks as well. First of all, this process failed to reconcile the KDP and the PUK. At the same time, it had further internationalized the Kurdish question in northern Iraq. Another result was that "it has contributed to the emergence, at least in appearance, of two rival groupings, one including Turkey, the United States and Barzani and the other composed of Syria, Iran and Talabani".²²⁷

As a result of the Dublin process, we see that Turkey faces difficulties to make a balance between its relations with the West and its ties with regional neighbours. For instance, Iraq reacted immediately and decided to close down its consulate in İstanbul while asking Turkey to close down its own consulate in Mosul.

²²⁴ Kemal Kirişçi and Gareth M. Winrow, "The Kurdish Question.....", **op.cit**, p.173; **Yeni Yüzyıl**, 7 April, 1995

²²⁵ **Ibid**, pp. 175-76; **Yeni Yüzyıl**, 21 and 31 March, 1995

²²⁶ Mahmut Bali Aykan, "Turkey's Policy.....", **op.cit**, p.361; **Milliyet**, August 12, 1995, p.17; **Milliyet**, October 12, 1995, p.16; **Cumhuriyet**, December 4, 1995, p.8

²²⁷ **Ibid**; **Milliyet**, November 15, 1995, p.17; **Milliyet**, November 24, 1995, p.21

This was a reaction to Turkey's contacts with Iraq's opponents, that is, the Kurdish groups and also INC in the context of the Dublin process.²²⁸ Syria also perceived the Dublin process as a threat for the region and looked at US's initiatives as a threat to its interests. It also had problems with Turkey as a US ally. Syria was eager for the signing of an agreement on the issue of access to the waters of the Euphrates as a precondition for not supporting the PKK, but Turkish officials were unwilling to meet what Syria wanted. As I mentioned before, Turkey's continued support for Operation Provide Comfort and then supporting US policies and aims was another stumbling block on the way for improvement of relations between these two countries.²²⁹ Therefore, we see that Syria brought Jalal Talabani and Abdullah Öcalan together and both Talabani and Syria encouraged the PKK to launch an attack against the KDP. Talabani declared, "We do not view the PKK as a terrorist organization but as a political organization".²³⁰ Talabani's aim was opening another front against the KDP and as a result of these attempts, the PKK attacked in June 1995.

Iran was another country which was unhappy about the Dublin process. As a matter of fact, Turkish-Iranian relationship has always been a complicated issue. Particularly, after the Islamic Revolution in Iran, their rivalry increased and both countries looked at each other with suspicion. They had now two different regimes, that is, an Islamist Iran and a secularist Turkey. During the Iran-Iraq war, Turkey remained neutral, but at the same time, it was concerned about an attack by Iran and Iraqi Kurdish groups supported by Iran, on the Kirkuk-Yumurtalık pipeline which provided a third of Turkey's oil need.²³¹ Turkey was also concerned about a possible victory of Iran that might cause disintegration of Iraq and eventually the establishment of a Kurdish state in northern Iraq. That is why we see that Turkey was

²²⁸ **Cumhuriyet**, October 14, 1995, p.9; **Milliyet**, August 20, 1995, p.17; **Milliyet**, August 21, 1995, p.17

²²⁹ Kemal Kirişçi, "Provide Comfort or", **op.cit**, p.56; Suha Bölükbaşı, "Turkey Challenges Iraq and Syria: The Euphrates Dispute", **Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies** (Vol.XVI, No.4, Summer 1993)

²³⁰ **Turkish Daily News**, May 5, 1995

²³¹ Mehmet Kocaoğlu, "Kürtçülüğün Siyasi Bir Sorun Haline Dönüştürülmesinde ve Kürtçülük Faaliyetlerinde İran Faktörü" **Avrasya Dosyası** (Vol.2, No.1, Spring 1995), pp.56-57

so apprehensive about the Iranian advances, especially in northern Iraq in 1986, that the Turkish public openly discussed the possibility of Turkish intervention to block these advances.²³² On the other hand, Iran was also suspicious about military incursions of Turkey into northern Iraq in late 1986 in order to destroy the PKK camps and perceived by Tehran as Turkey's intention to annex northern Iraq, especially the Mosul-Kirkuk region to its territories.²³³

After the second Gulf War, as we know, Turkey granted permission to the US to use the military bases in Turkey in order to launch attacks against the Iraqi targets and then participated in the OPC so as to enable repatriation of the Kurdish refugees and to prevent similar refugee flows. Unlike Turkey, Iran opposed Western operations including the OPC, inside Iraq and questioned the legality of the *de facto* partition of Iraq. Iranian officials thought that no-fly zone could be exploited by the US to threaten Iran's territorial integrity, or might become a safe haven for the Iranian opposition forces such as Mojahedin-e Khalq and Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran.²³⁴ Iran was also apprehensive about the Turkish-Kurdish cooperation and objected to the Turkish military incursions into northern Iraq. In its view, the balance of power would be altered if Turkey sought to control the oil fields of northern Iraq.²³⁵

Hence, we understand why Iran sought to sabotage the US-Turkish sponsored talks in Drogheda, Ireland. In August-September 1995, Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, the leader of the Iraqi Shiite opposition backed by Iran, the Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SAIRI), frankly declared that "the talks failed because

²³² Süha Bölükbaşı, **Türkiye ve Yakınındaki Ortadoğu** (Ankara: Dış Politika Enstitüsü, 1992), pp.27-33, 74-75; Henry J. Barkey, "Iran and Turkey, Confrontation Across An Ideological Divide", in Alvin Z. Rubinstein and Smolansky, eds., **Regional Power Rivalry in the New Eurasia: Russia, Turkey and Iran** (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), p. 160

²³³ **Ibid**, Suha Bölükbaşı, **op.cit.**

²³⁴ Nader Entesar, "Kurdish Conflict in a Regional Perspective" in M.E. Ahrari, ed., **Change and Continuity in the Middle East, Resolution and Prospects for Peace** (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), pp. 63-64

²³⁵ **Ibid**, p. 67

they were conducted with the aims of the US and Turkey behind them and were against the policies of Iran”.²³⁶

After then, Iran tried to increase its influence in northern Iraq. In agreement with the PUK, Iran deployed 5000 fighters from the Badr Forces near Sulaymaniyah in November 1995. In June 1996 the situation was more inflamed when KDP killed an important member of the Kurdistan Conservative Party who was provoked by the PUK in order to control the strategic Hamilton Road. Then PUK, in late July 1996, helped and allowed 2000 to 3000 Iranian troops, 250 kilometers deep into Iraqi Kurdistan to pursue Iranian Kurds in return for Iranian arms.²³⁷ The KDP denounced this action and declared that “The leaders of the PUK... have perpetrated a treasonous and shameful deed... Through this military coordination, the PUK leaders want to realize material and military gains to use in the internal [Iraqi Kurdish] strife”.²³⁸

Again, on 17 August, the PUK launched another attack against the KDP to control Haj Omran with arms and support from Iran. Talabani hoped that if his forces were able to keep controlling the strategic Hamilton Road that links Haj Omran and Rewanduz, he would be able to restrict Turkey’s trade with both Iraq and Iran.²³⁹ Then, as we discussed before, the KDP reached an agreement with Saddam that allowed Barzani to retake Irbil from Talabani on 31 August 1996. This action was justified by both Barzani and Saddam in terms of foreign Iranian support for the PUK. Iran claimed that Iraq’s army had moved into the Kurdish area with the US green light. Finally, Iran again supported the PUK to regain most of its lost-ground in northern Iraq.²⁴⁰ In this juncture, once again the KDP accused Iran and stated that “the Iranian Islamic regime has stepped up its direct intervention in support of Talabani’s PUK and has sent several thousand new troops with heavy weapons

²³⁶ Micheal M. Gunter, “The Kurdish...”, **op.cit**, p.112

²³⁷ **Ibid**, p.120

²³⁸ **Ibid**

²³⁹ İhsan Gürkan, “Northern Iraq, From the Recent Past and Present, to the Future”, **Turkish Review of Middle East Studies** (No.10, 1998-1999) ,p.25

²⁴⁰ Michael M. Gunter, “Turkey and Iran face off in Kurdistan”, March 1998, in <http://www.meforum.org/meq/march98/turkey.shtml>

across the border”. Sami Abdulrahman, a top aide of Barzani, stated, “one of the reasons for these [Iranian] attacks is our friendship with Turkey. We call on Turkey to help us.”²⁴¹

The mediation attempts by Turkey, US and Britain during the Ankara process was also condemned by Iran, defining it as an attempt by the US to establish “a spy base and spring board to carry out its malicious schemes in the region”. Iran also opposed to Turkey’s growing military ties to Israel. In fact the new Turkish-Israeli ties strengthened Turkey’s hand in its competition with Iran over northern Iraq. Therefore, Iran viewed the Ankara process as “a concerted effort [by] the US and Zionist regime To create another Israel in the Kurdish areas”.²⁴² In order to destroy the PKK units in northern Iraq and strengthening the KDP position, other Turkish military incursions into northern Iraq took place in May 1997 and again in October 1997. Turkey bombed the PUK and PKK positions who were backed by Iranian forces in their fight against the KDP. So, Turkey aimed not only at supporting Barzani but also at balancing Iran’s relationship with the PUK as a step toward preventing the Iranian influence in the region.

The Washington agreement, on 17 September 1998, brought an end to the PUK war against the KDP. Turkey objected to this accord because it was not invited and the text of accord was negotiated and concluded without Turkish participation and so Turkey felt slighted. Another reason was that the Turkomans also were not invited and were completely left out.²⁴³ According to Turks, the most critical point was about the implementation of reforms based on a federal system and principles, in other words, the formation of a federation in the region.²⁴⁴ The Turks also objected to the phrase “establishing stronger safeguards for Iraq’s borders”, as this statement could prevent them from incursions into the region in pursuit of the PKK in the future. Professor Michael M. Gunter, a famous scholar with his studies on Kurds, indicated other Turkish fears as “the accord’s influence on the Turkish Kurds, the

²⁴¹ Michael M. Gunter, “The Kurdish...”, **op.cit**, p.121

²⁴² **Ibid**, p.122

²⁴³ İhsan Gürkan, “Northern Iraq...”, **op.cit**, p.54

²⁴⁴ **Ibid**, p.55

loss of control over profitable smuggling routes, the future of water rights and Turkey's ambitious GAP project to harness the water, and the proposed Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline".²⁴⁵

An important point of this agreement was that Talabani accepted that the KDP and the PUK would prevent the PKK from undermining peace. However, the PUK had relations with the PKK until 2000, when the Turkish forces seemed to have dried up the power sources of the PKK in the region following the apprehension of the PKK's leader Abdullah Öcalan. Moreover, the PUK continuously lost power vis-à-vis the KDP (a process begun in 1996) and Tehran realized that the PUK alone no longer served Iran's geopolitical interests in northern Iraq. The weakness of PUK by the end of 2000 "further weakened Iran's geopolitical posture and its ability to challenge Turkey's increasingly strong position in northern Iraq".²⁴⁶ For this reason, Iran started to improve its relations with the KDP. Besides, with the help of Iran, the PKK had strengthened its position at the northern end of the Qandil mountains that occurred along the Iran-Iraq border and had organized a local administration and became able to challenge the PUK. Therefore, because of all these reasons we see that, by the late 2000, Talabani understood that he needs Turkey and if he wanted to mend fences with Turkey and improve his relations with it, he had to lessen his dependency on Iran and fight the PKK. The PUK did so and started to struggle against the PKK in the late 2000 and throughout the 2001.²⁴⁷

After the Washington agreement in 1998 and the following years, Turkish policy towards Kurds didn't change. Turkey continued to think that only a strong central authority in Baghdad could inhibit the break-up of the country and the eventual emergence of a federal structure or an independent Kurdish entity in the north. Therefore, Turkish officials tried to upgrade relations with Baghdad. For example, Turkey upgraded diplomatic representation in Baghdad to the ambassadorial level in 2000. Turkey's economical relations also improved.

²⁴⁵ Michael M. Gunter, "The Kurdish...", *op.cit.*, p.109

²⁴⁶ Robert Olson, "Turkey-Iran Relations, 2000-2001: the Caspian, Azerbaijan and the Kurds", *Middle East Policy* (Vol. IX, no.2, June 2002), pp.112-113

²⁴⁷ **Ibid**

Particularly, following the initiation of the oil for food agreement with Iraq in 1996 and then the increase of its amount in 1998, Turkish exports to Iraq turned upward, reaching over \$ 1 billion in 2001.

CHAPTER 5

THE OCCUPATION OF IRAQ AND ITS AFTERMATH

The US-led war of 2003 against the Baghdad regime shattered all arrangements in Iraq. In this chapter, therefore, I will try to examine the new situation, the new status of Iraqi Kurds, the policy of US in Iraq after this occupation and Turkey's relations with the US, with the Iraqi Kurds, with new authority in Baghdad and with other Middle Eastern states.

5.1. The Occupation of Iraq and the Iraqi Kurds

As we discussed before, the United States of America declared Iraq as a second target after the September 11, 2001. In fact, US efforts to topple Saddam Hussein had begun in 1998 by reuniting the Iraqi opposition under Washington process. The Kurds, as one of the stronger opposition groups of Iraq were worried about the repercussions of a possible US strike on Iraq. The Kurdish groups' concern was the possible repetition of Saddam's forces attacking the Kurds, as was the case in 1991 during which US led coalition forces thwarted Iraqi occupation forces out of Kuwait. They sought to ensure that the United States should not provoke an attack on the Kurds by Saddam forces. Therefore they were very cautious about this matter and both the KDP and the PUK declared that they would not participate in any attack on Iraq. Particularly, the KDP argued that their aim is a federal structure and if the Iraqi regime accepted their demand, the Kurdish people would have no problem with the regime.²⁴⁸

During 2002, however, the Kurdish parties realized that the US was determined to get rid of Saddam Hussein. They had to come together and show the same stand in order to protect their ends and their interests in the future. But the Kurdish leaders were still separated by a lot of distrust. The PUK blamed the KDP for taking concession upon concession without giving anything in return. The KDP

²⁴⁸ Birayati, March 29, 2001

on the other hand, accused the PUK of trying to gain time by employing delaying tactics.²⁴⁹ After a series of meetings between the two parties' officials, the two leaders met each other in September and after two days of discussion, they agreed to normalize relations and to convene the Kurdish parliament in Irbil on 4 October.²⁵⁰ It seemed that the two parties had no other choice rather than setting their problems aside to look at the challenges ahead.

In the formal session of the parliament in Irbil, with the participation of Barzani, Talabani and Mrs Danielle Mitterrand, the visiting wife of the former French President, the Washington agreement was ratified. The parliament was also supposed to take up the issue of drafting a federal constitution prepared by KDP experts and modified by a joint KDP-PUK committee. The obvious thing was that all Kurdish parties agreed on the main issue-federalism. The KDP announced that it did not want the partition of Iraq and although the Kurds have their own region, independent from the central government but the Kurds are ready to join together, but if Iraq is to be united, the only solution is federalism, a federal system with international guarantees.²⁵¹ These ideas were shared by the PUK as well.

The draft of a federal constitution prepared by the Kurds was a document of 15 pages which described precisely how relations between the Kurdish region and the central government should be. I want to mention some important items of this draft without going into specific details of a very technical text. The first item of the general principles of federalism for Iraq mentions that Iraq should be a federal state with a republican, democratic, parliamentary and multi-party system to be known as the Federal Republic of Iraq. It should consist of two regions; the first, the Arab region, to include the middle and southern parts of Iraq, along with most sections of the provinces of Mosul in the north. The second, the Iraqi Kurdistan region, to include the provinces of Irbil, Suleymania and Kirkuk within the administrative boundaries in place prior to 1968, as well as the province of Duhok and the districts of Akra, Sinjar and Sheikhan and the sub-district of Zimar in the province of

²⁴⁹ **Birayati**, "Walamek Bo Kurdistan Nwe", September 3, 2001

²⁵⁰ **Birayati** September 8, 2002

²⁵¹ **Birayati** september 3, 2002

Ninevah, the districts of Khanagin and Mandali in the province of Diyala, and the district of Badra in the province of Al-Wasit. The geographical boundaries of the region should be delineated in the federal constitution.²⁵²

The draft constitution also states that each region of the federal Republic will have a regional president, council of ministers and regional prime minister, its own legislative authority and regional judiciary. Article 14 declares that on the occasion of the election of the president of the federal Republic of Iraq from one of the regions, then, the prime minister shall be selected automatically from the other region. For instance, if the president of the Federal Republic is a Kurd, the prime minister will automatically be an Arab. Another important article is the fifth one which states that the city of Kirkuk shall be the capital of the Kurdistan region.²⁵³ Article 75 is also important as it declares that the structure of the entity and the political system of the Federal Republic of Iraq can not be changed without the consent of the Kurdistan Regional Assembly. Action contrary to this shall afford the people of the Kurdistan Region the right of self-determination. In other words, if there is a conflict between the region and the central government, the Kurds have the right to proclaim their independence.²⁵⁴ All these points were accepted by both Barzani and Talabani.

