EXPLAINING U.S. FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ (2003-2015)

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Abstract

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The objective of this thesis is to examine U.S. foreign policy towards the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) from 2003-2015. It argues that after 2003 there has been a considerable change in U.S. policy towards the KRI, and attempts to explain the key reasons behind this change.

The regime change in Iraq in 2003 can be considered the beginning of a dramatic departure from the U.S.' traditional policy towards the Kurds, which was mostly embodied in the rejection of any Kurdish aspirations for autonomy and independence. From 2003, the U.S. backed the Kurds and pursued more flexible policy towards the KRI, yet it was always limited by the U.S.' position on maintaining Iraq as a unitary state. Whilst the U.S. worked with the Kurds and supported Kurdish autonomous region, it nevertheless blocked the Kurdish aspirations for independence. In particular when it appeared to threaten U.S. policy in Iraq and the Middle East.

However, this U.S. policy changed further from 2012 to 2015, during which the KRI was seen as almost the final platform of stability in Iraq, a perception that was strengthened by the rise of ISIL in 2014. Thus, the U.S. position towards Kurdish interests and even a Kurdish independent state changed, as the KRI in particular became more important to the U.S. strategy in Iraq and region.

However, the position of the KRI highlights a wider set of issues. The regime change in Iraq in 2003 was latest part of the U.S.' wider strategy to enhance its regional hegemony, and so its behaviour towards the Kurds depended on the extent to which they contributed to its interests. As such, this thesis provides a case study to explain the changing approach of U.S. policy towards the KRI, and in doing so also provides a useful and detailed case study of U.S.-Kurdish policy.

Nawzad Abdullah Shukri

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the soul of my uncle who was martyred in 2014 while defending Kurdistan and protecting Kurdish people from Islamic terrorist groups.

Acknowledgments

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List of Acronyms

CIA   The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency

CPA   Coalition transitional authority

FP   Foreign Policy

GCC   Gulf Cooperation Council

IGC   Iraqi Governing Council

INA   Iraq National Accord

INC   The Iraqi National Congress

INSS   Institute for National Strategic Studies

IR   International Relation

ISIS   Islamic state in Iraq and Syria

ISIL   Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant

ITG   Iraqi Transitional Government

KRG   Kurdistan Regional Government

KRI   Kurdistan Region of Iraq

NSS   the National Security Strategy United States of America

ORHA   Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance

PDK   Kurdistan Democratic Party

PUK   Patriotic Union of Kurdistan

SA   Security Agreement

SFA   Strategic Framework Agreement

TAL   Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period

UNAMI   United Nations Assistance Mission—Iraq

WMD   Weapon of Mass Destruction

MEA   Middle East Arena

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This thesis analyses and explains U.S. foreign policy towards the KRI[1] from 2003-2015. It attempts to examine the key change that occurred in the U.S.' position and perspective towards the KRI and determine the central reasons behind this change. The U.S. policy towards the Kurds – in the form of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq – was determined by the wider U.S. strategy to maintain its core interests in the Middle East. This thesis argues that, in post-2003 Iraq, the U.S. perspective towards the Kurdish interests changed, primarily because the situation on the ground changed and the KRI came to be of strategic importance to the U.S.' strategy to maintain regional hegemony, ensure stability, retain access to oil supplies, counteract terrorism and contain Iranian influence in Iraq.

This is an important topic to study because, since the Cold War, U.S. policy towards Kurdistan has become an increasingly important part of its foreign policy in the Middle East. The Kurds and their claims for regional independence have always been an important factor in Middle Eastern politics. This has been the case whichever hegemonic power has been in control of the region, from the Ottoman Empire, to the British Empire to the unipolar moment of U.S. power following the end of the Cold War. Iraq was and has become an important part of U.S. strategies for maintaining hegemony and its interests in the Middle East. Within this framework, the Bush administration (2001-2009) took forward steps for regional transformation in the

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[1] It is crucial to clarify that the Iraqi state is an artificial one, created by Britain after WWI, and that Iraqi Kurdistan was forcibly attached at the time. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, the political equation altered. With the 1991 intervention in Iraq and its subsequent consequences, a *de facto* Kurdish region emerged. In particular, following the Kurdish uprising in 1991, the United States and its allies established the buffer zone in northern Iraq according to Resolution 688, and protected the Kurdish people from the Baath regime's attacks. In 1992, for the first time in Kurdish history, the Kurds created a parliament and elected a government. The territory that had been ruled by the Kurdish authorities was then termed the Kurdistan Region. During the period 1992-2003, both the region and its authority were considered to be *de facto* entities and were not recognised by either the central government in Baghdad or by the regional and global powers. This situation continued until the Baath regime under Saddam was overthrown in 2003. After the toppling of the Saddam regime, new political events occurred both in Iraq and at the regional level. See, M. M. Gunter and M. H. Yavuz, 'The Continuing Crisis in Iraqi Kurdistan', *Middle East Policy*, vol. 12, no. 1 (2005), pp. 122-133.; G. R. V. Stansfield, 'Chapter 7: The Kurdish Dilemma: The Golden Era Threatened', *The Adelphi Papers*, vol. 43, no. 354 (01/01; 2013/08, 2003), pp. 131-148.

Middle East, and the removal of the Saddam regime became part of the U.S.' broader strategy to enhance its position.[2] From 2003, the Bush administration intensified its efforts to transform Iraq into a strategic partner for the United States' control of the Middle East, realising that controlling Iraq's considerable oilfields and strategic geopolitical location would favour its policy in the region and would give U.S. the opportunity to remove and/or confront unfriendly and anti-U.S. regimes.[3]

However, regime change in Iraq and its aftermath and implications have not been kind to U.S. strategy. The United States wished to establish a united, strategic, and stable partner in Baghdad and bring regional transformation as part of a wider strategy to enhance its hegemony, yet it has encountered massive challenges that have forced different U.S. administrations to continually review and revise U.S. policy towards Iraq and the wider region, which has directly affected and changed U.S.-Kurdish policy. It is notable that the level of this change was different between 2003 and 2015. From 2003 to 2011, the U.S. policy towards Kurdish demands was limited by the former's support of Iraqi territorial integrity, which led it to back the Kurdish federal region within the framework of the Iraqi state. However, between 2012 and 2015 the policy changed further. In particular, after the incursion of ISIL into Iraq in 2014 and widespread regional instability which the U.S. policy in Iraq suffered a major setback.

The deterioration of Iraqi security, the rise of ISIL, and the increasing role of Iran, Russia and China as regional powers may signal the decline of U.S. regional hegemony in the region. These developments have shifted the political equation on the ground against U.S. strategy and interests. Hence, the U.S. policy towards the KRI has altered further, not only because the situation on the ground has changed but also because the Kurds have become of strategic importance to the United States in maintaining its national interests and confronting the challenges that its policy has encountered. Hence, the U.S. has shown more willingness to work with the KRG as a reliable and secure partner in Iraq and demonstrated more understanding regarding Kurdish aspirations for more autonomy and even independence. Therefore, this thesis provides a detailed case

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[2] For example, just after the 9/11 attack, Donald Rumsfeld is reported by a witness to have said, 'Best info fast. Judge whether good enough to hit S.H. @same time – not only UBL. Go massive. Sweep it all up. Things related and not'. Quoted in D. MacDonald, *Thinking History, Fighting Evil: Neoconservatives and the Perils of Analogy* (Lexington: New York, 2009), p. 124. Even at this stage, U.S. officials were examining how the response to 9/11 could expand to reshaping the politics of the Middle East via Iraq.
[3] See MacDonald's chapter 6 and also chapter 3 of T. Ricks, *Fiasco* (London: Penguin 2006).

study of U.S. policy towards the KRI. In doing so it also provides an important case study of the changing nature of U.S. foreign policy and power in the Middle East.

1.2 Literature Review

There has been little academic work undertaken on U.S. policy toward the Kurdistan region. The majority of the research conducted in this area has drawn attention to the need to investigate the Kurdish issue within the Iraq state, and has thus ignored the external dimensions of the Kurdish question. However, some researchers have concentrated on U.S. foreign policy and the Kurdish issue. The major study undertaken on–Kurdish-U.S. ties was Marianna Charountaki's 2011 text, *"The Kurds and U.S. Foreign Policy: International Relations in the Middle East Since 1946"*. This book is considered to be one of the most important studies that has attempted to investigate the relations between Kurds and the U.S. in the Middle East. Charountaki's central research aim was to question "whether the Kurds have influenced U.S. foreign policy, and if there is such a thing as a relationship between U.S. foreign policy and the Kurds in the form of an interaction between a state and 'non-state 'actor".[4] This study mainly concentrates on the relations between U.S. and the Kurds in four parts of Kurdistan, namely, Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey, since 1946. Charountaki argues that the U.S. has treated the Kurdish issue in accordance with the principles of 'de-facto and non-state actor'.[5] Moreover, this study argues that the U.S. -Kurdish ties started from 'contact' to covert ties, and finally to overt ties and an 'institutionalized relationship' post-2003.[6] However, Charountaki's book did not pay enough attention to the developments after 2003 and its ramifications over U.S.-Kurdish policy.

In the same direction, Michael M. Gunter's 2011 article published in '*Insight Turkey magazine*' tried to clarify U.S. foreign policy towards the four parts of Kurdistan, Iran, Syria, Iraq and Turkey. This article entitled "The Five Stages of American Foreign Policy towards the Kurds", discusses more generally the U.S. policy towards the Kurds. Gunter argues that the U.S. does not have a grand strategy towards the Kurds in these

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[4] M. Charountaki, the Kurds and U.S. Foreign Policy: International Relations in the Middle East since 1945, (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 1-2.
[5] See ibid.
[6] See ibid.

four countries. He continued to say that for the U.S., the countries that Kurds live in are more essential than the Kurds.[7]

This thesis, in contrast to Charountaki and Gunter works, attempts to identify the key Iraqi internal and external factors which drive the U.S.-Kurdish policy and attempts to explore why and how the U.S. position towards Kurdish demands, such as Kurdish independence, federalism, Kirkuk and the disputed areas has changed. Further, it attempts to explore the key reasons behind the change in the U.S.-Kurdish policy in post-invasion Iraq. Moreover, this thesis is unique in that it attempts to explain and analyze the rise of ISIL and its implications over the U.S. policy towards Iraq and Kurdistan region. Additionally, this thesis argues that between 2003 to 2015 there has been real change in U.S. position towards Kurdish interests in Iraq including Kurdish independent state.

1.3 Research Design

According to Burnham (2008), "Research design is the logical structure of the research inquiry that the political scientist is engaged upon. It is the plan, the structure and the strategy of the investigation so conceived as to obtain answers to the research questions or problems".[8] With this in mind, Kothari (2002) identifies the key points which research design should incorporate. These points include "a clear statement of the research problem, procedures and techniques to be used for gathering information, the population to be studied and methods to be used in processing and analysing data".[9] In this context, the following steps explain the research design of this study.

1.3.1 Research Problem

Following the removal of the Saddam regime from power in 2003, there has been a significant alteration in the track and directions of the U.S. policy towards the KRI and

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[7] M. M. Gunter, 'The Five Stages of American Foreign Policy towards the Kurds', *Insight Turkey*, 2 November 2011, pp. 93-96.

[8] P. Burnham, *Research Methods in Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). p.39.

[9] C. Kothari, *Research methodology: Methods and Techniques* (New Age International, 2004), p. 32.

its interests. For a long time, U.S. administrations did not demonstrate any intention to support the Kurds and their struggle for autonomy or independence in the Middle East, instead pursuing a purely traditional policy that manifested in avoiding recognising any Kurdish attempts at creating their own entity. In reality, there have been many reasons behind this U.S. position. For one thing, the U.S. authorities were concerned that backing Kurdish aspirations would pose a serious threat to their own hegemonic position in the Middle East, believing that Kurdish separatism would lead to widespread instability, the disintegration of the security system, the expansion of terrorist groups, and the disruption of oil throughout the region, which would pose serious consequences to U.S. national interests. In particular, the U.S. feared that the partition of Iraq would benefit its regional and international rivals, including Iran and Russia, which could shift the balance of power. Therefore, the strategy of keeping Kurds inside Iraq was part of its wider policy to preserve the old security system in the Middle East and prevent its rivals, in particular Iran, from dominating Iraq.

However, between 2003 and 2015 the U.S. administration has shown a new and broader understanding regarding Kurdish demands for autonomy, Kirkuk and the disputed areas, the distribution of power and even the creation of Kurdistan as an independent state in Iraq. In this regard, the U.S. has not exclusively placed stress on maintaining the territorial integrity of Iraq. This thesis questions why U.S. foreign policy towards the KRI changed between 2003 and 2015, further probing how the change came about and exploring the nature of it. In effect, this alteration in U.S. policy was related to the accelerated developments and transformations that occurred in Iraq and the wider region. These transformations significantly changed the situation and political equation on the ground, and the Kurdistan Region become vital to the U.S. strategy in Iraq and the Middle East.