After the adoption of this federalism bill in the national Assembly of Iraqi Kurdistan in its session on 7 October 2002, more than 400 delegates of Iraqi opposition met at the London conference from 14-17 December 2002. This conference in fact, supported what the Kurds were seeking. For instance, the conference condemned “all the racial injustice, oppression and ethnic cleansing which the Iraqi regime has carried out premeditatively on the people of Iraqi Kurdistan, particularly genocide and Anfal operations which..... moved the conscience of people all over the world”.²⁵⁵ Moreover, it condemned the changing of

²⁵² Michael M. Gunter, “Kurdish Future in a Post-Saddam Iraq”, **Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs**,(Vol.23, No.1, April 2003), p.12

²⁵³ **Ibid**

²⁵⁴ Chris Kutschera, “Iraqi Kurds Agree to Agree....for Now”, **The Middle East**, December 2002, p.27

²⁵⁵ Michael M. Gunter, “Kurdish Future...”, **op.cit**,p.17

the Kurdish national character of Kirkuk, Makhmur, Khanagin, Sinjar, Shekhan, Zimar and Mandali and so on. The conference also debated the experiences of federal system and concluded that such a system will be an appropriate system of government for Iraq and by this system the Kurdish problem will be solved.²⁵⁶ The conference also evaluated the Kurdish experience of freedom, democracy and reconstruction very positively and argued that Iraqis can benefit from this experience as a good example in the future for the anticipated democratic transformation in Iraq.

If we look at the role of the United States we see that it supported the Kurdish position about regime change leading to a new democratic Iraq which would even be a model for the rest of the Middle East. However, by February 2003, the US tried to change its stand in order to win the support of its allies in the region such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the various Gulf States. The American officials started to discuss that after Saddam Hussein an American general would rule Iraq for as much as two years. Under this scenario, this US general would not change the Iraqi regime's system and even call upon the pre-existing Iraqis such as Baathists.²⁵⁷

Both Iraqi opposition and Kurds reacted immediately and condemned such a plan. Hoshyar Zebari, an important KDP official, anticipated that "there is going to be a backlash". Kanan Makiya, a prominent Iraqi dissident argued that "it is a plan designed to humiliate the Kurdish people of Iraq and their experiment of self-rule".²⁵⁸ In addition to this plan, the United States also agreed to let Turkish military forces enter Iraqi Kurdistan to help establish order and warned the Kurds not to oppose these Turkish forces. This proposal was also condemned strongly by the KDP. Hoshyar Zebari declared that "we oppose any Turkish unilateral military intervention, whatever the pretext."²⁵⁹ The Kurds thought that if the Turks intervened

²⁵⁶ **Ibid**, p.18

²⁵⁷ Karl Vick, "Exile Group Leaders Fault US Plan for Postwar Iraq", **Washington Post**, February 12, 2003

²⁵⁸ Kanan Makiya, "Our Hopes Betrayed: How a US Blueprint for Post – Saddam Government Quashed the Hopes of Democratic Iraqis", **Observer**, February 16, 2003

²⁵⁹ Gareth Smyth, "Presence of Turkish Troops Unsettles Iraqi Kurds", **Financial Times**, February 13, 2003

it would prompt intervention from Iran as reports indicated that some elements of Badr force have already entered Iraqi Kurdistan from Iran.

Turkey's last minute decision on 1 March 2003, not to allow the passage of US troops through its territory, however, brought about a golden chance for the Kurds to play a unique and important role as an ally of US during the war against Saddam. Because of Turkey's rejection to help the US, the coalition forces had to launch the war without troops in northern part of Iraq. This put the burden of the ground fighting on the Kurdish *peshmargas*. So, in most cases, these *peshmargas* played the major role in the fighting while the US forces helped them by air support and intelligence.²⁶⁰ The Kurds also left their habitual mode of fighting in the mountains and moved into the plain and captured the two major northern cities of Mosul and Kirkuk.

It was the first time that the Kurds fought alongside a non-Muslim power and for a purpose beyond their autonomy. Moreover, they helped and contributed openly not in secret. Without this contribution, the US could not have opened a northern front simultaneously with the coalition's southern front. Another important point is that the Kurdish performance during the war was a Kurdish achievement vis-a-vis Turkey. The Kurdish loyalty to Washington was magnified by Turkey's policy, when it left the United States in last minute by rejecting to participate in the attack on Iraq. The US policy towards the Iraqi Kurds has always been influenced by consideration for Turkish sensitivities. After all these events, however, it was unlikely that US would forsake the Kurds to satisfy Turkey.²⁶¹ That is why, we saw that the Kurds were more powerful than the Turkish government in convincing the US administration not to press its request for sending Turkish troops to Iraq although the Turkish parliament had accepted the American invitation on 7 November 2003.

When the Saddam's regime was toppled down, the Kurds moved to Baghdad to establish a presence there after more than a decade of a *de facto* sovereignty. Their return was the result of their belief that any future association with

²⁶⁰ Ofra Bengio, "Iraqi Kurds: Hour of Power?", *Middle East Quarterly* (Vol.X, no.3, Summer 2003), p. 45

²⁶¹ *Ibid*, p.46

the rest of Iraq should be a voluntary arrangement and the product of a pact that was open for renegotiation instead of imposition and subjugation.²⁶² The Kurds demanded a federal system based on ethnicity not a provincial federalism in Iraq . As the Kurds did not want a centralized Iraqi state and fear the hegemony of the Shiite majority they wanted an appointed committee to draft the new Iraqi constitution. This was the major issue dividing the Shiite and Kurdish members of the Iraqi Governing Council. Shiis believed that most of the Kurdish leadership saw the constitution as an exit document from the state of Iraq.²⁶³ Another point is related to the position of Kirkuk. The Kurds insisted on the Kurdish identity of Kirkuk and argued that the effects of Arabization and deportations that took place in some parts of Kurdistan regions, particularly in Kirkuk must be redressed. Kurds should return to their previous homes in those areas and the Arab citizens who were brought by the authorities into those areas at any time since 1957 should return to their original homes.

In spite of Shii opposition to these demands, when the new constitution was drafted, all Kurdish demands were mentioned and accepted and signed by Kurds as well as Shiis.²⁶⁴ The Shiis hope that when the Iraqi election was done the new elected body in which the Shiis will be the majority, they will refuse the Kurdish demands and change some articles of the interim constitution.²⁶⁵ That is why they insisted on elections as soon as possible. They asked for elections to be held in June, 2004, but because of terrorism and violence, it was postponed to 30 January 2005.

In the elections, the Kurds united and all of them voted on the same list, the Kurdish list. The results showed that the Kurdish list secured a quarter of the votes. This placed them behind the Shia United Iraqi Alliance list, but ahead of any other

²⁶² Khaled Salih, "Kurdish Reality in an Emerging Iraq", **Middle East Policy** (Vol. XI, No.1, Spring 2004), p. 125

²⁶³ M. Hakan Yavuz, "Provincial Not Ethnic Federalism in Iraq", **Middle East Policy** (Vol.XI, No.1, Spring 2004), pp.128-29

²⁶⁴ "Law of Administration For the State of Iraq-For the Transitional Period", <http://www.kerkuk-kurdistan.com/nuceyek.asp?ser=4&cep=1&nnimre=3489>, March 8, 2004

²⁶⁵ M. Hakan Yavuz, "Provincial...", **op.cit**, p.130

list, including that of interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi.²⁶⁶ The Kurds won 77 seats in the future parliament and this showed that the Kurds would play a major role in the drafting of the country's new constitution. Although there are some different views between the Kurds and Shiis but I think it is normal as this is the time of bargaining. I don't think that Shiis can impose their views on Kurds, because the Kurds managed to enshrine most of their demands in the Transitional Administrative Law of March 2004. One of the Kurdish demands, for example, is known as "the Kurdish veto", which allows two-thirds of the population of any three governorates to block the progression of the permanent constitution to be drafted following this election.

Another issue is the status of the city of Kirkuk. The Shia and Sunni Arab parties have continued to oppose the attempts of the Kurds to include Kirkuk within their region's boundary. They think that control of the oil city will give the Kurds a big power to secede from Iraq.²⁶⁷ This opposition is particularly strong as a considerable proportion of the Arab population settled in Kirkuk during Saddam's Arabization policy are Shiis, in addition to other national minority – the Turkmen – who are also predominantly Shiis. But the Kurds insist that as it is mentioned in the article 58 of the interim constitution of March 2004, the Kurds who were deported by the previous regime's practices must return to their homes and those who were brought by that regime must return and leave the Kirkuk and after a fair census, the will of the people of those territories must be taken into consideration.

5.2. – Turkey and Kurdistan – Iraq Since the Occupation of Iraq

As we mentioned before, the globalization of terrorism at September 11 in New York and Washington, US brought the globalization of war on terrorism. This war started in Afghanistan against Osama Bin Laden and his al-Qaida organization with its multi-national ties in the world. After that George W. Bush, American president started the discussion on Axis of Evil which meant the three dictatorships, Iran, Iraq and North Korea, the US administration frankly showed Iraq as a second

²⁶⁶ **Turkish Daily News**, February 15, 2005

²⁶⁷ "Kurdish Aims For a Post-Election Iraq", <http://home.cogeco.ca/~kurdistan6/11-2-05-kurdish-aim-post-elections.htm>, February 10, 2005

target. As we know Turkey cooperated with US and coalition forces in the war in Afghanistan and İncirlik turned into an international logistics center for the United States, as well as other NATO allies of Turkey, participating in this war. This time, however, the situation was different and Turkey was faced with a crucial problem which was its stance vis-à-vis with its neighbour Iraq in the event of a US military operation against that country.²⁶⁸ The support of Turkey was really crucial this time unlike during the second Gulf War, in which the US could hit Iraq both from the south and the north, this time operations, particularly on the ground had to be conducted primarily from the north which meant Turkey. So US liked very much to have Turkey's help.

Although some members of the Turkish government such as Turkey's ambassador to Washington Faruk Logoğlu and Defense Minister Sabahattin Çakmakoğlu declared that Turkey may help the US if it came up with solid evidence that Iraq had links with the al-Qaeda network, but generally speaking, Turkey took the position that it was opposed to widening the war on terrorism to Iraq. When the US secretary of State Colin Powell visited Turkey in November 2001, Turkish president Ahmet Sezer discussed Turkey's concern with him in this issue.²⁶⁹ It seems that Turkish Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit's visit to the US in early 2002 was also to convince G.W. Bush not to attack Iraq.²⁷⁰

Turkey had some reasons so as not to join in a hostile act against Iraq. For instance, such a military operation might affect Turkey's economy as it did before or it would hurt Turkey's relations with its neighbours and the Arab world and the European countries or considerations about Saddam's arsenal of chemical and biological weapons. The most important reason, however, was that Turkey's officials thought that such an operation would likely result in partitioning of Iraq and gives rise to the establishment of an autonomous or semi-independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq. Concerns over the possibility that an independent Kurdistan might

²⁶⁸ Ferruh Demirmen, "Turkey Should Stay Out of Iraq", **Turkish Daily News**, December 7, 2001

²⁶⁹ **Ibid**

²⁷⁰ Hadi Elis, "The Kurds' Axis of Evil, US and War on Terrorism", <http://mywebpage.netscape.com/kurdistanobserver/24-2-02-opinion-hadi-axis-of-evil.h...>

emerge from the ruins of a post – Saddam Iraq formed the basis of Turkish opposition to American military action. As early as October 2001, in responding to a question on the possibility of US action against Iraq, the then Prime Minister, Bülent Ecevit argued that “Turkey can not accept this. This operation may lead to Turkey’s dismemberment. It also will disrupt all the balances in the Middle East... We do not want any intervention against Iraq whatsoever. As I have stated, it will create many dangers.”²⁷¹ At a 17 January 2002 press conference, following his meeting with Bush, Ecevit said a military operation against Iraq “could be catastrophic for Turkey, even if Turkey did not participate in it”.²⁷²

Such warnings continued right up to the eve of the US invasion of Iraq in March 2003. Indeed, Turkey’s unease over US thinking outlived the change of government in Ankara heralded by Justice and Development Party’s (AKP) November 2002 electoral victory.²⁷³ This official opposition, in fact, reflected Turkish public opinion as well, which was overwhelmingly opposed to an attack on Iraq with or without Turkish participation. Former US ambassador to Turkey Mark Parris claimed that he had “never met a Turk who likes this idea.”²⁷⁴

Turkey’s concerns over regional destabilisation and the emergence of a Kurdish state from a dismembered Iraq led it to identify its so-called ‘red lines’, delineating potential developments that Turkey would deem unacceptable and which could even constitute a *casus belli*²⁷⁵. Chief among these ‘red lines’ was the establishment of a separate administration by ethnic minorities in Iraq, which would be a cause for intervention. Another point was Turkey’s profound opposition to the incorporation of the oil-bearing regions of Kirkuk and Mosul in any future Kurdish self-governing region in Iraq. Turkey’s other objectives were preservation of the

²⁷¹ Cengiz Çandar, “Regime Change in Iraq, Repercussions for Turkey”, July 2002 [www.patrides.com/ July02/enregime](http://www.patrides.com/July02/enregime)

²⁷² **Ibid**

²⁷³ R. Quinn Mecham, “From the Ashes of Virtue, A Promise of Light: the Transformation of Political Islam in Turkey”, **Third World Quarterly** (Vol.25, No.2, 2004), pp.339-358

²⁷⁴ **Turkish Daily News**, 10 September 2002

²⁷⁵ Ertuğrul Kurku, “Washington Pushed Turks Towards the Red Line” Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP), Note 103, 6 August 2002 <http://www.iraqwatch.org/perspectives/merip-pin103-080602.htm>

rights of Turkomans as equal citizens of Iraq and insisting upon Turkey's continued freedom to intervene militarily in northern Iraq to pursue PKK militants based there²⁷⁶.

Protection of Turkey's 'red lines' required that Turkish forces retain their capacity to act independently. Ankara refused to place any Turkish troops sent into northern Iraq under US command, and in its negotiations with the Americans endeavored to limit the size of the planned US force²⁷⁷. Turkish forces on the Iraqi border were built up and put on an increased state of readiness²⁷⁸. Turkey also insisted that any Kurdish fighters armed by the US should be disarmed as soon as possible. Not surprisingly, the Iraqi Kurds threatened to resist any Turkish invasion of KRG territory²⁷⁹.

As US-Turkish talks on access to bases and territory became increasingly earnest in late 2002, so they became increasingly tangled up in parallel negotiations over the amount of economic compensation Turkey should receive for its cooperation. Turkey was haggling over the US offer of this financial compensation, despite an increased offer from \$4 billion to \$6 billion in aid and up to \$20 billion in grants and loans²⁸⁰. Ankara was also resisting Washington's attempts to ensure that the terms of the deal should fall within the IMF rescue package for Turkey, and was introducing to the agenda items such as duties on Turkish textile exports to the US and the requirement that the aid package have a written guarantee attached in the hope that any future congressional opposition might be overcome²⁸¹.

The negotiations showed that the financial package, the number of US troops to be allowed in, and the terms of Turkish entry into Iraq, had not been settled to Turkey's satisfaction and that the two sides were very far apart. Given that opinion polls suggested that 90 percent of the Turkish population were opposed to a war with

²⁷⁶ **Ibid**

²⁷⁷ "US Prodding Turkey to Be More Active", **Turkish Daily News**, 3 February 2003

²⁷⁸ "Turkey Deploys Troops Near Iraqi Border", **Turkish Daily News**, 17 December 2002; "Kurds Deny US Military Buildup", **Turkish Daily News**, 17 December 2002

²⁷⁹ "Turkey Puts Focus on Future of Kurds", **Financial Times**, 24 February 2003

²⁸⁰ "Legal Haggles Snag Deployment to Turkey", **Washington Post**, 10 February 2003

²⁸¹ "Yakış, Babacan Return from Washington", **Turkish Daily News**, 17 February 2003

Iraq²⁸², and that many AKP deputies shared this opposition, the granting of the requisite parliamentary permission for the entry of US troops onto Turkish soil was clearly not a foregone conclusion. The AKP leadership was aware of this, but was ultimately apprehensive about being held responsible for thwarting Washington's will, so did what it could to secure a positive vote. On 1 March, 2003, however, after more delay, and in the immediate wake of a National Security Council (NSC) meeting, parliament rejected the measure²⁸³.

Denied the opportunity to commit around 30 percent of its assembled force at the outset of the war, unable to approach the Sunni heartland from the north, obliged to deploy its logistical supply chain by sea to the Gulf, and frustrated by Turkey's negotiating tactics and refusal to comply, the US government was incensed. The then Assistant Secretary for Defense, Paul Wolfowitz, whose responsibility it had been to persuade Turkey into supporting Washington's war plans, suggested in an interview with CNN-Turkey in early May 2003 that Turkey apologise for its mistake in refusing the entry of US troops, and blamed Turkey's military leadership for failing to exercise leadership by lobbying more actively for a positive parliamentary vote²⁸⁴. Wolfowitz's comments caused uproar in Turkey²⁸⁵, and provoked Prime Minister Recep Erdoğan to declare that, "Turkey, from the beginning, made no mistakes"²⁸⁶.