Since 2003, the key U.S. strategy has concentrated on preserving hegemony, maintaining regional stability and bringing regional transformation to control the Middle East. Within this context, the U.S.' key objectives of regime change in Iraq were to establish democratic and secure partners in Baghdad and transform Iraq into a key partner, to enhance its position. However, after 2003 the U.S. strategy in Iraq has faced serious challenges and difficulties that have necessitated the revision of U.S. policy and work with the Kurds. The failure to build democratic system in Baghdad, the spread of terrorist groups, the continuing insurgency and instability, the increasing

influence of external powers (e.g., Iran, China, and Russia), in particular after the Arab Spring, and the incursion of ISIL into Iraq have all forced the U.S. to develop a more flexible attitude towards the KRG's demands. In particular, the KRI came to be seen by the U.S. as a major partner in pursuing its strategy in Iraq and the Middle East, and therefore its policy towards the KRI altered.

Hence, despite the importance of these transformations in the U.S.' position towards the Kurds after 2003, scholarly research thus far has not paid attention to this particular area. In this regard, no single academic work has focused on this new direction of U.S. policy towards Kurdish demands, in particular its flexible position towards a Kurdish independent state and why such a change occurred. In effect, the majority of academic work that has been published regarding U.S.-Kurdish policy has attempted to analyse U.S. policy towards the Kurdistan region, concentrating on the period before 2003. Moreover, due to accelerated development in Iraq and the region, in particular since 2014 and the rise of ISIL, more work on U.S. policy towards Iraq, the KRI, and the wider region is required. In this context, this research has found that there is a significant gap in academic research in this area, one that this study addresses and thus fill by being the first to examine and analyse all these transformations and their implications for U.S.-Kurdish policy. The major research aims of this thesis are to examine the following question: *What are the key reasons for the change in U.S. policy towards the KRI?*

This thesis, by concentrating on the U.S.' key driving factors in the Middle East, hypothesises that following 2003 there has been a considerable change in U.S-Kurdish policy. Further, it argues that the U.S. policy towards the KRI has changed, because the situation on the ground changed and the Kurds have become of strategic importance to the U.S. strategy in Iraq and region. This research has endeavoured to verify the validity of this hypothesis.

1.3.2 Research Approach

Deciding to use either quantitative or qualitative research is an indispensable step to determine the way in which a researcher works in order to fulfil his research goals. Ranjit Kumar (2011) observes that the obvious distinction between both methods is that

quantitative research mostly depends on 'classification and measurement' to analyse data.[10] Kumar distinguishes this from qualitative research, where the main focus is "to understand, explain, explore, discover and clarify the situation, feeling, perception, attitudes, values, beliefs and experiences of groups of people. The study designs are therefore often based on deductive rather than inclusive logic".[11] This study will apply methods of qualitative research to examine and analyse U.S. policy towards the KRI, and through a comprehensive investigation it will answer some crucial questions such as why, what and how. The nature of this study will, therefore, be analytical and descriptive.

1.3.3 Conceptual Framework

This thesis has adopted the conceptual framework around the U.S. strategic interests in order to examine U.S. policy and to explore the key factors which influence and affect the direction of the U.S.' strategy towards the Middle East. In this regard, chapter two will provide in detail the central factors driving the USFP towards the region and Kurdistan in particular. Generally, U.S. policy in the Middle East has mostly focused on maintaining its hegemony, security of oil supplies, maintaining stability, promoting democracy, confronting terrorist groups, preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and supporting its security allies. The U.S.' aspiration to be a unique hegemonic power in the region is considered to be one of the key objectives. The purpose of hegemony which this thesis refers to is the state which dominates the international system, remains the sole and unique actor globally and no military power can threaten its security and survival or confront its military power.[12] Many scholars have stressed that being a hegemonic power is crucial for the state to defend its national interests and security. In this regard, Mearsheimer argues that being the sole hegemonic power would be a crucial factor for maintaining and enhancing the security and survival

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10 R. Kumar, Research Methodology: a step-by-step guide for beginners, 3rd ed (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2011), p. 104.

11 ibid., p. 104.

12 J.J. Mearsheimer, *the Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York; London: Norton, 2001), p. 40.; J. J. Mearsheimer, 'The Future of America's Continental Commitment' in *No End to Alliance: The United States and Western Europe,* Geir Lundestad, ed., (New York: St. Martin's, 1998), pp. 224-225.

of states. Therefore, all states attempt to increase their power and the final goal is to be a hegemonic power.[13]

Within this context, since the Cold War the U.S.'s Middle East Policy has been aimed at achieving or preserving its regional hegemony as a part of its broader strategy to attain global domination. Following the end of the Cold War, and in particular after the events of September 11th, the U.S. authorities have pursued a global domination strategy and, for this purpose, they have mostly concentrated on military power in order to remove anti U.S. regimes in the region.[14] President Bush in 2002, stressed that "America has, and intends to keep, military strengths beyond challenge".[15] In the same year the National Security Strategy of the United States stated that "It is time to reaffirm the essential role of American military strength. We must build and maintain our defenses beyond challenge. Our military's highest priority is to defend the United States".[16] It continued by arguing that in order to achieve this, the U.S. military must stress on the following points:

- assure our allies and friends;
- dissuade future military competition;
- deter threats against U.S. interests, allies, and friends; and
- decisively defeat any adversary if deterrence fails.[17]

Further, for a long time, oil has played a key role in the American Middle East strategy and U.S.[18] administrations have continually emphasised that the security of oil and prevention of disruption to the global market is vital to its strategic interests. As Daniel

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[13] J. J. Mearsheimer, 'Structural Realism,' in *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith, eds., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 71-75.

[14]J.J. Mearsheimer, 'What is America's Purpose?*' National Interest* No. 139 (September/October 2015), pp. 34-35.

[15] G.W. Bush, *Address to the Nation,* (Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), 1 June 2002).

[16] U.S. Department of State, The *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (September 2002) http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/63562.pdf

[17] ibid

[18] According to the Marxism theory, the major purpose of the U.S. external policy is to develop and resolve its own economic challenges by controlling oil sources, finding cheap markets, and undertaking external investment. in this regards Marxism scholars argue that the crucial reason for the invasion of Iraq in 2003 was to take control of its oil resources. see T. Dodge, 'US foreign policy in the Middle East', in *US foreign policy,* Cox, Michael, and Doug Stokes(ed). 2th edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 197-216, pp. 198-218.; B, Schmidt, 'theories of US foreign policy' in *US foreign policy,* Cox, Michael, and Doug Stokes, pp. 12-13.; However, Realism theory mostly concentrated on the security of oil supplies. In this regards the key objective of the U.S. policy in the Middle East is to secure the follow of oil into global market and prevent its disruption.; D. Lieberfeld.; 'Theories of Conflict and the Iraq War', *International Journal of Peace Studies,* (2005): pp. 1-21

Yergin pointed out, as the Nixon Administration came to office, oil and energy were beginning to rise on the American political agenda.'[19] This has not changed over the last forty years. In this regard, U.S. authorities have stressed that it would confront any attempts from any state which aimed to disrupt the flow of oil to the global market.[20] This concentration on oil is related to many vital points; the U.S. economy mostly depends upon exporting oil from the Middle East, and therefore any disruption to the flow of oil would pose serious damage to its economy. Moreover, the U.S. as a great power has attempted to strengthen and enhance its military, political and economic position in the Middle East, in particular the Gulf region which has huge oilfields. This is not only to prevent the rise of the hegemony of oil power and to diversify its oil sources, but also the U.S.' belief that access and control of oilfields is considered to be a major factor in gaining its aspiration, which is to become a global hegemonic power. As David Harvey stresses, there has been a direct connection between global hegemonic power and controlling the oilfields in the Middle East, and any power able to control oilfields in the Middle East would be able to become the dominant power in the world.[21]

Hence, the great powers compete with each other to maximize its global economic wealth and prevent its rivals from dominating the wealthiest economic region.[22] This competition has mostly concentrated on the Persian Gulf region, due to the presence of the world's major oilfields there.[23] The U.S. authorities have argued that the Gulf region was "a stupendous source of strategic power, and one of the greatest material prizes in world history".[24] In this regard, the security of oilfields and energy is considered vital for the U.S.'s survival and its economy and from this arises the need for it to remain a strong and hegemonic power in the region.

Furthermore, stability/instability,[25] is regarded as another factor which has influenced the direction of U.S. policy towards the Middle East. Since the Cold War, the U.S. has

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[19] D. Yergin, *The Prize* (London: Simon and Schuster 1997), p.589.
[20] J. Carter, *State of the Union Address* (Washington, DC: January 23, 1980)
<http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/speeches/su80jec.phtml> [Accessed9 June 2014].
[21] D. Harvey, New *Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) , p. 19. See also Yergin, The Prize, chapters 29-31 on OPEC and especially the Gulf in the 1970s.
[22] Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics,* pp. 143-145.
[23] ibid. pp. 143-145.
[24] N. Chomsky, World Orders, Old and New, New edn (London: Pluto Press, 1997; 1996), p. 325.
[25] In general, Realist theory considers that military power is a central factor to create and maintain stability. See Felix, Berenskoetter and Williams, Michael J., eds. Power in world politics. (Routledge, 2007).; However, liberalism linked preserving stability with the democracy norms, international

seen that maintaining stability in the region would favour its strategic national interests,[26] and would prevent its rival from dominating the security system in the region. Therefore, U.S. administrations have seen that instability not only poses a serious threat to the security of oil, a drop in oil production,[27] and the spread of terrorist groups, but it also undermines U.S. strategy to strengthen its position and prevent its rivals from imposing their hegemony over the region. Moreover, for a long time the U.S. was concerned about the instability which can derive from sectarian and ethnic conflict in the region, by believing that such instability would pose a grave threat to the security of its allies, the majority of whom are multi-ethnic and religious. Hence, the U.S. has always attempted to prevent instability in the region.

Additionally, the promotion and installation of democracy in the Middle East is considered one of the other U.S. objectives in the Middle East, in particular during George W. Bush's presidency (2001-2009), where he was influenced by neoconservative perspectives.[28] It is notable that since the twentieth century, the U.S. has adopted the spread of freedom/democracy as a policy. This tendency started with Woodrow Wilson's fourteen points for world peace after World War I [29] followed by the U.S. after 1945 and the formation of West European democracies with the Marshall Plan.[30] However, this policy was not applied to the Middle East until recently and as part of US national strategy, under the 'war on terror' under George W. Bush (2001-

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institutions and economic interdependence. See Francis, Fukuyama, The End of History and TheLast Man (Simon and Schuster, 2006.).; Francis Fukuyama, 'Should Democracy Be Promoted or Demoted?,' The Washington Qutlrterly Vol. 31, No. I (Winter 2007-2008), pp. 23-45.; Sherif Abdel Rahman, Seif El-Nasr, 'Strategies of stability: US interventions in the Middle East (1953-2008): a social complexity approach',(Doctoral thesis, University of Liverpool, 2012), pp.78-121.; Constructivism theory concentrated on shared norms, idea and identities and common values as a basis of creating stability. see Sherif Abdel Rahman, Seif El-Nasr, 'Strategies of stability: US interventions in the Middle East (1953-2008): a social complexity approach', pp. 78-121.

[26] W. J. Burns, 'Toward a Positive Agenda for the Middle East, Remarks to Middle East Institute', *U.S. Department of State,* <http://2001-2009.state.gov/p/nea/rls/rm01/6934.htm> [accessed 21 January 2015].

[27] J. A. Nagl and B. M, Burton,'After the Fire: Shaping the Future U.S. Relationship with Iraq', (Centre for New a American Security), <http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/NaglBurton_AfterTheFire%20Future%20US%20Relationship%20with%20Iraq_June09.pdf> [accessed 21 January 2015]., pp. 1-26 .

[28] R. Haar, 'Explaining George W. Bush's Adoption of the Neoconservative Agenda after 9/11,' Politics & Policy vol.38, no.5 (2010), p. 965-990.pp. 970-984.

[29] See R.H. Jackson and S. Georg, Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) PP. 30-34.

30 See M. Cox 'From the Truman Doctrine to the Second Superpower Detente: The Rise and fall of the Cold War', Journal of Peace Research, 27(1), 1990, pp. 25-41.

2009).[31] The neoconservatives in the Bush administration argued that democratization of the region should be started by removing authoritarian regimes and establishing a democratic system in the region which would be pro-U.S. [32] The U.S. authorities saw that this would not only reduce the anti-U.S. sentiment in the Muslim world, but it would also maintain America's security interests. [33] In this regard, they stressed that the major threat to U.S. national interests is not embodied in wars among states, but rather the lack of democracy, freedom and respect for human rights within autocratic states. Therefore, the spread of democracy would minimize threats and maintain U.S. national interests.[34]

Overall, this thesis focuses on these U.S. objectives to examine U.S. strategy towards the Middle East and Kurdistan region of Iraq and will demonstrate how and why these driving factors pushed the U.S. to work with the KRG and support its aspirations.