Undoubtedly, there were tactical errors on the Turkish side and a degree of mutual misperception. The Turkish government convinced themselves that, for geostrategic reasons, Washington would be unable to act militarily without Ankara's cooperation. Such thinking led Ankara to believe that it was in a strong bargaining position vis-à-vis Washington over the terms of cooperation, and that Turkey had an opportunity to ensure that their own strategic, political, and economic interests would

²⁸² Jon Gorvett, "A Hugely Unpopular War", **The Middle East**, No.328, November 2002

²⁸³ Ertan Efeğil, "Why Did the Turkish Parliament Reject the Memorandum of March 1?", **Insight Turkey** (Vol.6, No.1, January-March 2004), pp.105-112

²⁸⁴ <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2003/tr20030506-depsecdefo156.html>

²⁸⁵ "Wolfowitz Remarks Draw Ire in Turkey", **Turkish Daily News**, 8 May 2003

²⁸⁶ Nicole Pope, "Wolfowitz's Advice", **The Middle East**, No.700, 16 May 2003, pp.23-24

be attended to²⁸⁷. Turkey's regional sensitivities and interests, which Turks naturally regarded as paramount, were in contradiction to Washington's more global considerations and its absolute determination to act against Baghdad.

On the other hand, it could be argued that Washington's determination to take action post-11 September, unilaterally if necessary, explains the US failure to appreciate its ally's differing interests and perspective and to make a more effective attempt to reach an understanding. Washington appeared to be in denial about the depth of Ankara's opposition right across to political spectrum and overwhelmingly shared by the public²⁸⁸. The US did not take sufficient note of the fact that Turkish General Staff was not enthusiastic about US plans and was preparing a dramatic intervention of its own in northern Iraq²⁸⁹. Americans did not appreciate the seriousness of Turkey's concern about the Kurdish issue and the extent to which their own readiness to arm, train and operate with the Iraqi Kurdish *peshmarga* was seen as threatening by Turkey. The US failed to assess the nature of the new AKP government and did not take sufficient account of the domestic political difficulties it was experiencing in its endeavours to cooperate with the US²⁹⁰.

The obvious thing is that, as a result of the no-vote, Turkey's influence both in Washington and northern Iraq has been weakened, and Turkish foreign policy is still struggling to adapt to this new predicament. This became clear when, an undisclosed number of Turkish troops did cross the border in March 2003 to join those already in place. Iraqi Kurds with whom US special forces were now embedded, threatened to resist them. US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld announced that "we have advised the Turkish government and the Turkish armed

²⁸⁷ Mark R. Parris, "Starting Over: US-Turkish Relations in the Post-Iraq Era", Turkish Policy Quarterly (Vol.3, No.1, Spring 2003), p.7
<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID:1610>

²⁸⁸ Barak A. Salmoni, "Strategic Partners or Estranged Allies: Turkey, the United States, and Operation Iraqi Freedom", Strategic Insights (Vol.2, No.7, July 2003)
<http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/July03/middleEast.asp>

²⁸⁹ Ertan Efeğil, "Why Did...", *op.cit.*, p.108

²⁹⁰ *Ibid*

forces that it would be notably unhelpful if they went into the north in large numbers.”²⁹¹

After the occupation of Iraq, Turkey’s rhetorical commitment to its red lines which Kirkuk was one of them remained intact. On the other hand, in the war to remove Saddam, Kurdish *peshmargas* cooperated closely with US forces in the north, engaging with Iraqi forces and those of the extreme Islamic group al-Ansar alongside US troops, liberating Mosul and Kirkuk, handing nominal control of these areas over to American forces, and ensuring that the areas under their control were secured²⁹². The reference to Kirkuk as a Kurdish city by Washington’s interim governor in Iraq, General Jay Garner²⁹³, the selection of a Kurd-dominated interim authority in Kirkuk²⁹⁴, and Turkomans allegations that the US favoured the Kurds²⁹⁵, made Washington’s new, heightened regard for the Kurds all too clear to Turkey.

This US pro-Kurdish policy was also felt clearly on 4 July 2003, when the US Special Forces in Sulaymaniyah captured 11 Turkish Special Forces soldiers, along with 19 members of the Iraq Turkomans Front. The Americans argued that those soldiers were planning to kill the newly appointed governor of Kirkuk. An American official said that they had substantial intelligence that the Turks were in activity to assassinate the local leadership. It showed clearly the depth of crisis so as the Turkish chief of staff General Hilmi Özkök stated that this event “had unfortunately led to the biggest crisis of confidence ever between the US and Turkish armed forces.”²⁹⁶

According to Professor Robert Olson, an expert of the Middle East issues, the expulsion of the Turkish Special Forces from Sulaymaniyah had the following results:

²⁹¹ <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/2003/t03212003-t0321sd1.html>

²⁹² Yossef Bodansk, **The Secret History of the Iraq War** (New York: Reyan Books, 2004)

²⁹³ “Turkey Eyes the Middle East: Strategic Realignment”, Strategic Comments (Vol.10, No.6, July 2004) <http://www.iiss.org/stratcomments.php?volume=10&issue=6>

²⁹⁴ “Local Council Elected in Kirkuk, Draws Protests”, **Turkish Daily News**, 26 May 2003

²⁹⁵ “Iraqi Turkmen Front Says US Favours Kurds”, **Turkish Daily News**, 5 June 2003

²⁹⁶ Nicholas Birch, “Detention Strains Already Tense US-Turkish Relations”, **Christian Science Monitor**, July 15, 2003; **The New York Times International**, July 7, 2003

“(1) it reduced Turkey’s presence in Sulaymaniyah and Kirkuk and other towns in northern Iraq and restricted Turkish armed forces to the area that they occupied inside Iraq along the international border between Turkey and Iraq; (2) it reduced further the strategic and tactical cooperation between Turkey and the United States in Kurdistan-Iraq and in Arab Iraq; (3) it reduced Turkey’s presence to unofficial representations, trade delegations, and its military and peacekeeping forces in Kurdistan-Iraq; by early 2004, both the KDP and PUK were demanding that the peace-keeping forces be removed; and (4) Ankara perceived that Washington was not too concerned about the effect of Iraqi Kurdish nationalism on Kurdish nationalist movements in Turkey.”²⁹⁷

The US invitation to Turkey to despatch Turkish troops to Iraq on 7 November 2003 helped relax the tension in Turkey. The US had hoped that Turkish contributions to forces in Iraq would promote stability in the country, but the Iraqis’ rejection indicated that the opposite would most likely have been the case. All Iraqis rejected such a deployment, particularly the Kurds²⁹⁸. The Turkish General Staff proposed that the 10,000 troops it envisaged contributing to peacekeeping in Iraq should remain within a 150 kilometre range of the Iraq-Turkish border for “logistical reasons”; this would have made their presence necessary on large parts of Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) territory and many Turkomans-populated areas²⁹⁹. This prompted the Kurds to threaten armed resistance and the Americans to propose alternative locations for Turkish peacekeeping duties and then to abandon this idea.

The KDP and PUK used these events to enjoy *de facto* control of areas populated by Kurds beyond the KRG zone where they lay claim, such as Tamim province, which contains the Kirkuk city and around Mosul.³⁰⁰ Kirkuk is considered by the Kurds as their future capital and has been the primary focus of their call for an enlarged Kurdish self-governing region. The PUK *peshmarga* liberated Kirkuk in spite of a prior agreement with the Americans and then they handed it over to

²⁹⁷ Robert Olson, “Turkey and Kurdistan-Iraq, 2003”, **Middle East Policy** (Vol.XI, No.1, Spring 2004), pp.117-118

²⁹⁸ Ibrahim Al-Marashi, “A New Chapter in Iraqi-Turkish Relations? Examining Iraqi and Arab Reactions to the Turkish Deployment to Iraq”, **Insight Turkey** (Vol.6, No.1, January-March 2004), pp.119-128

²⁹⁹ “Military Outlines Possible Location for Iraq Troops”, **Turkish Daily News**, 27 September 2003

³⁰⁰ “Oil Rich City will be Major Test for Iraq”, **Washington Post**, 14 January 2004

American forces. The US military supervised a power-sharing council in Kirkuk that included representatives from the Turkomans, Arab and Assyrian as well as the Kurdish communities. Kurds, however, extended their control over the city and regional administration gradually, including its education system and police force. The Kurdish parties accepted that they are behind this trend, and pay the salaries of those Kurds who have moved into the city and surrounding area.³⁰¹

Kurdish refugees poured gradually into Kirkuk and the city became overwhelmed with these returning Kurds who had been forced out by Arabisation programmes of the Iraqi government since the 1960s.³⁰² No one knows the exact figure, but it has been said that around 50.000 of 200.000 Arabisation Arabs of Kirkuk had left by November 2004 and been replaced by around 100.000 displaced Kurds.³⁰³ Intimidation of beneficiaries of Arabisation has accompanied this influx, although to a lesser degree than many expected³⁰⁴. There have been claims that some of the returning Kurds are not originally from Kirkuk at all, and at the end of March 2004, the Turkoman and Arab council members suspended their participation in protest, leaving a council of just 15 Kurds and seven Assyrian participants³⁰⁵.

At the center of an oil-rich region, Kirkuk has been home to Arabs, Turkomans and Kurds for a long time. In fact, it is considered by many Turkomans as well Turkey as the main land of the Iraqi Turkomans community. The last census held in Kirkuk in 1957 showed that 40 percent of the population was Turkomans and

³⁰¹ International Crisis Group, "Iraq's Kurds: Toward an Historic Compromise?" Middle East Report, No.26 (Amman/Brussels: 8 April 2004), p.11 http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/middle-east_north-africa/iraq-iran-gulf/26-iraq-kurds-toward-an-historic-compromise.pdf

³⁰² Human Rights Watch, "Reversing Ethnic Cleansing in Northern Iraq", (Augusts 2004 Vo.16, No.4(E) <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2004/iraq0804/>

³⁰³ International Crisis Group, "Iraq: Allaying Turkey's Fears Over Kurdish Ambitions", Middle East Reports, No.35 (Ankara/Amman/Brussels: 26 January 2005), p.3 http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/middle-east_north-africa/iraq-iran-gulf/35-iraq-allaying-turkey-s-fears-over-kurdish-ambitions.pdf

³⁰⁴ Human Rights Watch, "Reversing...", *op.cit.*, p.48; International Crisis Group, "Iraq:Allaying...", *op.cit.*, p.2-3

³⁰⁵ "Turkmen Quit Kirkuk City Council, Say Kurds Taking Over", <http://home.cogeco.ca/~kurdistan2/28-3-04-turkmen-quit-city.council.html>, 28 March 2004

35 percent Kurdish.³⁰⁶ In addition to Arabisation process, the oil industry has been very effective in changing traditional demographic make-up of Kirkuk. It is not surprising that Kurdish attempts to alter Arabisation have brought about demographic disputes and ethnic tensions in the region.

The Shi'ite militants of Muqtada al-Sadr began to fight against the Kurds of Kirkuk in early 2004.³⁰⁷ We know that Shi'ites comprise the majority of Arab population in Iraq, and thus have a big chance in a unitary Iraq that they could dominate. These Shi'ite Arabs have suffered largely at the hands of Kurds in Kirkuk since April 2003, because they are the main beneficiaries of Arabisation process. Many Iraqi Turkomans, perhaps 40 percent of the total,³⁰⁸ are also Shi'ites. Towards the end of 2004, Sunni militants began confronting the Kurds of Mosul. Mosul as a multi-ethnic city on the frontline between Kurdish and Arab Iraq, emerged as a major focus of Sunni opposition to the near elections and to the coalition presence in Iraq, particularly in the wake of the US November attack against Sunni insurgents in Falluja³⁰⁹. As the Iraqi National Guard troops who were ethnically Arab, were not reliable, the US deployed Kurdish *peshmarga* against the insurgents, as Iraqi National Guard but bearing Kurdish flags and wearing Kurdish garb. In this guise, the *peshmarga* have also protected Kurdish communities and operated in villages undergoing de-Arabisation³¹⁰. These incidents of *peshmarga* activity serve to intensify inter-communal tension, help tighten the Kurdish control of the north, and fuel Turkish concerns about the Kurdish-US relationship.

³⁰⁶ Jackie Spinner, "Ethnic Groups Try to Stake Claim on Kirkuk", **Washington Post**, 30 January 2005

³⁰⁷ Nicholas Blanford, "Some 2,000 Sadr Militiamen March Through Kirkuk", <http://home.cogeco.ca/~kurdistan1/8-3-04-sadr-militia-march-kirkuk.htm>, 8 March 2004; Michael Howard, "Insurgents Stir Up Strife in Kirkuk", **Washington Post**, 17 May 2004

³⁰⁸ International Crisis Group, "Iraq: Allaying...", **op.cit.**, p.5

³⁰⁹ "New Insurgency Confronts US Forces", **Guardian**, 12 November 2004; "Insurgents Step Up the Battle for Mosul" **Guardian**, 25 November 2004

³¹⁰ Michael Knights, "Lessons from Mosul", Policywatch, No.950, 27 January 2005, www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2245

In spite of these developments, the programme of de-Arabisation and Kurdification which was promised by Article 58a of the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL), has not been fulfilled as the Kurds might have hoped, for a number of reasons.³¹¹ One of the reasons is that the authorities have been slow to put into place an administrative system to manage the programme. Security problems can be considered as another reason that officials, including Iraqi and foreign NGO staff, have not been able to work effectively. Another reason is that many returning Kurds do not possess adequate documentation to prove their property rights, particularly in urban areas where properties were often rented rather than owned. In addition, little agreement has been arrived at, concerning the resettlement of Arabs affected by any de-Arabisation of northern Iraq. Furthermore, coalition forces have frequently interfered attempts by Kurds to frighten Arab residents into leaving their homes³¹². As a consequence, many Kurdish returnees have uncertain status and are living in temporary places such as disused army barrack, ruined houses and public building of various kinds.

In November 2004, the Iraqi Kurdish leadership began to ask that the local elections in Kirkuk, set to coincide with the national elections, should be postponed on the grounds that the provision of the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) calling for a change of Arabisation had yet to be implemented³¹³. They succeeded in convincing coalition officials and just weeks before the election, they reached to an agreement with the Interim Iraqi Government (IIG) and coalition officials, allowing for around 100.000 displaced Kurdish refugees to vote in the Kirkuk area in the January elections. The deal also maintained that a census in Kirkuk should not be held until Article 58 of the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) providing for a

³¹¹ Human Rights Watch, "Reversing Ethnic" **op.cit**, pp.55-77

³¹² **Ibid**

³¹³ "Iraqi Election Creates Unusual Alliances", <http://home.cogeco.ca/~kurdistan4/30-11-04-election-creators-unusual-alliance.htm>, 30 November 2004

managed de-Arabisation is first implemented, and more speedily³¹⁴. Unsurprisingly, announcement of the deal precipitated an Arab boycott of the elections in Kirkuk³¹⁵.

This deal intensified Turkey's anger as the election approached. This anger was deepened by the independent Iraqi Electoral Commission's refusal to ban participation in the Iraqi elections by two alleged PKK-linked parties³¹⁶. A few days before the election, deputy Turkish General Staff (TGS) chief General İlker Başbuğ warned that the Kurdish influx into Kirkuk and their electoral participation "could make the results of the election questionable trigger an internal war in Iraq" and "threaten the territorial and political integrity of Iraq". He went on that such developments could "pose an important security problem for Turkey"³¹⁷. Both Erdoğan and Abdullah Gül supported what military officials said. Erdoğan warned that "the effects of any misstep in Kirkuk could endanger the future peace in Iraq" and that "the US and other coalition forces... will have to pay for the negative events that could happen in the future". Gül also warned that Turkey should not be expected to remain passive in the event of internal disarray in Iraq as a consequence of developments in Kirkuk³¹⁸. He wrote to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan warning of Turkey's anger at the potential impact of handing the vote to Kurdish refugees in northern Iraq³¹⁹. On the basis of this Kurdish influx into Kirkuk and the Sunni Arab boycott of the elections Turkey has questioned the validity of the January vote.