1.3.4 Data Collection

This thesis will utilise primary and secondary sources and, importantly, will differentiate between the two. Pierce (2008) defines primary data as "original, unedited and first-hand' and secondary data as "second-hand, edited and interpreted material".[35] Regarding primary sources, this thesis will rely on 'elite interviewing'. The nature of these interviews will be face to face and 'semi -structured' , as defined by Kothari.[36] In particular, I will try to interview some official policymakers in Kurdistan, especially those who are in the decision-making circles and who have a role in the political process in Kurdistan. Secondly, this study will utilise primary material in order to analyse and interpret data and support the objectives of the study. This thesis has used declassified documents regarding U.S. foreign policy towards the KRI. These published documents can be obtained from the current and previous U.S. administrations,

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[31] See haar, 'Explaining George W. Bush's Adoption of the Neoconservative Agenda after 9/11,' pp. 965-990.

[32] T. Carothers, 'Promoting Democracy and Fighting Terror,' *Foreign Affairs*, sec. 82, pp. 84-97, pp. 91-92.

[33] S. R. David, 'American Foreign Policy towards the Middle East: A Necessary Change?' *Israel Affairs* vol.12, no.4 (1 2013/08, 2006), pp. 614-641, p. 637.

[34] ibid. p. 637.

35 R. Pierce, Research Methods in Politics (Sage, 2008). P. 80.

36 Kothari, Research methodology: Methods and Techniques, p. 231.

Department of State, the KRG and the KRP website. Another form of primary material used in this study will be public statements, official speech from the Kurdish and U.S. authorities, press conferences, congressional hearing report, congress report, and television interviews. Other primary and secondary sources can be obtained through the website and university library. Finally, it will draw upon published books, journal articles, dissertations and any other relevant secondary sources. Throughout, the focus will be on primary, valuable and unbiased sources, analysing data and proving the validity of the research question.

1.4 Aims and Objectives

The objectives of this research will address the following points:

- To determine the key reasons which influenced and changed U.S. policy towards the KRI from 2003 to 2015
- To explore the influence of the U.S.' desire for Middle Eastern hegemony in affecting U.S.-Kurdish policy
- To clarify the influence of U.S. allies on the direction of U.S. foreign policy toward Kurdistan.
- To examine the U.S.-Iran competition in Iraq and its impact over U.S.-Kurdish policy
- To demonstrate that post-2003,there has been a significant change in U.S. policy towards the KRI and its demands.
- To examine how the convergence of interests between KRI and U.S. affected directions of U.S.-Kurdish policy.
- To explore the fallout and implications of rise of ISIL over the U.S.-Kurdish policy.

1.5 Overview of the Research

The first chapter has offered an overview of this thesis. This chapter will introduce the aims and objectives of the research, outline the research question and hypothesis, and provide an overview of the thesis's structure. It will also briefly introduce the methodology and theoretical framework, which will be used when conducting this research.

The second chapter will primarily focus on strategic U.S. interests and goals in the Middle East. This chapter will determine the major factors which affect U.S. policy towards the region. In this regard, the chapter concentrates on hegemony and the factors that link with this - oil, stability, terrorism, the prevention of the multiplication of WMD, the issue of democratization and on the tensions among rival states in the region. Moreover, it provides the context for the later chapters and will discuss, broadly, the key pillars of regional hegemony in the Middle East.

The third chapter will concentrate on the following three major points: the first is devoted to the discussion and analysis of the creation of Iraq and the rise of the Kurdish question in Iraq from 1921 to 2003, examining the reasons why this part of Kurdistan was annexed to Iraq. In this regard, the thesis concentrates on the role of external powers in the creation of Iraq and the incorporation of this part of Kurdistan into Iraq. The chapter will explain the role played by the British authorities in this sense. The second part of the chapter will discuss U.S. foreign policy towards Iraqi Kurdistan from 1958 to 1989 and will explain the key driving factors which affected U.S. policy towards the Iraqi Kurds. Moreover, this topic examines how the Cold War and the confrontation between the U.S. and USSR influenced the direction of U.S. policy towards the Kurds. The third topic of the chapter will focus on the stage which started in 1990 and ended in 2002 characterized by the unipolar system. In this regard it will explain the new direction of U.S. policy towards Iraq and Kurdistan. During this stage, new transformations in the world and the Middle East took place embodied in the transformations of the structure of the international system, Saddam's invasion of Kuwait, the uprising in Kurdistan, and the events of 11 September 2001. Moreover, the chapter will explain why the U.S. acted with the KRI only in terms of humanitarian aid and did not support the KRI's political rights.

The fourth chapter addresses the key Iraqi domestic factors which affected the U.S. policy towards the KRI from 2003 to 2011. First, an overview of the U.S.' policy development in Iraq is provided. Secondly, the U.S. objectives of stressing the territorial integrity of Iraq are addressed. The U.S. position towards the Kurds was often based on whether the Kurds were helping to keep Iraq together as a political unit, or were encouraging its further fragmentation. This often led the U.S. to shift away from the Kurds in favour of the Iraqi government, especially during Maliki's rule, even though Maliki pursued a sectarian and dictatorial policy towards Kurds and Sunnis, thus violating the permanent constitution. Alternatively, the security situation in Iraq at times was so disastrous that the U.S. turned to Kurdistan as a reliable ally to stabilize Iraq, confront terrorist groups and contain the influence of Shia religious groups. In this regard, the Kurds became an influential factor in advancing U.S. strategy in Iraq and the region. Therefore, U.S. authorities started to revise their policy towards the KRG and accept Kurdistan as a federal region.

Third, Kirkuk and disputed areas are examined in so far as they highlight the attitude of the U.S. towards the Kurdistan Regional Government. Generally, the U.S. position towards the contested areas had not been in favour of the KRG. Thus, the U.S. administration constantly, directly or indirectly, exerted pressure on the KRG to seek a compromise settlement regarding the contested territories. Fourthly, the conflict between Erbil and Baghdad is examined. Also, this connects with the Kirkuk issue since the struggle was mostly related to the distribution of oil and political power in Iraq. These issues are interconnected, but in the 2000s the U.S. considered Iraq's integrity the only way to achieve hegemony in the region.

The fifth chapter will discuss the external driving factors which influenced U.S. policy towards the KRI from 2003 to 2011. This chapter will comprehensively investigate the U.S. desire to enhance its regional hegemony and its impact on the U.S.-Kurdish policy. In particular, the chapter will discuss the attempt undertaken by the U.S. administration during this period to make Iraq a strategic partner for the control of the Middle East. As already explained, the U.S. considered that the partition of Iraq and Kurdish independence would change the balance of power and lead to the decline of its regional hegemony. Therefore, it would explain why despite U.S. support of Kurdish federal region, it rejected Kurdish independence and stressed on maintaining the territorial integrity of Iraq.