Turkey was frustrated further by the observation of the ethnically Kurdish IIG Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari that "no country has the right to speak out on

³¹⁴ "Kirkuk Election Deal Tips Power to Kurds, Angers Arabs, Turkmen" <http://home.cogeco.ca/~kurdistan5/15-1-05-kirkuk-ele-deal-tips-kurds.htm>, 15 January 2005; "Talabani: We have Received Assurances for Kirkuk", <http://home.cogeco.ca/~kurdistan5/23-1-05-talabani-says-assurances-on-kirkuk.htm>, 23 January 2005

³¹⁵ "An Arab Party Based in Kirkuk to Boycott Elections", <http://home.cogeco.ca/~kurdistan5/25-1-05-arab-party-kirkuk-boycott-elections.htm>, 25 January 2005

³¹⁶ "PKK-linked Parties to Participate in Iraq Elections", *Turkish Daily News*, 26 January 2005

³¹⁷ Selcan Hacaoğlu, "Turkey Warns Kurds about Kirkuk Control", <http://home.cogeco.ca/~kurdistan5/27-1-05-tyk-warns-kurds-kirkuk.htm>, 27 January 2005

³¹⁸ "Kirkuk Consensus", *Turkish Daily News*, 28 January 2005

³¹⁹ "Turkey Appeals to UN for Kirkuk", *Turkish Daily News*, 25 January 2005

Kirkuk. The people of Iraq will decide on the fate of Kirkuk³²⁰. A few days earlier, US State Department spokesman Richard Boucher issued a statement which affirmed Washington's position that

efforts to remedy the unjust policies of the Saddam government in and around Kirkuk, which included the forced deportation of residents, confiscation of property and the manipulation of administrative boundaries, are internal issues for Iraqis to decide. The Transitional Administrative Law (TAL), which was drafted and agreed to by Iraqis, lays out specific steps to undo Saddam Hussein's terrible legacy. The United States supports the full implementation of the Transitional Administrative Law, including Article 58 related to Kirkuk.³²¹

The Kurds have reiterated their key demands: that the KRG zone be extended and that Kirkuk becomes its capital. Jalal Talabani has described Kirkuk as "the Jerusalem of Kurdistan"³²². KDP leader Massoud Barzani has been even less compromising and more consistent figure. During an October 2004 visit to Syria –a country which, like Turkey, regards the prospect of an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq as an unacceptable red line³²³– Barzani told a press conference that Kirkuk would eventually be incorporated into Iraqi Kurdistan³²⁴. He was careful, however, to point out that Iraqi Kurds sought a federation with Iraq, not complete independence from it, and reminded his Syrian hosts that "Kirkuk is an Iraqi Kurd city. The question of this city is an internal Iraqi affair, neighbouring countries should not interfere"³²⁵. A few days earlier he made similar comments in Turkey³²⁶. There have been frequent and equally uncompromising restatements of this Kurdish position since the elections took place in January 2005.

³²⁰ Yusuf Kanli, "Turkey won't Sit Back Over Kirkuk Spillover", **Turkish Daily News**, 28 January 2005

³²¹ "US Policy on the Status of Kirkuk", <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2005/40916.htm>, 13 January 2005

³²² "Talabani: Kirkuk is Kurds' Jerusalem", **Turkish Daily News**, 31 December 2004

³²³ Kurdish State is a 'Red Line' for Syria, Too", **Turkish Daily News**, 28 December 2004

³²⁴ "Barzani Sees Kirkuk Joining Southern Kurdistan", <http://home.cogeco.ca/~kurdistan4/18-10-04-barzani-kirkuk-will-rejoin-kurdistan.htm>, 18 October 2004

³²⁵ "Iraqi Kurd Leader Warns Neighbours not to Meddle in Kirkuk Issue", <http://home.cogeco.ca/~kurdistan4/17-10-04-barzani-warns-ky.htm>, 17 October 2004

³²⁶ "Massoud Barzani: Kurds Ready to Fight for Kirkuk", <http://home.cogeco.ca/~kurdistan4/13-10-04-barzani-kurds-ready-to-defend-kirkuk.htm>, 13 October 2004

Briefly, we can say that the leadership of the KDP and PUK, participated fully in US initiatives in Iraq since the demise of Saddam regime has failed to reassure Turkey that the Kurds are fully and permanently committed to Iraq's territorial integrity. Turkey observes that repeated US declarations of loyalty to Iraq's integrity have not been backed up by a willingness to harness a gradual Kurdish takeover of northern Iraq. Many in Turkey believe that the fears of Turkey concerning a Kurdish state are progressively being realised.

5.3. Turkey's Allies in the Opposition to Iraqi Kurdish Ambitions

The election of an AKP government instinctively more comfortable with Turkey's Middle Eastern neighbours and character has coincided Turkey's conduct of an active regional diplomacy³²⁷. Prime Minister Erdoğan asserted in January 2005 that Turks "don't have the luxury of remaining insensitive to the problems in our neighbourhood... because of our geographic location, our history, our civilization and our national interests"³²⁸. It might also be that Turkey, sitting on the fault-line between the cooperative, consensus-building, Kantian "security community" of a Europe with which it hopes to integrate, and a Hobbesian Middle East of violence, mistrust, terrorism and zero-sum approaches to disagreements³²⁹, is endeavouring to contribute to a climate in which "engagement and dialogue, rather than confrontation and containment"³³⁰ become the main concern of its own and broader regional diplomacy. Developments in northern Iraq, and indeed, in Iraq as a whole, have been instrumental in pushing Turkey towards this approach as well.

Turkey sought to maintain a dialogue in the run up to the war with Baghdad, and repeatedly sought to ease the tension by cooperating with UN inspectors³³¹. For

³²⁷ Kemal Kirişçi, "Between Europe and the Middle East: The Transformation of Turkish Policy", *Middle East Review of International Affairs* (Vol.8, No.1, March 2004), <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2004/issue1/jv8n1a4.html>; "Turkey Eyes the Middle East", *op.cit*

³²⁸ "PM Says Turkey to Pursue Active Foreign Policy", *Turkish Daily News*, 5 January 2005

³²⁹ Kemal Kirişçi, "Between Europe....", *op.cit*

³³⁰ Soner Cagaptay, "A Turkish Rapprochement with Middle East Rogue States", *Policywatch*, No.825, January 9, 2004, Washington Institute of Near East Policy, p.2, www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=1703

³³¹ "Ecevit: Saddam Should Allow Arms Inspectors to Return", *Turkish Daily News*, 23 January 2002

its part, Iraq encouraged Turkey to resist US demands. The AKP government which came to power in November 2002 preserved with this open-door policy towards Iraq; even as war was clearly imminent, the Turkish trade minister led a large delegation of businessmen to Baghdad in January 2003, partly to drum up trade, but also to deliver yet another message to Saddam Hussein asking him to cooperate with the UN³³².

When the US war against Iraq loomed, the AKP government announced it would explore the scope for a regional initiative aimed at resolving the issue of Iraqi arms programmes without recourse to war³³³. To this end, Foreign Minister Gül started a tour of Middle East capitals in January 2003, and secured agreement for a summit to be held in Istanbul later that month, attended by Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Iran – an opportunity for Turkey to explain its perspective on the Kurdish issue. In fact, each of these states shares Turkey’s anger about Kurdish aspirations, Iraq’s territorial integrity and the prospect of regional turmoil. Nevertheless, the outcome was an inconclusive discussion and a weak final communique³³⁴. Subsequent gatherings have been held in Riyadh, Tehran, Damascus, Kuwait and Cairo. This loose regional alliance was incorporated into a UN Advisory Group by the UN Secretary-General³³⁵. With the advent of the Interim Iraqi Government, Iraq was brought into this round of meetings.

Turkey has been particularly keen to align its position on Iraq with those of Iran and Syria. Turkey’s cultivation of these two neighbours has intensified in the wake of Saddam’s removal and as Iraqi Kurds tightened their control on northern Iraq. Bilateral declarations in support of Iraq’s territorial integrity and against the Kurdish preference for an ethnically based Iraqi federation, border cooperation, agreements on the training of Iraqi security forces and government officials, and

³³² “Ecevit Warns Saddam: Do Not Set the Region on Fire”, **Turkish Daily News**, 11 February 2002

³³³ “Turkey to Drum Up Arab Support for War”, **Financial Times**, 19 December 2002

³³⁴ **Turkish Daily News**, 25 January 2003

³³⁵ <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/MFA/PressInformation/Speeches/Speeches2004/StatementByGul-14February2004.htm>

cooperation on dealing with Kurdish activities, are some of the fruits of this diplomacy³³⁶.

Since March 2003, Turkey and Syria, have also warmed markedly, embracing frequent official visits that have resulted in economic and cultural as well as political and diplomatic initiatives. President Bashar al-Assad's visit to Turkey in January 2004, during which he proclaimed that "we have moved together from an atmosphere of distrust to trust"³³⁷, was the first visit by a Syrian head of state. Turkey has appreciated Syrian cooperation in tracking down some of the perpetrators of the November 2003 Istanbul bombings and their associates.

During 2003, largely as a consequence of Turkey's overtures, Turkish-Iranian relations improved considerably as well. Security issues relating to northern Iraq and the PKK provided much of the impetus and content for these meetings, although economic relations and the wider problems of Iraq were also discussed. Contacts have intensified, and during Foreign Minister Gül's visit to Tehran in January 2004, the Iranian President Muhammad Khatami declared that "Turkey's security is our own security" and that "Turkey's enemies, terrorist groups or others, cannot harm Turkey by using Iranian territory"³³⁸. Prime Minister Erdoğan's visit to Tehran in July 2004 coincided with Iran's designation of the PKK as a proscribed terrorist organization. There have subsequently been joint Turkish-Iranian security force operations against PKK activists on Iranian territory³³⁹.

Washington displeasure with the visit, and with Ankara's regional friendships in general, compelled Erdoğan to deny that his trip to Iran should be seen as threatening to the US in any way³⁴⁰. Turkey's regional diplomacy prompted American suspicions that the 1 March vote indicated a deeper realignment of Turkish foreign policy³⁴¹. Washington's focus on what it sees as the uncooperative behaviour

³³⁶ Soner Cagaptay, "A Turkish....", **op.cit.**, p.2

³³⁷ **Ibid**

³³⁸ "Iran Reassures Turkey on Border Security", **Turkish Daily News**, 12 January 2004

³³⁹ "Iran to Declare Kongra-Gel as Terrorist", **Turkish Daily News**, 21 July 2004

³⁴⁰ "Erdogan Says Iran Visit not Aimed Against Third Countries", **Turkish Daily News**, 31 July 2004

³⁴¹ "Turkey Denies Shift in Foreign Policy", **Financial Times**, 8 April 2003 See also.....

of Turkey's neighbours, Iran and Syria, not least their presumed interference in Iraq, has intensified with the advent of President Bush's second term³⁴². The harsh warnings delivered to Iran and Syria by Bush in his February 2005 State of the Union address explicitly illustrated that a shared Turkish-US understanding of the region's affairs does not exist.

Turkey's efforts to re-engage more constructively with its Middle Eastern neighbours have been accompanied a more proactive approach to its relations with wider Islamic world. This too has been partly prompted by Turkey's search to further its liking in Iraq, but it also reflects the deeper instincts of the AKP. One illustration of this was Foreign Minister Gül's call at the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) summit in Malaysia in October 2003 for a peacekeeping force for Iraq drawn from the Islamic world³⁴³. This initiative might have been motivated in parts as an attempt to deflect criticism of Turkey's offer to send 10.000 troops into Iraq, an offer subsequently withdrawn in the face of opposition Iraq's Governing Council and particularly its Kurdish members. In fact, Turkey's proposal received a cool response at the summit, with the Jordanian delegation arguing that parochial agendas and interests should disqualify Iraq's neighbours from participating in any peacekeeping force in Iraq³⁴⁴. Most delegations took the view that an Islamic peacekeeping force for Iraq could only be put together under UN auspices³⁴⁵. Despite this setback, Turkey made a positive overall impression on the OIC delegates; its reward, a year later, was the election at the OIC summit in Istanbul of the first Turkish secretary general of the organisation.

The apparent cooling of the AKP government's relationship with Israel has further added to the sense that Ankara's regional alignments are undergoing a transformation. After a critical Turkish stance on Israeli policies towards the Palestinians, in May 2003, the Turkish ambassador to Israel was recalled in protest at

³⁴² "Syria and Iran Aiding Militants, Iraq Says", **Guardian**, 20 February 2004

³⁴³ "Turkey Calls for Islamic Peacekeeping Force for Iraq", **Turkish Daily News**, 14 October 2004

³⁴⁴ "Turkey Faces Tough Task in Getting OIC Support for Iraq Mission!", **Turkish Daily News**, 13 October 2004

³⁴⁵ "Malaysia Urges Muslim Peacekeeping Force in Iraq Under UN", **Washington Post**, 10 October 2003

Israeli behaviour in Gaza. In May 2004, Erdoğan described Israeli's hardline behaviour in Gaza as state terrorism. More relevant to the Kurdish issue was the claim that Israeli military and intelligence officers had been training Kurdish *peshmarga* both as a precaution against the emergence of an Iranian-backed Shi'ite regime in Iraq, and as a means to weaken and monitor both Iran and Syria³⁴⁶. Israel had offered humanitarian and military support to the Kurds in the 1960s and 1970s in their fight against Iraqi regime, and there has long been sympathy in Israel for the Kurdish cause.

The fact that Turkey is the most determined opponent of Kurdish aspirations to self-determination, explicit Israeli support for the Kurds would inevitably upset the Jewish state's alliance with Turkey. The claim of Israel's support to the Kurds was met with a predictable official and media furore in Turkey, and Gül rather unconvincingly accepted Israeli and Kurdish denials³⁴⁷. Whatever the truth of the matter, it is conceivable that Israel would welcome the establishment of a Kurdish state as a means to weaken its adversaries and as a potential regional ally. Although both Turkey and Israel profess to value their relationship, there can be little doubt that the Kurdish issue contains the potential to further damage a relationship that has clearly deteriorated since the AKP election victory in November 2002.

³⁴⁶ Seymour Hersh, "Plan B", New Yorker, 28 June 2004, <http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/articles/040628fa-fact>

³⁴⁷ Turkish Daily News, 23 June 2004

CHAPTER 6

PKK IN NORTHERN IRAQ AND IRAQI TURKOMANS

This chapter involves with other two factors in Turkish foreign policy towards Iraq. The first one is the existence of PKK in northern part of this country. Another one is the Turkomans of Iraq. I will try to examine the significance of both factors precisely and in details.

6.1. PKK in Northern Iraq

Another factor in Turkish foreign policy towards Iraq is the existence of PKK in northern part of this country. Therefore in this part I will try to examine the Kurdish question in Turkey, the emergence of PKK and its relations with Iraqi Kurds and Turkish policy towards it.

6.1.1. The Emergence of PKK

We can say that the PKK grew out of two sources: the Kurdish nationalist movement and the leftist, Marxist movement that can be traced back to 1960s.³⁴⁸ It was officially formed on 27th November 1978 near Diyarbakır. Öcalan was appointed General Secretary at the head of a central committee. In fact the PKK began its first propaganda activities in 1974. Its programme was simple and radical. Its aim was independence by using violence and terror as an instrument against both Turkish state and those Kurds who collaborate with it.

The PKK leader himself was a cruel and pitiless person who executed every one who could be a rival to him. For instance, in 1977 there was a split in the group. The organization based in Gaziantep quarrelled with Öcalan who ordered the execution of its leaders. Another example is that during the first congress of the PKK held at the Syria-Lebanon frontier. One of the delegates put Öcalan in a difficult position. Öcalan executed him shortly afterwards and re-emerged as the uncontested

³⁴⁸ Nihat A. Özcan, **PKK (Kürdistan İşçi Partisi), Tarihi, İdeolojisi ve Yöntemi** (Ankara: ASAM Yayınları, 1999), p.21

leader at the second congress in 1982.³⁴⁹ Although the PKK dismisses these charges but it is a fact that if anyone crossed Öcalan, either with eyes or attitude, he was accused of creating conflict. The sinner was then declared a contra-guerilla, and his punishment was death.

In 1994, Selim Çurukkaya, a former PKK leader in Europe, published a book entitled *Verses of Apo*. In his book, Çurukkaya called Öcalan a “murderer” and “dictator” and claimed that Apo was the biggest betrayer of the already betrayed Kurdish revolution.³⁵⁰ Simultaneously, the PKK reported that Dr. Baran (Muslum Durgun), its long time commander had committed suicide. A lot of people believed that he was executed on orders of Abdullah Öcalan. Huseyin Yıldırım, a Kurdish lawyer who had served as a spokesman for the PKK in Europe for several years, also broke with Öcalan in the late 1980s over the party’s policy of killing civilians. He helped to establish the *Vejin* (resurrection) movement. It was said that many PKK members have been executed over the years for various reasons by the PKK itself.

The PKK used violence and terror against the other Kurdish parties inside and outside Turkey as well. In 1970s there were many other Kurdish parties such as: the KDPT (Kurdistan Democratic Party of Turkey) which was created in 1965, in the image of the KDP-Iraq, by Faik Bucak, a lawyer and the parliamentary deputy for Urfa; the KUK (Nation Liberation of Kurdistan which was created in 1977; SPTK (Socialist Party of Turkish Kurdistan) led by Kemal Burkay, the party’s secretary general, created in 1971; Rizgari (Liberation), a leftist and Marxist and pro-independence, created in 1976; Ala Rizgari (the Flag of Liberty), a split from the former created in 1979; Kawa, a maoist and anti-Soviet group, created in 1976; and Tekoşin (the Struggle).³⁵¹ The PKK termed the leftist groups as ‘social chauvinists’ and called the other Kurdish groups such as KUK ‘primitive nationalists’ or ‘national reformists’ and attacked them and used the violence and terror against them. Such

³⁴⁹ Gerard Chaliand, **The Kurdish Tragedy**, trans. By Philip Black (London and New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd, 1994), p.48.

³⁵⁰ M. Selim Çürükaya, **Apo’nun Ayetleri** (İstanbul: Doz Yayınları, 2005).

³⁵¹ Michael M. Gunter, **The Kurds in Turkey: A Political Dilemma** (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990), p.64-66

violence continued almost 20 years later when the PKK suddenly attacked the KDP in northern Iraq in August 1995.

During the first years, the PKK declared its opponents as: fascists, social-chauvinists, agents and feudal landlords. The Turkish security forces were not included as being a target, so that the PKK would have an easier time establishing itself by not directly antagonizing the state. It was only on August 15, 1984 when a PKK attack on the towns of Eruh and Shemdinli killed 24 soldiers and nine civilians.³⁵² As I mentioned before, the PKK chose women and children as target as well. For instance the PKK launched a series of actions against the civil Kurds with the pretext of being collaborators as early as 1978. In order to focus some attention on the creation of the PKK in this year, a plan to assassinate a landowner in the Siverek area was devised. These acts of assassination and choosing civilians as target continued. For instance on June 1987, during a PKK attack on the village of Pınarcık, in the province of Mardin which had been accused of collaboration, 30 people including 16 children and 8 women were killed.³⁵³

The violence of these actions alienated the sympathy of the population from the PKK and provoked the opposition of ordinary people as well as other Kurdish political forces. In fact the only reason that some Kurds feel sympathy toward the PKK is the wrong policies of Turkish government and the use of counter-violence by Turkey in the eastern parts of the country.³⁵⁴ On September 1980, the Turkish military staged another coup and seized all executive and legislative power and suppressed political activity and opposition. Political parties were banned and their leaders were arrested. Thousands of Kurds were arrested and 122 death sentences were passed. The 1982 constitution placed a number of restrictions on the use of the Kurdish language.³⁵⁵ The Turkish code was also revised to criminalize expressions of

³⁵² Ümit Özdağ, **Türkiye Kuzey Irak ve PKK** (Ankara: ASAM Yayınları, 1999), p.42

³⁵³ Gerard Chaliand, **op.cit**, p.49

³⁵⁴ Kemal Kirişçi and Gareth M. Winrow, **op.cit**, p.112

³⁵⁵ Michael M. Gunter, "The Kurdish Problem in Turkey", **Middle East Journal** (Vol.42, No.3, Summer 1988), p.399

Kurdish ethnic identity. These, along with the existing ban on the use of the terms 'Kurds' or 'Kurdish', further radicalized the Kurdish sentiments.

Turgut Özal's assumption of power as the new civilian prime minister did not remove the military's influence. General Evren continued to serve as president, and the military remained in full control of internal and foreign security matters.³⁵⁶ Until the end of the 1980s, the government's strategy to end the Kurdish conflict was the use of overwhelming force or 'all stick and no carrot'. It included the appointment of an emergency administration in the region known as the 'Extraordinary Circumstances Regional Governorship'; the forced evacuation and destruction of Kurdish villages; the use of both conventional and counterinsurgency warfare; spoken and unspoken agreements with Iraq and Syria allowing 'hot pursuit' of Kurdish guerrillas in their territory; the clandestine employment of death squads; and the mass arrest, imprisonment and torture of suspected PKK guerrillas and their sympathizers.³⁵⁷

Abdulmelik Fırat, Shaikh Said's grandson says that the reason of enhancing Kurdish national consciousness is due to the government's oppressive policies in the region rather than the propaganda work of PKK.³⁵⁸ The ordinary people had no interest in the PKK's socialist agenda and even in its nationalist one as separation and independence. They supported the PKK because they were oppressed and angry and PKK only channelled that anger and exploited it. The mayor of Nusaybin, a sizable Kurdish town near the Syrian border argued that a lot of people cooperated with the PKK as a result of cruelty of the Turkish special operations teams against the civilian population.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁶ Nader Entessar, **op.cit**, p.97

³⁵⁷ Helsinki Watch, **Destroying Ethnic Identity: The Kurds of Turkey** (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1990); Philip Robins, **Turkey and the Middle East** (London, New York: The Royal Institute of International Affairs/Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1991), pp.30-36

³⁵⁸ Kemal Kirişçi and Gareth M. Winrow, **op.cit**, p.112

³⁵⁹ Nader Entessar, **op.cit**, p.100

6.1.2. The PKK in Northern Iraq Since the Second Gulf War

The settlement of the PKK in northern Iraq goes back to the 1980s. The Iran-Iraq war of 1980-88 weakened the presence of Iraqi government in its northern part. This diminution of Iraqi government in its northern provinces allowed the PKK in 1980s to establish bases there and use the area as its strategic depth while challenging Turkish forces on the other side of the border. There, the PKK made an alliance with the KDP of Massoud Barzani. The PKK was welcomed by the Iraqi Kurds and the KDP signed an accord with the PKK, termed as 'Principles of Solidarity' in 1983.³⁶⁰ The two parties agreed upon a unified commitment against every kind of imperialism, with imperialism of America at first and then against the plans and plots of imperialism in the region. They also emphasized that they should not interfere in their internal affairs and should not commit actions that could damage the other.

They began to cooperate with each other and the KDP gave all its support to the PKK. Lolan camp which was the center of KDP's headquarters and clandestine radio stations was shared with the PKK to become the PKK's largest base. It was in this time that it is said that Barzani and Öcalan met each other in Damascus for the first time. This alliance did not last, however, for a long time, because the KDP realized that the PKK involves in terrorism and violence against women and children and even members of the KDP itself.³⁶¹ On the other hand, Iraq permitted Turkey in 1984 to engage in hot pursuit operations against the Kurds. Turkey carried out many raids into northern Iraq in 1986 and 1987 and killed hundreds of people most of them belonged to the KDP. Turkey's aim was to frighten the Iraqi Kurds who were fighting against the Iraqi regime.³⁶² In spite of all these facts, the PKK continued its propaganda against the KDP and accusing them as primitive nationalists and collaborators with Turkey. As a result, in May 1987, the KDP warned the PKK to abandon its aggressive attitude towards its leadership and friends.

³⁶⁰ Ümit Özdağ, *Türkiye Kuzey Irak ve PKK*, **op.cit**, p.37

³⁶¹ **Ibid**, pp.44-48.

³⁶² **Ibid**, pp.46-7; Henry Barkey, "The Silent Victor: Turkey's Role in the Gulf War", in Efraim Karsh, ed., **The Iran-Iraq War: Impact and Implications** (New York: St Martin's Press, 1989)

Barzani denounced the PKK activities and its terrorist operations within the country and abroad and argued that “The mentality behind such action is against humanity and democracy and is not in line with the national liberation of Kurdistan.”³⁶³ By the end of 1987 their alliance was severed according to their accord of 1983 in which it was declared that if one of the parties interfere the internal affairs of the other and made a mistake in implementing their alliance and ignored a warning from the other, then the alliance could be terminated. One year later, PKK signed a ‘Protocol of Understanding’ with the PUK in Damascus. It called for strengthening Kurdish unity and for cooperation and joint action by Kurdish groups. Talabani warned Turkey not to repeat its military incursions into northern Iraq in search of PKK guerrillas.³⁶⁴ But within a year, Öcalan ended its alliance with PUK as well.

After the Gulf War of 1991, Iraqi Kurds established their authority and for the first time they felt that they were free. The neighbouring countries were unhappy with this situation including Turkey. Although Turkey renewed the mandate of the US-supported Operation Provide Comfort, based in southeastern Turkey and by so doing it was supporting the emergence of an Iraqi Kurdish administration that was against its interests, but abandoning the OPC would simply lead it to regroup elsewhere and thus strip Turkey of any influence over the course of events in northern Iraq. Therefore, Turkey continued to help the Iraqi Kurds and played its new role as part-time protector of the Iraqi Kurdish enclave from Saddam.

Iraqi Kurds, for their part, needed Turkey and were obliged to be in good terms with Turkey. There was a double economic blockade imposed on them by both United Nations and Saddam Hussein. Therefore the Habur border crossing point with Turkey was the only legal entry point for commerce and customs revenues. As a result, Turkey was Kurds’ lifeline to the West and the whole world and they had to take into consideration the interests of Turkey.

The Iraqi Kurds asked the PKK to cease activities against Turkey because by making northern Iraq a base against Turkey, the villages, from where the PKK’s

³⁶³ Michael M. Gunter, “A *de facto*...”, **op.cit**, p.305

³⁶⁴ Ümit Özadğ, “Türkiye...”, **op.cit**, p.50; Michael M. Gunter, The Kurds and..., **op.cit**, p.116

raids were staged, were bombed on the pretext that PKK forces and bases were located there. For instance, in 1991 and 1992 Turkish bombing resulted in a large number of Iraqi Kurdish deaths. Barzani, whose sphere of influence near the Turkish border was under attack by Turkish forces, closed his office in Ankara periodically in a protest over Turkish military attacks on Iraqi Kurds. But, fearing this might alienate the Turks and give his rival Talabani the upper hand, he backed off and reopened the offices. The Iraqi Kurds asked the PKK not to interfere their internal affairs and carry on only peaceful political actions within northern Iraq.³⁶⁵ The Iraqi Kurds also advised the PKK to look for a dialogue with the Turkish government but the PKK rejected all these suggestions and continued its activities.

Abdullah Öcalan accused both Barzani and Talabani of attempting to stab the PKK in the back by cooperating with Turkey and called them minor broker and noted that the two leaders “have signed their own death warrants”³⁶⁶ and that “the first thing we must do is to remove these leeches [because]... they espouse the views of the fascist Turks. These two leaders are now our enemies”. He also claimed that these two leaders have little support among Kurds of Iraq and that he would challenge them both politically and militarily. The PKK founded a new organization called the Kurdistan Liberation Party (PAK) which the PKK argued that it would be able to challenge Barzani and Talabani on their own ground.³⁶⁷

On 24 July 1992, the PKK placed an embargo on trade between Turkey and northern Iraq. This PKK-imposed ban threatened to cut the Iraqi Kurds’ economic lifeline, because local drivers stopped taking supplies to northern Iraq, in fear of the consequences. It resulted to a shortage of foodstuffs and medicine and prices doubled and tripled. The Kurdistan Regional Government declared that the PKK had seized over 300 border villages and had prevented Kurdish farmers from returning to their homes. The KRG also charged that “the PKK is collaborating with Iraqi officials”³⁶⁸

³⁶⁵ **Hürriyet**, 11 December 1992

³⁶⁶ Michael M. Gunter, **The Kurds and the Future of Turkey** (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), p.118; **Milliyet**, March 26, 1992.

³⁶⁷ **Ibid**

³⁶⁸ Michael M. Gunter, **The Kurds and...**, **op.cit**, pp.119-120

adding that “the Iraqi, Iranian, and Syrian governments help the PKK against the Iraqi Kurdish movement... because they do not want our parliamentary and governmental experiment to be successful”.

Barzani argued that the PKK was against the authority of Kurds and KRG which had been established that year in 1992.

Öcalan’s men acted as if they were the authorities and started to control roads and collect taxes... Öcalan’s men threatened to expel the government and parliament from Irbil, [the seat of the KRG] they said they would hang all those “who sold out the homeland”. They even threatened to expel us from Duhok and al – Sulaymaniyah and started to form espionage, terrorism, and sabotage networks inside cities. It has unequivocally been proven that they are conspiring and planning to undermine the existing situation in Kurdistan and its experiment [the KRG].³⁶⁹

When the PKK continued its threats and interference, the Iraqi Kurds, on 4 October 1992, the day that they declared a federated state, launched major assaults against the PKK. The Turkish army also attended the fighting and by 29 October heavy fighting forced the PKK to surrender to the Iraqi Kurds and others escaped into Iran and Syria. Iraqi Kurds did not accept to hand over the PKK fighters they held to the Turkish officials and permitted them to hold some of their lighter weapons. Therefore, Turkey was suspicious that the Iraqi Kurds were not serious in their fighting against the PKK.³⁷⁰

The outbreak of civil war between the KDP and PUK in May 1994 and the resulting chaos created new opportunities for the PKK, Turkey and other neighbouring countries to interfere and deteriorate the situation in northern Iraq because all of them were against this Kurdish authority. This chaos helped the PKK to establish bases in the areas that bordered on Turkey. Thus, Turkey crossed into northern Iraq in March and again in July of 1995.³⁷¹ United States and many European countries criticized Turkey, particularly the KDP and the PUK.³⁷² The PKK, however, accused the KDP of collaborating with Turkey. Then in early August

³⁶⁹ **Ibid**

³⁷⁰ **Ibid**; Michael M. Gunter, “A *de facto*...”, **op.cit**, p.308

³⁷¹ Ümit Özdağ, Türkiye..., **op.cit**, pp.131-35

³⁷² Kemal Kirişçi and Gareth M. Winrow, **op.cit**, p.173

1995 the KDP and PUK came together in Dublin to settle their fighting. There, the two parties asked Turkey not to cross the border and in return gave guarantees for preventing the PKK infiltration from northern Iraq into Turkey. While the Kurdish people and their friends welcomed this peace agreement, the PKK condemned it and again, accused the Iraqi Kurds as Turkey's collaborators.

As the PUK was determined to defeat the KDP by force, Talabani began to take the assistance from Iran for its fighting against Barzani. Syria also encouraged Apo and Talabani to meet each other in Damascus. In this meeting Apo was convinced to attack the KDP and open another front in the north. Therefore, with the tacit cooperation of Syria, Iran, and the PUK, the PKK suddenly attacked some 20 KDP bases and offices.³⁷³ This sudden attack led to hundreds of deaths during the fall of 1995, until the PKK realized that it can not defeat the KDP and finally declared a cease-fire early in December 1995.

While the PKK had become the puppet in the hands of Iran and Syria, it claimed that it was attacking the KDP because it refused to join the fight for a greater Kurdistan and so, it must be wiped out because it helped Turkey and betrayed them not only at that time, but even in the past years as well.³⁷⁴ Barzani declared that, contrary to Öcalan's accusations of KDP betrayal in the past, "ungrateful PKK has forgotten all the support and assistance the party [KDP] offered them in 1980 when they fled from Turkey following the military coup" and that "had it not been for the party's [KDP's] assistance, the PKK would not have managed to stand on its feet".³⁷⁵

The reality was that KDP fought the PKK only as a self-defence not on Turkey's behalf. Barzani declared frankly that although he disliked the PKK, but he had to accept that the PKK, in some measure, was also fighting for Kurdish nationalism.³⁷⁶ If the KDP needed Turkey as its only connection with the outer world and received aid and assistance from Turkey, but in its part, Turkey needed the KDP as well, for many reasons such as: the KDP stands across the roads that connect

³⁷³ **Ibid**

³⁷⁴ Michael M. Gunter, *The Kurds and...*, **op.cit**, p.121

³⁷⁵ **Ibid**, p.123

³⁷⁶ İhsan Gürkan, "Northern Iraq...", **op.cit**, p.10

Turkey with Baghdad; those who control the border on the Iraqi sides were the *peshmargas* of the KDP; The Kirkuk-Yumurtalık oil pipeline was passing (which was not really operational) through the KDP controlled region; all merchandise Turkey sent to Baghdad were obliged to pass through the KDP zone of influence; Barzani constituted a counterweight against the Iranian influence in northern Iraq provided by the PUK which was totally under Iran's influence.³⁷⁷

That is why we see that Barzani makes advances to the PKK in order to convince it for abandoning its wrong policy in spite of the fact that Turkey was against such a thing. It is even said that Barzani met Apo in Damascus in 1996.³⁷⁸ His brother Osman Öcalan also attended the KDP's fiftieth anniversary celebrations in the summer of 1996. The PKK, however, supported and coordinated with PUK and Iran in their fighting against the KDP in which the Turkish military participated in the war, supporting KDP's *peshmargas* in 1997.

Finally, in 1998, the PKK leader was expelled from Syria and then he was captured in 1999 and was brought to Turkey. The PKK's strength decreased dramatically. Then in 2000 and throughout the 2001, Talabani's forces started to fight the PKK.³⁷⁹ All these measures forced the PKK to search for political methods rather than armed struggle. Although there are still some PKK militants in the mountainous parts of northern Iraq but they have nearly no activities.

6.1.3. Turkish Policy Towards the PKK Since the Second Gulf War

Up to the late 1980s, Turkish state used all means such as education, the census, the media and military service to forcibly assimilate the Kurds into an imagined Turkish nationhood based on Turkey's Kemalist project of constructing a homogenous nation-state out of different ethnic groups and forced secularization of the state and society.³⁸⁰ According to this mentality the Kurds' demands on their

³⁷⁷ **ibid**, p.11

³⁷⁸ **Ibid**, p.16

³⁷⁹ Robert Olson, "Turkey – Iran Relations, 2000-2001...", **op.cit**, pp.112-13

³⁸⁰ M. Hakan Yavuz, "Five Stages of the Construction of Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey", **Nationalism and Ethnic Politics** (Vol.7, No.3, Autumn 2001, pp.1-24; M. Hakan Yavuz, "A Preamble to the Kurdish Question: The Politics of Kurdish Identity", **Journal of Muslim Minority Affair** (Vol.18, No.1, 1998), pp.9-18

identity and specially the claims of the PKK about a Kurdish state or federalism were considered as a threat to the Turkish state which must be prevented. Therefore, Turkey's policy was based on the elimination of the PKK from Iraq and Turkey.

We mentioned that the Turkey's policy towards the Kurds during the 1980s was denial of Kurdish identity. However, by the late 1980s the government's repressive policies in the eastern parts of Turkey and the repression of Kurds in Iraq and refugee crisis enhanced Kurdish national consciousness. The Turkish government's favourable treatment of ethnic Turks fleeing oppression in Bulgaria in 1989, in contrast to its treatment of the Kurds fleeing Iraq a year earlier, had a significant role as well. This treatment of Turkish government deepened many Turkish Kurds' sense of alienation and the social-political roots of the Kurdish conflict.³⁸¹ All these factors forced the Turkish government to recognize the Kurdish reality. In June 1989, Turgut Özal, the then Turkish President, announced that he himself had Kurdish blood. This expression can be considered as the first step to the acceptance of Kurdish reality in Turkey.