The chapter will also address the influence of the regional states over U.S. policy towards the KRI. In this regard, the author will focus on the role of Turkey, the Arab states and Iran and how they affected the U.S. policy towards the Kurdistan region.

Chapter six will determine and analyse the key internal and external driving factors affecting U.S. foreign policy toward the KRI from 2012 to 2015. This chapter will examine how and why the KRI came to be seen as a strategic partner by the U.S. authorities. The structure of this chapter will be as follows. Firstly, the author will try to examine the ramification of the marked deterioration of security in Iraq and its impact on the directions of U.S. policy towards Kurdistan. In this regard, the author will try to demonstrate how and why the collapse of security and stability in Iraq affected the U.S. policy and has pushed it to be more flexible towards Kurdish aspiration for independence.

Secondly, the chapter explains the emergence of the KRG as a new energy supplier and the ramifications of this for U.S. policy towards KRI. Additionally, It will examine the strategy of the KRG itself in developing its energy sector using it as a tool to influence the regional and international perspective towards the Kurds. The third point will concentrate on the role of the KRI as a reliable ally contributing to the U.S. hegemony, particularly in combating the rise of ISIL and maintaining regional stability. Fourthly, the chapter will look at Iran's domination over Iraq and its implications for the U.S. policy towards Iraq and Kurdistan. Finally, the chapter examines the new perspective of the U.S. allies in the region including Turkey, the Arab Gulf States and their impact over the U.S. policy towards KRI. The KRI became a key support to the U.S in its efforts to maintain hegemony in the region.

Chapter seven will summarise the overall argument of this dissertation and display the results and conclusions of the research.

Chapter 2: The U.S. Foreign Policy Objectives in the Middle East

Introduction

Before analysing U.S. foreign policy towards the Kurdistan region, this chapter examines the general drivers of U.S. foreign policy towards the Middle East. This provides a context for the later chapters which follow and it offers the conceptual framework which could be used as a guide to explain the changing approach of U.S. policy towards the Kurdistan region.

Within this context, the U.S.-Middle East policy can be understood and analysed within its attempts to maintain or enhance its regional hegemony. In this regard, since the end of the Cold War, U.S. foreign policy has been heavily concentrated on the Middle East and has been aimed at protecting its core interests. In order to analyse all aspects of U.S. strategic interests, this chapter will examine all the factors which drive the U.S. Middle East policy. These include: the U.S. attempts to enhance its regional hegemony and make a platform for global domination; the U.S. desire to maintain stability in the Middle East; the role of oil in U.S. Middle East policy; U.S. security policy which in recent decades has concentrated on confronting terrorist groups and preventing the spread of WMD; and finally, the chapter will discuss the U.S. attempts to spread the promotion of its democracy in the region which was also a part of its desire to maintain hegemony.

2.1. U.S. Foreign Policy Objectives in The Middle East

Since the Cold War, U.S. foreign policy has been mostly concentrated on the Middle East, due to economic, military, geostrategic and political considerations,[37] and has constantly strived to gain or maintain its hegemonic position in the region. Following the end of the Cold War and then the events of September 11 2011, U.S. administrations have attempted to implement the policy which maintains its core national interests in the Middle East. To this purpose, U.S. authorities have

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[37] Dodge, 'US foreign policy in the Middle East', pp. 198-218.

concentrated some major objectives as a vital priority in terms which can be determined by the following points:

2.1.1 Regional Hegemony

One of the key U.S. strategic objectives is to become the hegemonic power in the world and to enhance its regional hegemony in the Middle East. Mearsheimer argues that the state should maximize its power and should try to be the unique hegemonic power in the system. He considers this as the most influential strategy for guarantying the survival of the state,[38] because in such a situation its rivals cannot threaten its security and hegemony.[39]

> Hegemon power is a state that is so powerful that it dominates all the other states in the system. No other state has the military wherewithal to put up a serious fight against it. In essence, a hegemon is the only great power in the system. [40]

Since the Cold War the U.S. has intensified its attempts to gain or preserve its hegemonic power in the world. In this regard the key U.S. policies in the Middle East have concentrated on enhancing its regional hegemony as a part of a wider strategy to dominate the world. In this respect Krauthammer in 2001 argued that the U.S. administration was pursuing a hegemonic policy and argued that "we now have an administration willing to assert American freedom of action and the primacy of American national interests. Rather than contain American power within a vast web of constraining international agreements".[41]He continued by saying that, "the new unilateralism seeks to enhance American power and unashamedly deploy it on behalf of self-defined global ends".[42] On the same note (but from a different political perspective) Mearsheimer stressed that since the events of 11 September 2001, the U.S. authorities have increasingly pursued a global domination strategy and, for this purpose, they mostly concentrated on military power in order to remove anti-U.S. regimes in the

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[38] Mearsheimer, 'Structural Realism', p. 57.
[39] Mearsheimer, The further of American continual containment, p. 224.
[40] Mearsheimer, *the Tragedy of Great Power Politics,* p. 40.
[41]C. Krauthammer, *Krauthammer: The Bush Doctrine: 'New Unilateralism*, (8 June 2001) <http://www.chron.com/opinion/editorials/article/Krauthammer-The-Bush-doctrine-new-2055304.php > [accessed May 2014].
[42] ibid.

region.[43] In fact many authors from different analytical and political perspectives have examined the idea of U.S. hegemony and regional hegemony.[44]

It is notable that following the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, there has been a transformation in the international system from a 'bipolar' to a 'unipolar' system. This change was embodied by increasing U.S. hegemony in the world, especially in economic, military and technological concerns.[45] In this regard the American strategy has relied on maintaining and enhancing its preponderant and dominant position, especially in the Middle East, Europe and East Asia.[46] Hence, one of the major goals of U.S. policy in the Middle East has manifested itself in the installation and safeguarding of its regional hegemony. In order to achieve this goal, it has concentrated on several underlying factors. Controlling oilfields in the Middle East has been considered one of the central tools for maintaining this hegemony.[47] America has believed that access to plenty of oil is vital for preserving its hegemony in terms of economic and military scope in the world.[48]

There has been conflict and competition among 'superpowers' such as the U.S., Russia, China and the UK in order to dominate and impose their authority over major oilfields in the world generally and, more specifically, in the Persian Gulf and Caspian Sea.[49] The call for more oil in the world is increasing, and these states have been depending mostly on oil resources in this region.[50] They consider a constant flow of oil and access to oil sources as vital parts of a strategy to maintain their national interests. Consequently, these powers try to consolidate their position and place in the region and impose their hegemony.[51] Moreover, the U.S. policy of confronting terrorists groups,

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[43] Mearsheimer, 'What is America's Purpose?' pp. 34-35.