Another important event was the Gulf War in 1991 which proved a major turning point in the development of the Kurdish question in Turkey. In April 1991, immediately after the Kurdish refugees from Iraq poured into Turkey, the ban on the Kurdish language was lifted and in March 1992, the then Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel announced that he recognized the reality of a Kurdish ethnic presence in Turkey.³⁸² These steps were very important as it was the first time that after a long period of denial the Kurdish reality was recognized in Turkey. In fact, during the Gulf War, Özal assumed an active role in the alliance against Iraq and had a moderate policy towards the Kurds as he was seeking a new role for Turkey in regional and global politics.³⁸³ He believed that the new circumstances in the world necessitated the policy shift in domestic and international structures. He was foresighted enough

³⁸¹ Martin Van Bruinessen, "Shifting National and Ethnic Identities: The Kurds in Turkey and Europe", in Günay Göksu Özdoğan and Gül Tokay, eds., **Redefining the Nation, State and Citizen** (Istanbul: Eren, 2000), pp.95-98

³⁸² **Turkish Daily News**, 18 March, 1992

³⁸³ Selim Deringil, "Turkish Foreign Policy Since Atatürk" in Clement Dodd, ed., **Turkish Foreign Policy: New Prospects** (Britain: The Eothen Press, 1992), p.5

to realize that trying to continue Turkey's bankrupted policy of mentioning Kurds as "mountain Turks" and their problem as "Eastern problem" did not work any more.³⁸⁴

As the Gulf War provided a dramatic popularity for the Iraqi Kurds, Özal tried to use them for changing Turkey's image in the world. He allowed the establishment of an autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq. He tried to use the Iraqi Kurds, with the support of the United States, to control Turkey's Kurdish problem, particularly the PKK. In October 1991, for instance, Talabani was encouraged to bring Öcalan around by halting his armed activities and looking for a dialogue with the Turkish government.³⁸⁵ In March 1993, again Talabani met the PKK leader to discuss a new initiative and cease-fire. The PKK accepted to declare a unilateral and unconditional cease-fire. The PKK argued that they do not want to partition Turkey, but to share it inside the framework of one homeland.³⁸⁶

It was a truly historic opportunity which was lost after the sudden death of Özal, the Turkish leader who was most receptive to some compromises that might have ended the struggle. We can say that after the death of Özal, the Turkish military forces did a silent coup. With weaker leadership, Süleyman Demirel who succeeded Özal as president and Tansu Çiller as the new prime minister, the military managed to reassert its influence and steer Turkey back to its traditional policy options.³⁸⁷

Both the PKK and government intensified the use of power and violence after the end of brief ceasefire declared by the PKK. As we discussed, the PKK had adopted the use of violence as early as 1977. Their target included the state collaborators; feudal landlords; economic targets such as: electoral power, communication lines, irrigation facilities, factories, petroleum installations, road construction, tourism facilities in and outside Turkey; military targets; civilian targets

³⁸⁴ Haldun Gülalp, "Islamism and Kurdish Nationalism: Rival Adversaries of Kemalism in Turkey", in Tarama Sonn, ed., **Islam and the Question of Minorities** (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1996)

³⁸⁵ Michael M. Gunter, "The Kurds and...", **op.cit**, p.117

³⁸⁶ **Ibid**, pp.75-76

³⁸⁷ Henry J. Barkey, "Hemmed in...", **op.cit**, p.114

and teachers and schools.³⁸⁸ All these terrorist actions continued in 1993, 1994 and 1995.

The Turkish government's answer to these violations was only the use of power and counterviolation. The emergency rule issued in July 1987 and the Anti-terror Law of April 1991 continued to be applied and these two laws gave the civilian governors and the armed forces the right to exercise their power to make restrictions on the press and removal the area of persons whose activities were believed inimical to public order and the ban on any dissemination of ideas which led to many detentions and human rights abuses.³⁸⁹

A large number of journalists and other writers were held in Turkish jails for supporting the Kurdish cause in their writings. For instance, Ismail Beşikçi received sentences totalling up to 200 years in prison for his publications in violation of anti-terror law. Many pro-Kurdish newspapers were closed.³⁹⁰ Many people were assassinated secretly known as mystery killings. It is said that the Turkish military forces were involved in these killings by supporting the Hizbullah and village guards to kill people who are suspected to support the PKK. Hizbullah which was founded in 1980 in the southeast of Turkey, later split into two rival groups of Menzil and İlim.³⁹¹ In spite of Menzil which objected to any struggle against the PKK, İlim fought against the PKK. It was alleged that the Turkish military had given support to İlim training camps in south-eastern Turkey.³⁹² The village-guard system which was introduced in April 1985 against the activities of PKK, was another instrument for the Turkish state. It is said that these villagers were also involved in those killings as their number increased from just under 18,000 in 1990 to 63,000 by August 1994.³⁹³

³⁸⁸ I. İsmet, **The PKK: A Report on Separatist Violence in Turkey**(Ankara: Turkish Daily News Publication, 1992), p.16; **Turkish Daily News**, 8 January, 1996; **Yeni Yüzyıl**, 20 December, 1994; **Milliyet**, 3 January, 1995

³⁸⁹ **Turkish Daily News**, 26 December, 1994; **Yeni Yüzyıl**, 25 November, 1995

³⁹⁰ Michael M. Gunter, *The Kurds and...*, **op.cit.**, p.12

³⁹¹ Bülent Aras and Gökhan Bacık, "The Mystery of Turkish Hizbullah", **Middle East Policy** (Vol.9, No.2, 2002), 147-161; Hikmet Çiçek, **Hangi Hizullah** (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 2000)

³⁹² *Ibid*; **Turkish Daily News**, 6 January, 1996

³⁹³ Kemal Kirişçi and Gareth M. Winrow, **op.cit.**, p.130

The Turkish military also began to evacuate the villages in order not to be used by the PKK as a staging post. 3,000 villages were evacuated up to 1995, many of them evacuated forcibly by the security forces.³⁹⁴ All these measures affected the PKK and weakened it. The incursions of 1995 and 1997 into northern Iraq by Turkish armed forces and the war of PKK against the KDP in those years was another factor that sapped the strength of PKK, but we can say that the final blow came when Turkey threatened to go to war against Syria in October 1998 unless Syria expelled Öcalan from that country.

After the Washington agreement in 17 September 1998 between the KDP and PUK Turkey realized that incursions into the northern Iraq in pursuit of the PKK would be difficult as the Kurdish leaders expressed their determination to prevent any outside encroachments into northern Iraq. It meant that Turkey's military operations against PKK in northern Iraq would be no longer tolerated by the United States. Turkey feared that this agreement would be the first step toward a Kurdish state and would provide the PKK with more opportunity to become active and penetrate into Turkey.³⁹⁵ Therefore it became a necessity forcing Syria to cease support to the PKK to neutralize the militants in northern Iraq, before they became more active. Turkey warned Syria concerning the support of that country for the PKK and it became a crisis. The crisis, however, culminated in an agreement signed by Turkey and Syria on October 20, 1998, in which the Syrian government agreed to expel Abdullah Öcalan.³⁹⁶

After Turkey's capture of Apo in Nairobi, Kenya on 16 February 1999, the Turkish military seemed to have dried up the power sources of the PKK in the region, particularly in northern Iraq. Talabani, who had relations with the PKK until 2000, was obliged to change its policy in order to mend its relations with Turkey. Hence, he started to fight the PKK in the late 2000 and throughout the 2001.³⁹⁷ All

³⁹⁴ **Ibid**, p.131

³⁹⁵ Mahmut Bali Aykan, "The Turkish-Syrian Crisis of October 1998: A Turkish View", **Middle East Policy** (Vol.VI, No.4, June 1999), pp.174-187

³⁹⁶ **Ibid**

³⁹⁷ Robert Olson, "Turkey-Iran Relations, 2000-2001...", **op.cit**, pp.112-13

these developments weakened the PKK more and more and forced it to emphasize on political activities rather than fighting.

As we know the PKK had abandoned its demands for Kurdish independence even before the capture of Öcalan in favor of federation. After his apprehending, Öcalan demanded simply genuine democracy within the preexisting Turkish borders.³⁹⁸ Early in 2002, the PKK even renamed itself the Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress (KADEK) which indicated a new, more moderate stance and armed clashes between the state forces and Kurdish rebels, which had continued since 1984 except for brief intervals, practically ceased.³⁹⁹

For the first time since the PKK revolt began, dynamics other than violence and considerations other than state security got a chance to play a significant role in determining the parameters of the conflict. The percentage of Turkish citizens who viewed terror as the greatest threats to the Turkish state dropped from 39.3 to 5.5%, from 1998 to 2002.⁴⁰⁰ As a result, in August 2002, the Turkish parliament passed a reform package, granting significant cultural-linguistic rights to Kurds, such as broadcasting in and teaching Kurdish. The implementation of these rights has been slow, and fell short of Kurds' expectations for change. There has been considerable resistance from the institutions and from the AKP's political opponents, and many of the new constitutional and legal changes include get-out clauses that give wide scope for the notoriously conservative judiciary to restrict in practice many of the freedoms that the EU expects to see implemented. The freedom to broadcast in Kurdish is severely restricted and it remains illegal to speak Kurdish in any Turkish government office or to make a political speech in Kurdish. The Turkish registry continues to refuse names with Kurdish spelling. The EU has learned to distinguish between reform and its implementation in the Turkish case, and the capacity of the regional and central bureaucracies, the courts, the law enforcement agencies and the like to

³⁹⁸ Michael M. Gunter, "The Continuing Kurdish Problem in Turkey after Öcalan's Capture", **Third World Quarterly** (Vol.21, No.5, 2000), pp.854-57

³⁹⁹ Murat Somer, "Turkey's Kurdish Conflict: Changing Context, and Domestic and Regional Implications", **The Middle East Journal** (Vol.58, No.2, Spring 2004), p.235

⁴⁰⁰ Necat Erder, **Türkiye'de Siyasi Partilerin Yandaş/Seçmen Profili 1994-2002** (İstanbul: Tüses Yayınları-Veri Araştırma, 2002), pp.17-18

obstruct and delay the full implementation of the new laws and regulations should not be underestimated.⁴⁰¹ The November 2003 European Commission Progress Report drew attention to these difficulties, and exhibited a degree of scepticism with respect to implementation.⁴⁰²

Nevertheless, these reforms were important steps forward for Turkey in the direction of the normalization of the Kurdish conflict via demilitarization and to meet EU standards of democracy and minority rights as enumerated in the Copenhagen Criteria.⁴⁰³ The Kurdish issue is now more openly and hotly debated in Turkey than before. The release in June 2004 of former Democratic Party (DEP) Kurdish member of the parliament Leyla Zana and three of her colleagues, imprisoned a decade ago for their activism, and her call for a peaceful and democratic solution to Turkey's Kurdish problem in the context of a devolved but unitary Turkish state, has added to this debate.⁴⁰⁴ Some Turkish commentators have noted that extending democracy, human rights and a higher standard of living to Turkey's Kurds might be the best way of minimising the impact on Turkey of any Iraqi Kurdish self-government.⁴⁰⁵

In 2003, the US-led war in Iraq, drastically altered the external environment of the conflict. Iraqi Kurds represented by the KDP and PUK emerged as major US-allies and actors. The possibility of rising PKK activities in northern Iraq refueled Turkish policy makers' security concerns. As we mentioned before, in April 2002 the PKK changed its name to the Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress (KADEK), then again in November 2003 to the Kurdistan People's Congress (KONGRA-GEL).⁴⁰⁶ These name changes in part reflected a somewhat futile attempt to evade international proscription, but were also indicative of internal rifts, with

⁴⁰¹ Ziya Onis, "Domestic Politics, International Norms, and Challenges to the State: Turkish –EU Relations in the Post-Helsinki Era", **Turkish Studies** (Vol. 4, No.1, Spring 2003), pp.9-34

⁴⁰² Regular Report on Turkey's Progress Towards Accession <http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/turkey/index.htm>

⁴⁰³ Murat Somer, **op.cit.**, p.236; Michael M. Gunter, "The Kurds in Iraq", **op.cit.**, p.108.

⁴⁰⁴ "Kurds Activists Set Up New Party", <http://home.cogeco.ca/~kurdistan4/23-10-04-zana-sets-new-party.htm>. 23 October 2004

⁴⁰⁵ Doğu Ergil, "Foreign Policy Challenges (2): Iraq", **Turkish Daily News**, 7 February 2005; Faik Bulut, "Preparing the New Iraqi Constitution; Risk Factor", **Turkish Daily News**, 8 February 2005

⁴⁰⁶ Michael M. Gunter, "The Kurds in Iraq", **op.cit.**, p.107.

reports of a shift towards a non-violent approach by some leading PKK figures.⁴⁰⁷ By mid-2004, there were thought to be an estimated 5,000 PKK fighters in the mountains of northern Iraq, mostly inside PUK territory close to Iran, and up to 1,800 inside Turkey. However, on 1 June 2004, the PKK's unilateral ceasefire of February 2000, which was never absolute in its implementation, was called off. This seems to have been accompanied by an infiltration of as many as 1,200 PKK fighters into Turkey from northern Iraq.⁴⁰⁸ There has subsequently been a marked increase in violent exchanges inside Turkey between Turkish security forces and PKK units: between 1 June and 30 August 2004, 109 PKK attacks resulted in the 35 Turkish security officers killed and 94 injured.⁴⁰⁹ Turkey believes this upsurge of violence has been facilitated by the PKK's freedom of movement in northern Iraq.

Turkey has had little alternative since April 2003, but to become more reliant on the willingness and ability of US and Iraqi Kurdish forces to flush out PKK cells operating in northern Iraq. For Turkey's security and political elite, this has proved a frustrating experience. In autumn 2003 Washington agreed to an action plan, details of which were kept under wraps, but which Turkey clearly interpreted as obliging American forces to confront the PKK presence in Iraq on Turkey's behalf. There has been little evidence of a will or capacity to invest in this mission, which enjoys the declaratory support of the Iraqi Kurdish leadership. As early as January 2004, Turkish General İlker Başbuğ, who had helped negotiate the agreement, was already declaring that "the US's fight against the PKK is not meeting our expectation".⁴¹⁰ By September, Gül appeared to have given up on US goodwill on the issue, and told a Turkish newspaper that "we cannot progress on this issue by relying on other

⁴⁰⁷ "PKK/KADEK Claims to Have Disarmed", **Turkish Daily News**, 6 January 2004; "Osman Öcalan in Mosul", **Turkish Daily News**, 23 June 2004; "Osman Öcalan: We Have Laid Down Our Arms", **Turkish Daily News**, 17 September 2004

⁴⁰⁸ İlnur Çevik, "Who Left the Door Open", **Turkish Daily News**, 23 June 2004; Soner Cagaptay and Emrullah Eslu, "Is the PKK Still a Threat to the United States and Turkey", **Policywatch** (No. 940, 10 January 2005), Washington Institute for Near East Policy www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2217

⁴⁰⁹ **Ibid**

⁴¹⁰ "Turkish Army Flexes Muscles on Iraq, Cyprus", **Washington Post**, 16 January 2004

countries”, and that Turkey will itself “do what our security necessitates”.⁴¹¹ During the same month, he reportedly warned Barzani and Talabani that the PKK issue could produce “a calamity for you in the future, be aware of this”.⁴¹² By November Gül was asking rhetorically, “How much longer can they postpone the operation?” and declaring that the US had “lost the Turkish people already” as a consequence of their inaction.⁴¹³

The US position, reportedly made clear during the action plan discussions with Turkey, was that it had other security priorities in Iraq; that searching out PKK activists in their mountain hideouts would be difficult, time-consuming and manpower expensive; that Turkey was exaggerating the threat posed by the remnants of the PKK; and that in any case a more political approach was needed.⁴¹⁴ There would be no immediate military action, a position Washington has subsequently reiterated.⁴¹⁵ In August 2004, then US National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice remarked under questioning that “we are doing what we can with non-military means to try and make less active and less capable those forces”.⁴¹⁶ Erdoğan declared himself unconvinced by these remarks, and went on to contrast the US onslaught against Falluja with its inactivity in the mountains of northern Iraq.⁴¹⁷ More recently, Bush reaffirmed the American position to Erdoğan⁴¹⁸ and the February 2005 visit to Ankara by Rice also offered no indication that the US yet intended to be more proactive in its approach to the PKK.

⁴¹¹ “Gul: We Will Take Care of PKK Ourselves”, <http://home.cogeco.ca/~kurdistan/2-9-04-gul-ourself-take-car-pkk.htm>, 3 September 2004

⁴¹² **Kurdistan Observer**, 11 September 2004

⁴¹³ “Gul: US Has Lost the Support of Turkish Public”, <http://home.cogeco.ca/~kurdistan/4/24-11-04-gul-says-us-lost-thy-support.htm>, 24 November 2004

⁴¹⁴ Mehmet Ali Brand, “PKK in Northern Iraq Not on the Agenda Anymore”, **Turkish Daily News**, 5 May 2004.