[44] C. Johnson, Nemesis. The Last Days of the American Republic (New York: Metropolitan 2006).; A. Bacevich, *The New American Militarism* (Oxford, Oxford University Press 2005) chapter seven 'Blood for Oil'.; Dionysis Markakis, *US Democracy Promotion in the Middle East: The Pursuit of Hegemony* (London Routledge 2016).

[45] C. W. Maynes, 'Principled" Hegemony,' *World Policy Journal* vol.14, no.3 (Fall, 1997), pp. 31-36, pp 31.; M. Mastanduno, 'Hegemonic order, September 11, and the consequences of the Bush revolution,' *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific,* vol.5, no.2 (2005), pp. 177-196.

[46] C. W. Maynes, 'Principled Hegemony' *World Policy Journal* vol.14, no.3 (Fall, 1997), pp. 31-36, p 31. ; Mastanduno, 'Hegemonic order, September 11, and the consequences of the Bush revolution, pp. 177-196.

[47] Harvey, *New imperialism, pp. 19*-25.

[48] ibid., pp. 20-25.

[49] M. T. Klare, *Blood and oil: the dangers and consequences of America's growing petroleum dependency* (London: Penguin, 2005), pp. 146-147. See also D. Yergin, *The Prize* , chapters 28 to 33.

[50] Klare, *Blood and oil: the dangers and consequences of America's growing petroleum dependency*, pp. 146-147.

[51] ibid., pp. 146-147.

brining regional transformations in the region, preventing WMD and maintaining stability as discussed in this chapter is to enhance its regional hegemony.

Another factor that the U.S. utilizes to maintain its regional hegemony in the Middle East and prevent the enemy from imposing their hegemony over the region is associated with making alliances and using them for this purpose. Israel, Turkey and Arab Gulf states are considered as the key states that the U.S. has relied upon to maintain its regional hegemony. Israel is considered to be one of the fundamental and most reliable allies of America in the Middle East. The U.S. has been very supportive of Israel in terms of economy, military and diplomacy; it is considered the largest recipient of U.S. external assistance.[52] America has continually confronted international pressures regarding this state, and has vetoed many Security Council resolutions condemning

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[52]J.J. Mearsheimer and M. Stephen. Walt, 'The Israeli Lobby,' *Journal of Palestine Studies* vol.35, no.3 (spring 2006), pp. 83-114, pp. 84-85.; S. McConnell, 'The Special Relationship with Israel: Is It worth the Costs?' *Middle East Policy* vol.17, no.4 (2010), pp. 67-79. It is notable Israel has many lobbies inside the U.S. which try to maintain Israeli interests. The Jewish lobby is considered the most effective one which mostly focuses on Israeli issues and the Middle east overall. This lobby consists of two key organizations, first "the conference of presidents of Major American Jewish organization" secondly, "American Israel Public Affairs Committee" (AIPAC). AIPAC, which was created in1954, is the most influential lobby in terms of affecting the Congressional stance towards the Israeli state. According to a Congress report, in 1997 the AIPAC lobby was the second most influential lobby after ''the American Association of Retired People''. The AIPAC lobby has proved its capability by maintaining legislations which are in favor of Israeli interests and blocking legislations which damage its interests. For example, during the 1970s, the Israel lobby attained support from 67 Congressional members that demanded that the president Gerald Rudolph Ford to back Israel in every peace initiative and peace process in the Middle East. In the 1980s AIPAC played an essential role in preventing Ronald Reagan's government from selling weapons to Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, due to it being an influential lobby, the Israeli state has obtained the highest rate of annual financial support since 1976 and acquired the biggest amount of support since the Second World War. It is unique in the sense that it regularly gains US militarily foreign assistance without commitment to any conditions. In addition, since 1982 the US has blocked about 32 resolutions in the United Nations that were aimed at criticizing Israel. See; Stephen Walt, The Israel Lobby, pp. 83-114.; J. Dumbrell and D. M. Barrett, *The making of U.S. foreign policy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 158.; Michael Massing, 'The Israel lobby', vol. 274 (22) June 10, 2002), p.6 .; Charountaki, *The Kurds and US foreign policy*, pp.78-80.; McCormick, James M., ed., 'Ethnic Interests Groups in US Foreign Policy', In: *The Domestic Sources of American Foreign Policy*: *Insights and Evidence*, 6th edn (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012), p.71.; Mearsheimer, John and Stephen Walt, 'The Israel Lobby,' *London Review of Books* vol.28, no.6 (2006), pp. 3-12, <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v28/n06/john-mearsheimer/the-israel-lobby> accessed 21 October 2013.

Israel.[53] This is a result of the U.S.'s belief that Israel is one of the most important strongholds from which to confront the impact of the Soviet Union in the Middle East.[54] Since the Cold War, there has been bilateral cooperation between both sides to confront threats that damage their national interests. Israel has been considered a major U.S. ally with a positive effect on regional security, as well as the major influential factor in confronting Islamic terrorist organisations and preventing WMD in the Middle East, in particular in Iran, Syria and the former Iraqi regime.[55]

Similarly, Turkey is considered another major U.S. ally in Europe and the Middle East; both sides have had common objectives in terms of security, stability, economy and politics. During the Cold War, the U.S. depended heavily on Turkey in the Middle East to confront the Soviet Union.[56] Since the Cold War, Turkey has supported U.S. policy to maintain regional stability in the Middle East, confronting terrorist groups and protecting the oil supply.[57] The Arab states allied with the U.S. have a strategic position in the Middle East and play a significant role in maintaining U.S. national interests in the region. The importance of these states for U.S. policy in the region is vital. The Arab Gulf states (United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Oman) are considered the major U.S. allies and partners contributing to stability and security in the region.[58] Moreover, the U.S. has had strong relationships with Saudi Arabia since 1945.[59] During the Cold War, Saudi Arabia supported the U.S. strategy in order to counter the threat of communism.[60] Moreover, in terms of security, regional hegemony, the economy and military power in the Middle East, there have been strong relations and cooperation between both sides. Saudi Arabia is considered a major, reliable friend of the U.S. in terms of oil supply. [61]

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[53] Mearsheimer, John and Stephen Walt, 'The Israel Lobby, pp. 3-12.

[54] D. 'Pollock and M. Eisenstadt, 'Friends with Benefits: Why the U.S.-Israeli Alliance is Good for America,' *Foreign Affairs*, 7 November 2012 .; McConnell, 'The Special Relationship with Israel', p. 68.

[55] ibid., p. 68.