⁴¹⁵ “US Says no Military Action on PKK Soon”, **Turkish Daily News**, 19 June 2004

⁴¹⁶ “Remarks by Condoleezza Rice about Kurds in Southern Kurdistan”, <http://home.cogeco.ca/~kurdistan/4-9-04-erdogan-losing-patience-US.htm>, 4 September 2004

⁴¹⁷ “Turkey Loses Patience with US Stance on Kurdistan Rebels, PM Warns”, <http://home.cogeco.ca/~kurdistan/4-9-04-erdogan-losing-patience-us.htm>, 4 September 2004

⁴¹⁸ **Kurdistan Observer**, 22 December 2004

In fact, in January 2005, following a six-week period during which Erdoğan appeared too busy to meet with US Ambassador Eric Edelman, behaviour widely interpreted as a snub to Washington, the first tripartite Turkish-US-Iraqi meeting to discuss the PKK presence in northern Iraq was held. It appears that the Turkish side, having secured Iraq's consent that extradition agreements signed between the two countries in 1989 and 1995 were still in place, demanded that 150 of the PKK's leaders in northern Iraq be extradited to Turkey. However, immediate military action against the PKK was again ruled out.⁴¹⁹ Rather, it was reported that the US continued to favour non-military measures, such as interrupting the PKK's financial flow and curbing its communication capabilities.⁴²⁰

The fact is that neglect of this issue will cause mounting discontent in Turkey, particularly if the recent revival of PKK violence persists. It seems that the American press often ignores Turkey. Turkey can argue that while a single terrorist incident in Israel becomes headline news in the United States, the PKK's murder of dozens in recent months receives little mention.⁴²¹

6.2. The Turkomans of Iraq

The Turkomans of Iraq are another factor in Turkish foreign policy towards Iraq. Therefore, I will try to provide a survey of this community, their origins, populations size and their areas of settlement. After that I will examine their political status during the post – 1990 period and then analyze the Turkish policy towards them as a balancing factor against the demands and ambitions of Kurds in northern Iraq.

6.2.1. Origins, Population, Settlement

There are different interpretations regarding the Turkoman people in the region. Abdul – Razzaq al-Hasani an Iraqi historian argues that the Turkomans of Iraq are part of the forces of Sultan Murad the Fourth who fought against the

⁴¹⁹ “Turkey Presses Iraq on PKK Extradition”, **Turkish Daily News**, 13 January 2005

⁴²⁰ “Priorities Differ on PKK Issue”, **Turkish Daily News**, 12 January 2005

⁴²¹ Michael Rubin, “A Comedy of Errors: American-Turkish Diplomacy and the Iraq War”, **Turkish Policy Quarterly** (Vol. 4, No.1, Spring 2005), p.77

Safavids and occupied Iraq in 1638. These forces then remained there in order to protect this route between the southern Vilayats of Ottoman Empire.⁴²²

The Turkomans' sources trace back the origins of the Turkomans to Umayyad and Abbasid eras and argue that this group began to settle in northern Iraq at that time and it was a continuation of the migration wave by Turkomans coming from Central Asia and present-day Azerbaijan. This migration happened during the Umayyad and Abbasid eras as these rulers needed them because of their prowess in the battle. According to them, this period, however, was one of the introduction rather than settlement, so the Turkomans of those eras were integrated to the population existing there. They believe that their settlement began during the Saljuqi era and then was expanded during the Ottomans.⁴²³ Erşat Hürmüzlü and Fazıl Demirci assert that the settlement of Turkomans in Iraq happened in three different waves. The first wave of migration took place during the Umayyad and Abbasid; the second one during the era of Saljuqi; and the third wave occurred during the Ottomans when they got control of Iraq.⁴²⁴

As far as the population of the Turkomans is concerned, there are different views by Turkomans on the one hand and the Iraqi and Western and Kurdish sources on the other hand. The Turkoman sources give different numbers regarding the population of the Turkomans, all full of exaggerations. According to many Turkish and Turkomans scholars the population of Turkomans people in Iraq is at least 10-15 percent of the overall Iraqi population.⁴²⁵ For example one source claims that the overall Turkoman population in Iraq is above two million at the worst prediction.⁴²⁶ Another Turkoman source estimates the overall Turkoman population in Iraq to be

⁴²² Abdul-Razzaq al-Hasani, **Ancient and Modern Iraq** (Saida: Al-Irfan Press, 1956)

⁴²³ <http://www.angelfire.com/tn/turkoman>

⁴²⁴ Suphi Saatçi, **Irak (Kerkük) Türk Edebiyatı**, Türkiye Divanındaki Türk Edebiyatı Antolojisi 6 Azerbeycan-Irak (Kerkük) Edebiyatı (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1996), pp.153-155;

Fazıl Demirci, **Irak Türklerinin Dünü-Bugünü** (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1991); Erşat Hürmüzlü, **Irak Türkleri** (Ankara: A Publication of the Iraqi Turkman National Party of Iraq, 1994)

⁴²⁵ Fazıl Demirci, **op.cit**, p.5; Erşat Hürmüzlü, **op.cit**,p.30

⁴²⁶ Ziyat Köprülü, **Irak'ta Türk Varlığı** (Ankara: Örnek Limited Şirketi, 1996),p.9

around 2.5 million.⁴²⁷ In another sources this number is around 2.600.000 making up 10-12 percent of Iraqi population. All other sources claim nearly the same estimates. The most exaggerated Turkoman figure puts the proportion of the Turkomans at 22 percent of the overall Iraqi population.⁴²⁸

On the other hand, according to the western sources, the population of the Turkoman people living in Iraq does not exceed five percent of the overall Iraqi population. We have to mention that these foreign sources rely mostly on the statistics provided by the Iraqi government which according to the Turkoman scholars do not reflect the reality. For example, the results of the 1987 census shows that the overall Iraqi population is 16.278.000 in which the ratio of the Arabs is 76 percent, of the Kurds is 19 percent and of the others including the Turkomans is five percent.⁴²⁹ According to a study conducted by the Federal Research Division in the US in 1990, the Turkoman population is around 220,000.⁴³⁰ A CIA research estimates the Iraqi population as 22.675.617 in which the ratio of Arabs is 75-80 percent, of the Kurds is 15-20 percent and of the others including the Turkomans is five percent.⁴³¹ Another independent source estimated the Iraqi population at 22.675.617 as of July 2000. The number of Turkoman people, out of this figure is also less than five percent.⁴³² All other foreign sources nearly show the same figures.

Kurds argue that the majority of the northern Iraq consists of Kurds. If we look at the 1920s and 1930s census we see that the Turkomans consisted 2.1 percent of the overall population. In the 1957 census the Turkomans ranked the third after the Arabs and Kurds in Iraq at the figure of 2.16 percent. In the 1977 census, this number further went down to 1.15 percent.⁴³³ Some Turkomans also claim that Kirkuk is

⁴²⁷ <http://www.angelfire.com/tn/turkoman>

⁴²⁸ N. Demirci, "Kuzey Irak, Kürdistan ve Türkmenler", **Kerkük**, No.7,p.3

⁴²⁹ Chapin Helen Metz, **Iraq: A Country Study**,ed., (Washington DC: Federal research Division Library of Congress, 1990)

⁴³⁰ **Ibid**

⁴³¹ <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/goes/iz.html/people>

⁴³² <http://www.countrywatch.com/files/081/cw-country.asp?v=COUNTRY:081>

⁴³³ Nuri Talabani, **Iraq's Policy of Ethnic Cleansing: Onslaught to Change National/Demographic Characteristics of the Kirkuk Region** (London, 1999), p.8 at: <http://www.puk.org/nouri/kirkuk.htm>

populated overwhelmingly by them, but when we look at the figures we see that Turkomans rank second after the Kurds with the ratios of 21.4 percent in 1957 and 16.75 percent in 1997.⁴³⁴ The Turkoman population in Mosul is 4.8 percent according to the 1957 census and 0.99 percent in 1977 census.⁴³⁵

Regarding the settlement areas of the Turkomans, we can see some claims by some Turkomans who try to draw a united land of Turkomans called Turkmeneli, starting from Talafar in the north and ending in Mendeli in the south. The fact, however, is that the Turkomans are dispersed in the region and such a land or region does not exist. We can find this national minority in Mosul, Arbil, Kirkuk, Salahaddin and Diala. Talafar, Sınjar, Altunkupru, Kifri, Khanaqin, Baquba and Mandali are some of the districts of these cities in which the Turkomans live.

Regarding Kirkuk, the prospect of controlling its considerable oil wealth is giving rise to fierce disputes over population statistics, boundaries and heritage in this area. Kurds claim that Kirkuk is a Kurdish city historically and demographically and that the history of Kurds in this city goes back to thousands of years B.C. According to them, all historical books reaffirm this fact. They argue that Shamsuddin Sami, a Turkish scholar of Ottoman Empire, in his famous dictionary 'Qamus al-Alam', describes the demography of Kirkuk at the time of his writing as follows: "three quarters of the inhabitants are Kurds and the rest are the turkomanism, Arabs and others".⁴³⁶ They also mention that after the establishment of Iraq state, during the monarchy, two thirds of deputies representing Kirkuk province in the Iraqi National Parliament, were Kurds.⁴³⁷ On the other hand, according to Iraqi National Turkoman Front (INTF) and Turkey, the region of Kirkuk is a Turkoman area in which the Kurds are considered rural intruders. They

⁴³⁴ Azad Naqishbandi, "Karigari Nawti Karkuk Leser Ragwezani Kurd Le Karkuk u Baarabkrdni" (The Impact of Kirkuk Oil on Deportation of Kurds from Kirkuk and Its Arabisation), **Brayati Center** (No.20, Summer 2001), p.24; Ethnic Distributions in Kirkuk, Past and Present <http://home.cogeco.ca/~Kurdistan1/15-1-04-opinion-kirkuk-population.html>

⁴³⁵ Nuri Talabani, **op.cit**

⁴³⁶ **Ibid**; Azad Naqshbandi, **op.cit**, p.23; Halkawt Mohammad Karim, "Karkuk we Isalat Kurdiatiha", **Al-Itihad**, No.23, April 10,1993, p.10; Wria Jaf, **Karkuk, Drasat Siasia we Ijtimaia** (Arbil: Ministry of Education, 1997), p.20

⁴³⁷ Nuri Talabani, **op.cit**

argue that the Turkomans were the masters during Ottoman times – senior military officers, urban traders and professionals – whereas the predominantly rural Kurds were servants, maids, guards, cleaners, foot soldiers and Afro-Americans there. They argue that many studies describe Kirkuk of the 1950s and 1960s as a predominantly Turkoman city with Arab and Kurdish populations. Arabs and Assyro-Chaldeans have the same claims as Kurds and Turkomans.⁴³⁸

6.2.2. Turkomans Before and After the Second Gulf War

From 1920 until 1932, Iraq was under the mandate of Britain. During this period, we see the 1925 constitution in which there is no reference to the Turkomans explicitly. The only positive thing about this constitution is its reference that all Iraqi people are equal before the law irrespective of their language, ethnicity and religion. Therefore, this constitution allowed the Turkomans and other ethnicity to use their own language in their schools.⁴³⁹

After this period, in 1932 Iraq was granted its independence and it was allowed to register as a member of the League of Nations. Following this membership the Iraqi government published a declaration in which the Turkomans were classified as one of the national minorities in Iraq with special rights to education and other aspects of life. The importance of this declaration, read out by Iraqi Prime Minister in the wake of Iraq's entry to the League of Nations as an independent country, lies in the fact that for the first time Turkomans were mentioned within an official declaration and their language was accepted as one of the official languages in the Turkoman populated areas.⁴⁴⁰

After this declaration, in all other constitutions of 1958, 1968 and 1990, the Turkoman were mentioned as a distinctive national minority. In practice, however we see that the regimes reigned in Baghdad never gave the appropriate rights of Kurds or national minorities living in Iraq including the Turkomans. We can also say that whenever pan-Arabic nationalistic regimes came to power in Baghdad, the

⁴³⁸ International Crisis Group, "Iraq's Kurds...", **op.cit**, pp.9-10; International Crisis Group, "Iraq: Allaying...", **op.cit**, p.9

⁴³⁹ Omer Turan, "Irak'ın Milletler Cemiyetine Girenken Yayınladığı Deklarasyonda ve Anayasalarında Türk ve Diğer Azınlıkların Hakları", **Avrasya Dosyası** (Vol.3,No.1, Spring 1996), pp.28-29

⁴⁴⁰ Erşat Hümmüzlü, "Kerkük'ün Etnik Yapısı", **Kardaşlık** (Year2, No.7), pp.6-7

conditions of Turkomans and other minorities became worse, particularly during the rule of Ba'th Party and Saddam's dictatorship.

In spite of the fact that the Turkomans did not achieve their proper rights, but they succeeded to integrate into the Iraqi society and if we compare them with Kurds, we see that the relations of the Turkomans and the central government is much better and Baghdad showed much sympathy towards them. The reason is that the history of Iraq shows that since the establishment of Iraqi state, the Kurds and Arabs were in open conflict and the Kurds challenged the Iraqi authority in their region in an effort to achieve their national rights all over this long period and as a result of this Kurdish challenge the rulers in Baghdad showed better treatment towards the Turkomans in order to gain the support of them against the Kurds, so relative position of this community improved.⁴⁴¹ That is why most of this community is well – educated. They are all doctors, lawyers, judges and teachers. Therefore, they have never involved in political activities against the Iraqi regime. It is not surprising if we do not see a single Turkoman party up to the 1991. It is not also surprising that during the exodus of Kurds in 1991, while millions of Kurds fled to the Iranian and Turkish borders, almost no Turkoman left his home.⁴⁴²

Thanks to the continuous struggle of the Kurds and their uprising of 1991 which brought about the establishment of no-fly zone. Turkomans for the first time found themselves in a free and democratic environment along with their Kurdish brothers. In order to improve their status and preserve their rights inside this free situation, the Turkoman community began to get politicized. The “Iraqi National Turkman Party” of Muzaffer Arslan can be mentioned as the first Turkoman Party, which was founded in 1991. “Turkmanland Party” founded in 1994 by Rıyad Sarkahye, “Independents Turkoman Movement” founded in 1994 by Ferit Çelebi and “Iraqi National Turkoman Front” founded in April 1995 by Sanan Ahmet Ağa which

⁴⁴¹ The Ba'ath regime always tried to spark anti-Kurdish feelings among the Turkomans, that is why Saddam Husein built the statues of two Turkoman figures in the central squares of Kirkuk, who were killed by the members of Communist Party during the 1959 events in Kirkuk, but the regime did not succeed in its policy.

⁴⁴² Mazin Hasan, “Irak'ın Gizlenen Gerçeği; Türkmenler”, in Ümit Özdağ and Others, eds., **Irak Krizi-2002-2003** (Ankara: ASAM Yayınları, 2003), p.53

is the unification of seven other small parties are some examples of this politicization process.⁴⁴³ For the first time, the Turkomans under the Kurdish Regional Government enjoy their cultural, social and political rights. They have their Turkish education. There are 11 primary school, 5 school and one high school in Arbil. They have their television and radio stations broadcasting in Turkish language.⁴⁴⁴

6.2.3. Turkish Foreign Policy Towards the Turkomans

As we discussed in the previous chapters, since the end of the Gulf War in 1990, the main concern of the Turkey has revolved around a possible Kurdish state or a federal unit in northern Iraq.⁴⁴⁵ Therefore we see that the backbone of Turkish foreign policy towards the region has been formulated with a view to preventing any such possibility from occurring. As they thought that such an event might have a direct impact on Turkey's Kurdish population, Turkish decision-makers were forced to make it clear that Iraq's territorial integrity and indivisibility is the essence of the Turkish approach towards the region. Instead of engaging the Kurds of northern Iraq in a cooperative manner, Turkish political and security elites considered the Kurds as the enemies of Turkey and therefore tried to balance the influence of these enemies by giving all their support to the Turkomans, assumed to be the only relatives of Turks in this region.⁴⁴⁶

The official Turkish foreign policy towards Turkomans had been based on a near denial of their entity in Iraq up to the 1990. Although the regimes in Baghdad kept Turkomans under severe conditions for many years and repressed them, Turkey never reacted and remained indifferent. After the Second Gulf War, however, Turkey tried to strengthen the position of Turkomans and use them as an instrument to balance the Kurds in northern Iraq. Turkey began to bring significant number of Turkomans to Turkey for educational purposes under the auspices of the

⁴⁴³ Mazin Hasan, "Türkmenler, Türkiye ve Irak: Körfez Savaşından Irak'ın İşgaline Türkmenlerin Durumu", *Avrasya Dosyası* (Vol.9, No.4, Winter 2003), p.178

⁴⁴⁴ **Ibid**

⁴⁴⁵ Baskın Oran, "Kalkık Horoz Çekiç Güç ve Kürt Devleti", *Avrasya Dosyası* (Vol.3, No:6, 1996), pp.155-172

⁴⁴⁶ Tarık Oğuzlu, "The Turkomans as a Factor in Turkish Foreign Policy", *Turkish Studies* (Vol.3, No.2, Autumn 2002), pp.139-148

distinguished personality İhsan Doğramacı, a Turkoman by origin and pioneer in the field of higher education in Turkey. Turkey also tried to help the Turkomans in order to establish political organizations and parties by channelling financial and logistic support in order to persuade its policies against the Kurdish experiment in northern Iraq.⁴⁴⁷

As a consequence of this policy, we see that the Turkomans did not participate in political process in northern Iraq and the Kurdish Regional Government in 1992 to show it as illegitimate, although they were invited by Kurdish authorities and they were given a ministry. The civil war and conflicts between KDP and PUK which began in 1994 gave an opportunity to Turkey to interfere in northern Iraq. In addition to its military incursions, Turkey tried to unify the Turkomans parties and associate them under single roof. Therefore, we see that in April 1995 Iraqi National Turkoman Front was established by the direct support of Turkey and its Prime Minister, Tansu Çiller. In fact, during the conflicts between Kurdish parties, the influence of Turkey dramatically increased. Iran and Syria were prevented from interfering the northern Iraq by the US. On the other hand, the US considered Turkey as an ally and let Turkey's military incursions into the region in her attempts at finishing off the PKK there and decrease the influence of Iran. Turkey used this chance and during the Ankara agreement, Turkey insisted on injecting the Turkomans into the peace process and established the PMF which mainly consisted of Turkomans. This force was trained by Turkish military forces and they were supported by all means.⁴⁴⁸

After the Washington agreement and particularly following the apprehension of the PKK's leader Abdullah Öcalan, the Turkish military seemed to have dried up the power sources of the PKK in the region, so it became difficult for Turkey to send its troops to this region and to seek US acquiescence to its actions there. As a consequence, the influence of the Kurdish administration in the region appeared to be strengthening. In response to this challenge, Turkey set a two-part policy into motion. The first policy was to upgrade relations with the government in Baghdad in

⁴⁴⁷ **Ibid**,pp.145-46

⁴⁴⁸ Mazin Hasan, "Türkmenler, Türkiye..."**op.cit**,p.180

the hope that only a strong central authority in the capital could inhibit the increasing Kurdish influence. Turkey gradually upgraded diplomatic representation in Baghdad to ambassadorial level in 2000.⁴⁴⁹ The second policy was to strengthen the Turkomans as a counter-balancing agency against the Kurds. In May 2001, the then Turkish Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit sent a directive to government agencies outlining the goals of a new strategy based on a report drawn up by the Turkish Foreign Ministry and signed by Foreign Minister, Ismail Cem. In this new strategy, the protection of the rights of the Turkomans was cited as an important component. The Iraqi Kurdish leaders were also told that the Turkomans in northern Iraq should be placed on an equal footing with Kurds.⁴⁵⁰

The Iraqi Kurds reacted to this policy. They frankly declared that the Kurdish administration has given all minority rights of the Turkomans in the region controlled by them and argued that they have never had any problems with Turkomans. They argued that the INTF is not the representative of the Turkomans but it is established by foreigners and does not serve the Turkomans' rights but the aims of others.⁴⁵¹ They also criticized the INTF for not participating in the Kurdish administration and their regional parliament in order to question its legitimacy. Regarding the Kirkuk, Kurds repeated their claims and said that its identity is a Kurdish one and that they do not accept any discussion and debate on this issue.⁴⁵²

The rights of the Turkomans was one of Turkey's red lines in their early opposition to US war plans in Iraq, and provided one of the rationalisations behind Turkey's pre-March 2003 preparations to intervene militarily. As I mentioned before, one means by which Ankara has been able to muddy the waters for the present and any future Kurdish self-governing enclave in northern Iraq has been by championing the cause of its Turkic kinsmen in the region.⁴⁵³ Turkey's sponsorship of the Iraqi

⁴⁴⁹ Tarık Oğuzlu, **op.cit**, p.141

⁴⁵⁰ "Turkey Drafting New Strategy towards Iraq", **Middle East News Agency**, May 13, 2000

⁴⁵¹ Fazıl Mirani, "Turkmanakani Jer dasalati Hukumati Harem la Hamu Ruyekawa Lawanay Dike Bashtr Dejin" (Turkomans under Regional Government Live Better than Other Turkomans), **Brayati**, August 26, 2002

⁴⁵² Mesut Barzani, **Brayati**, October 15, 2002

⁴⁵³ Tarık Oğuzlu, "The Turkomans...2, **op.cit**, pp.139-148

National Turkmoan Front (INTF), reportedly a creation of Turkey's security services in 1995,⁴⁵⁴ has caused irritation to Turkey's relations with the Iraqi Kurds, the US and even many of Iraq's Turkomans. It has been claimed that Turkish security forces have been present in the Turkoman areas of northern Iraq since the early 1990s, and began training and arming Turkoman fighters in 2001.⁴⁵⁵ The INTF's leaders have been a regular presence in the corridors of power in Turkey since its foundation in May 1995.⁴⁵⁶ Washington and Iraqi Kurds are equally mistrustful of the INTF's links with Turkey; Washington refused to allow INTF representation on the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) appointed by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in 2003 and superseded by the Interim Iraqi Government (IIG) in June 2004.⁴⁵⁷ The Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) and the IIG each had only one ethnic Turkoman member, in neither case affiliated to the INTF. Turkey has also objected to US that the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) in identifying only Arabic and Kurdish as the official languages of Iraq, pays insufficient attention to the rights of Turkomans as the third-largest ethnic group in the country.

The Sulaymaniyah incident of 2003 in which US troops detained a group of Turkish special forces officers and Turkomans in Suleymaniah on suspicion of plotting to assassinate the Kurdish governor of Kirkuk, illustrated the dangers of Turkey's continued active support for the Turkomans in northern Iraq.⁴⁵⁸ Both Turkey and the INTF have alleged discrimination against Turkomans in areas administered by Kurds. In March 2004, the remaining six ethnic Turkomans on the Kirkuk council resigned in protest at the Kurdish takeover of the city's administration, and at the scale and demographic implications of the Kurdish influx.⁴⁵⁹ Although the INTF initially mirrored Turkey's preference for a federation,

⁴⁵⁴ International Crisis Group, "Iraq: Allaying Turkey's Fears Over..." **op.cit**, pp.9-11

⁴⁵⁵ Yossef Bodansky, "The Secret...", **op.cit**, pp. 30-31

⁴⁵⁶ Michael Rubin, "A Comedy...", **op.cit**, p.74

⁴⁵⁷ Ilnur Çevik, "Turkey flops on Iraqi Turkmen", <http://home.cogeco.ca/~kurdistan2/22-3-04-tky-flops-turkmen.htm> 23 March 2004

⁴⁵⁸ Jean-Christophe Peuch, "US-Turkey: Relations Still Racked by Mutual Distrust Despite Attempts to Mend Fences" www.rferl.org/features/2003/07/1707200316029

⁴⁵⁹ "Turkmen quit Kirkuk City Council, Say Kurds Taking Over", **op.cit**

if federation there must be, based on Iraq's existing 18 administrative governorates rather than on ethnicity, it has also argued that if the Kurdish case for an ethnically based federal Iraq prevails, then the Turkomans too should enjoy a self-governing zone of their own, centered on Kirkuk⁴⁶⁰ and the surrounding area, which, the INTF has claimed, has a Turkomans demographic preponderance.⁴⁶¹ However, the INTF scored just 16 percent of the January election vote in Kirkuk province. Turkomans have also campaigned to reverse the Arabisation of former Turkomans villages and homes, but they are disadvantaged by comparison to Kurdish groups, who are better organised and more numerous.

In general, Iraqi Turkomans have exhibited little political unity either before or since Saddam's overthrow, for a combination of reasons: their geographical dispersal around the country and high degree of urbanisation, their relatively high degree of integration into Iraqi society generally, and because around 60 percent of Iraqi Turkomans, like the Arab majority are Shia. The Turkomans have often affiliated to ethnic parties other than the INTF, or have identified as Shia rather than ethnically, with a section of the community even throwing in their lot with Muqtada al-Sadr. Turkomans have even occasionally claimed that the main problems they face in northern Iraq are not posed by Kurds but are the consequences of Arabisation and Arab reluctance to recognise Turkomans rights.⁴⁶² PUK leader Talabani has pushed the same line with Turkey, to reassure the Turkish government that a Kirkuk incorporated into a Kurdish federal region would be "a city of brotherhood" in which the rights of all communities would be respected and power would be shared.⁴⁶³

A Turkish commentator has insisted that "Turkey has to realise that the Turkomans have not been able to forge any kind of unity or set up viable organisations to become a political force in Iraq. On the contrary a weak Turkoman Front has not been constructive in bringing the Turkomans together, and the

⁴⁶⁰ "If Kurds Insist, Turkmen will Demand a Federal Region", **Zaman**, 5 January 2004 <http://www.zaman.com/?hn=4812&61=international>

⁴⁶¹ Saadet Oruç, "Iraqi Turkomans Concerned about Security", **Turkish Daily News**, 18 March 2004

⁴⁶² İlnur Çevik, "Turkey Flops...", **op.cit**

⁴⁶³ "Kurds Tell Ankara Arabisation True Danger in Kirkuk", **Turkish Daily News**, 23 June 2004

Turkoman Shi'ites have preferred to join forces with the other Shi'ites of Iraq".⁴⁶⁴ Yet Turkey has persisted in championing the rights of Turkomans. It continues to issue strident warnings to the Kurds and the US that Turkey is committed to their protection and to ensuring that Kirkuk's future must be multiethnic and not exclusively Kurdish, and therefore cannot be regarded as an exclusively internal matter.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶⁴ İlnur Çevik, "Start Living in the Real World in Iraq", **Turkish Daily News**, 26 May 2004

⁴⁶⁵ "Kirkuk Sensitivity", **Turkish Daily News**, 14 October 2004

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion we can say that the European imperial involvement in establishing the boundaries of newly established states after the First World War, made their national integrity vulnerable. Security concerns have been more vital and significant for these states than other issues such as economy. Since their establishment in 1920s, both Turkey and Iraq have been sensitive about their national integrity. Saadabad Pact of 1937, Baghdad Pact of 1955, and the agreement on Hot Pursuit in 1984, all confirm the strong security concerns of these two states in dealing with their foreign relations.

In considering the potential threats to Turkey and Iraq, it is evident that the Kurdish question occupies a significant place in their foreign policy. As this question is a trans-state issue, we see that Turkey's approach to Iraq since the second Gulf War was influenced by the Kurdish question in northern Iraq and its impact on the Kurds in Turkey. All other geopolitical or strategic considerations were less important in comparison. Therefore, Turkey's first priority was to ensure the existence of a stable and unitary government in Baghdad, which would put an end to the Kurdish demands of federation or independence in northern Iraq.

As a matter of fact, after the collapse of Soviet Union, Turkey which was a buffer against the Soviet's expansionism, lost its former geostrategic importance. Turgut Özal, the then president of Turkey realized this fact and tried to have a more active role in the region. Therefore he started an active, confident and high profile style foreign policy. That is why we see that during the Gulf War, he assumed an active role in the alliance against Iraq. He also looked at the Kurdish question as an old taboo which must be removed. As he saw that the Gulf War provided a dramatic popularity in northern Iraq for the Kurds, in the eyes of West, Özal tried to use this for Turkey and change Turkey's image in the world. Özal allowed the establishment of a *de facto* autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq, because he had played a central role and initiated the introduction of the idea of a safe haven. He tried to use the Iraqi Kurds to control Turkey's Kurdish problem, particularly the PKK.

Therefore, after the war he initiated a dialogue and regular contacts with the Iraqi Kurdish leaders, Masoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani.

These liberal policies were abandoned after the death of Özal, particularly those towards Iraq and northern Iraqi Kurds. This study, therefore, answers the reasons of Turkey's failure in its foreign policy towards Iraq. Turkey wished a unitary government in Baghdad but we saw that in the end the Iraqi regime collapsed and Saddam was toppled down. Turkey wanted to prevent the Kurds in northern Iraq from establishing a federal state, but in the end we saw that their demands were guaranteed. Turkey tried to use the Turkomans and particularly INTF as a card against Kurdish demands by giving all kinds of support to it, but we saw that in the elections on 30 January 2005, the INTF was able to achieve only 93,000 votes.

Turkey's policy of denying ethnic identities including the Kurdish, in public sphere as well as the state's sole emphasis on military means to deal with the Kurdish issue led to increasing Kurdish ethno-nationalism in Turkey. Turkey did not make any distinction between the terror of PKK and the Kurds generally and their demands. In its foreign policy towards northern Iraq, Turkey also emphasized the PKK and its presence there. This study demonstrated that Iraqi Kurds on the one hand cooperated with Turkey against the PKK, on the other hand, they supported the solution of Kurdish question in Turkey in a peaceful way by moving toward a more democratic and multicultural society in which the Kurds are able to express openly their identity without undermining the territorial integrity and stability of the Turkish state.

I think that Turkey can redefine its policy towards Iraq generally and particularly towards the Kurds there, as they have a lot of mutual interests. Even an independent Kurdish state can be considered not as a threat to Turkish interests as many believe that sooner rather than later it will be the road the Kurds will travel. Since 1991, they have a *de facto* state, protected by the US no-fly zone from Iraqi invasion. They received 13 percent of the Iraqi money achieved from oil sales allowed by the United Nations. So, their region is currently prospering in spite of the fighting between KDP and PUK from 1994 to 1998, and even can be considered as a model of economic and democratic success for other Middle Eastern states. In

addition to these, the Iraqi Kurds, for the first time since the creation of the failed state of Iraq by Britain, have a powerful ally in the US, a situation which was brought about by Turkey's refusal to allow the US to use its territory in March 2003. If the Iraqi Kurds continue to maintain their *de facto* independence into the foreseeable future and be convinced that Iraq can not sustain a federal democracy, then a Kurdish state will become increasingly possible.

In any situation, the Iraqi Kurds should try to maintain good relations with Turkey, a powerful neighbour, a candidate for membership in the European Union, because they are in a land-locked region which is dependent on Turkey economically. Thus, the Iraqi Kurds should convince Turkey that they do not interfere in domestic affairs of Turkey by encouraging the Turkish Kurds to rebel against this state. On the contrary, the Iraqi Kurds should encourage Turkey's democratic reforms, which will help lead to eventual Turkish membership in the EU and thus help solve the Kurdish problem in Turkey without secession. If Turkey joins the EU, its fears about Iraqi Kurdistan would not remain because this membership would guarantee Turkish territorial integrity. If Turkey joins the EU, the influence of the Turkish military on political decisions regarding issues such as Iraqi Kurds diminish. On the other hand, a Turkey, out of the EU, will be more likely to go back to its traditional national-security policy and consider the Iraqi Kurds as a threat.

Turkey can also benefit from friendly relations with the Iraqi Kurds by fostering stronger economic relations between the two. These relations had suffered for years because of the instability caused by Iraq's wars and US-led sanctions on it. Economic developments in Iraqi Kurdistan and its oil-wealth will benefit the Kurds of Turkish southeast who so badly need a better economic situation. This friendly relations will also have a positive impact on Turkish Kurds as we discussed that any rhetoric against Kurds in northern Iraq merely serves to increase the alienation of Kurds in Turkey.

Since 2004, Turkish-Kurdish cooperation has existed alongside tension and menacing rhetoric. This was symbolised by Turkey's expression of sympathy to the Kurds in the wake of the suicide bombing at a meeting in Erbil in February 2004. The bombing killed many people, including a number of leading Kurdish political

figures, and many of the injured were treated in Turkish hospitals where they were visited by Foreign Minister Gül.⁴⁶⁶ Both Turkey and the Kurdish political parties have also encouraged the flourishing relationships between Turkish commercial interests and the KRG and the newly Kurdish administered areas beyond it. Turkish companies built the new Sulaymaniyah University campus. It is also said that Turkey has struck a deal that will allow “Air Kurdistan” to fly into İstanbul from Erbil.⁴⁶⁷

Recently there are some debates that Turkey should accept the reality of northern Iraq’s autonomy, but to ensure its economic and political dependence on Turkey. In Summer 2004, Massoud Barzani insisted that Turkey’s special envoy to Iraq, Osman Korutürk had indicated to him that Turkey no longer objected to an autonomous Kurdistan inside a loosely federal Iraq.⁴⁶⁸ In *de facto* terms, Turkey clearly recognise the KRG’s reality now. One Turkish observer has even claimed to detect the beginnings of a debate in Turkey over whether its interests might best be served by being “the midwife of Kurdish independence in northern Iraq”.⁴⁶⁹ Although, these debates have not been materialised in practice but these developments show that Turkey and the KRG as secular, pro-Western, democratised and geographically adjacent, have some underlying logic to a closer relationship and can cooperate with each other.

⁴⁶⁶ “New Opening with the Iraqi Kurds”, **Turkish Daily News**, 16 February 2004.

⁴⁶⁷ Yusuf Kanli, “Have We Recognised the State of Kurdistan”, **Turkish Daily News**, 11 November 2004.

⁴⁶⁸ “Kurds Surprised by Turkey’s Stand on Autonomy”, **Turkish Daily News**, 28 June 2004.

⁴⁶⁹ International Crisis Group, “Iraq: Allaying ...”, **op.cit.**, p.16.

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