[56] O. Karasapan, 'Turkey and US Strategy in the Age of Glasnost,' *Middle East Report*, no.160, Turkey in the Age of Glasnost (Sep. - Oct., 1989), pp. 4-10-22.

[57] A. Gül, 'Turkey: Vital Ally in the Cause of Long-Term Stability,' *American Foreign Policy Interests* vol.29, no.3 (2007), pp. 175-181, pp. 175-176.

[58] H. M. Jackson, 'Overview Of United States Of America' National Security Strategy 2009' (University of Washington, 2009), pp. 20-22, <https://digital.lib.washington.edu/researchworks/bitstream/handle/1773/4635/TF_SIS495E_2009.pdf?sequence=1> [accessed 22 November 2014].

[59] D. T. Dumke, 'Congress and the Arab Heavyweights: Questioning the Saudi and Egyptian Alliances,' *Middle East Policy* vol.13, no.3 (2006), pp. 88-100.

[60] ibid., pp. 88-100.

[61] ibid., pp. 88-100.

2.1.2 Maintaining Stability

The Middle East is considered one of the most unstable regions in the world for a number of reasons. Firstly, the majority of the states have been artificially established by external powers, notably the victorious states of the First World War,[62] without taking into account the interests of all ethnic groups.[63] Secondly, the Israeli- Arab conflict,[64] the Kurdish issue, the division of Kurdistan among regional states[65] and the sectarian conflict between Shia and Sunnis represent other sources of conflict.[66] Thirdly, the dictatorial systems in the region, the lack of democracy and freedom,[67] the presence of terrorist groups constitute other dimensions of instability in the region.[68] Finally, the continuing intervention of foreign powers to maintain their interests has further contributed to the instability and militarisation of the Middle East.

In this regard, Zbigniew Brzeinski argued that the Middle East has been an area of instability for a long period, and could realistically be named the 'new global Balkans' for its political, social and religious fragility.[69] Brzeinski stressed that the hostility in the Muslim world towards western countries has clear political motivations and that the U.S. would face many challenges in this region similar to the ones it faced fifty years ago in Europe.[70] From the U.S. perspective, maintaining stability and securing the Middle East is important and constitutes one of the major U.S. priorities,[71] and as Assistant Secretary of State William J. Burns, shortly after 11 September 2011 argued, the U.S. continually stressed the stability and security of the Middle East:

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[62] M. E. Sørli et al, 'Why is there so much conflict in the Middle East?' *Journal of Conflict Resolution* vol.49, no.1 (2005), 141-165, p. 146.

[63] F. Zakaria, *'U.S. Fuel to the Middle East Fire', Washington post,* (January 16, 2014).

[64] For more information see; K. E. Schulze, *The Arab-Israeli conflict* (London: Longman, 1999).; C. D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2001).

[65] For more information see; D. McDowall, *A modern history of the Kurds* (London: IB Tauris Publishers, 2004).

[66] Sørli et al, 'Why is there so much conflict in the Middle East?', p. 147.

[67] For more information see; D. H. Rand, *Roots of the Arab Spring: contested authority and political change in the Middle East* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

[68] For more information see; M. Zanini, 'Middle Eastern Terrorism and Netwar,' *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* vol.22, no.3 (1999), pp. 247-256.

[69] Z. Brzezinski, 'Hegemonic Quicksand ', *National Interest*, 2003), pp. 5-16.

[70] ibid., p. 5-6.

[71] W. J. Burns, 'Toward a Positive Agenda for the Middle East, Remarks to Middle East Institute', *U.S. Department of State,* <http://2001-2009.state.gov/p/nea/rls/rm/rm01/6934.htm> [accessed 21 January 2015].

> The United States has understood that a secure, prosperous and stable Middle East is an essential ingredient not only in defending vital American interests, but also the interests of the world economy.[72]

Brzezinski also argues that the key to the U.S. challenge of maintaining international security relies on the possibility of establishing stability and peace in the Middle East. The region's large holdings of–oil and gas push the U.S. to maintain stability and its presence in the region.[73] Brzeinski asserts that without U.S. intervention in the Middle East regional conflict, the amount of WMD and number of terrorism groups would grow in this region.[74] Moreover, the instability would be one of the factors that would disrupt access to the oilfields, and this would threaten the international economy, with serious consequences for the U.S. and its allies' economies in the region.[75] Therefore it can be said that maintaining stability is considered one of the key U.S. objectives in the region to defend its core interests there and secure the flow of oil and confront terrorist groups.

2.1.3 Oil

The Middle East is considered one of the most important regions in the world in terms of reserves and the production of oil.[76] Thus, this region continuously has been a location of competition and struggle among great powers to control its oil resources. Before the start of the Cold War, the UK was dominant in the Middle East, but during the Cold War this UK hegemony was replaced by U.S. preponderance.[77] During this period, strategic calculations of the oilfields in the region had dominated U.S. policy,[78] and this pushed the U.S. administrations to reinforce and consolidate their political and military presence in this region.[79] This step had been portrayed by the U.S. as being of vital national strategic interest.[80] One of the considerable challenges that faced the U.S.

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[72] Burns, 'Toward a Positive Agenda for the Middle East, Remarks to Middle East Institute'.
[73] Brzezinski, 'Hegemonic Quicksand', pp. 5-6.
[74] ibid., pp. 5-6.
[75] Nagl and Burton,'After the Fire: Shaping the Future U.S. Relationship with Iraq, pp.1-26.
[76] Harvey, *New imperialism*, p. 20.
[77] G. Harms, *Straight power concepts in the Middle East: U.S. foreign policy, Israel and world history* (London: Pluto Press, 2010). pp. 70-74.
[78] Dodge. 'US foreign policy in the Middle East',pp. 215-117.
[79] T. C. Jones, 'America, Oil, and War in the Middle East,' *The Journal of American History*, vol.99.1 (2012), pp. 208-218.
[80] Harvey, *New imperialism, p.* 20.; Dodge, 'US foreign policy in the Middle East' pp. 215-217.

and western countries during the Cold War period in the Middle East was the efforts by local states to nationalize their oil, which western states considered as a threat to their interests.[81] To prevent these efforts, the governments of Mohammed Mosaddeq in Iran in 1953[82], and Abdul Karim Qasim in Iraq in 1963 were toppled with the support of the U.S. and UK administrations.[83]

During the Carter administration, access to oil resources in the Middle East and confrontation of any threat disrupting the oil supply was one of the core objectives of U.S. foreign policy. On 23 January 1980, President Carter emphasized this goal by stressing that the Gulf region "contains more than two-thirds of the world's exportable oil".[84] Therefore, access to its oil resources was considered vital for America in terms of economic growth.[85] In his speech, Carter emphasized that the U.S. did not permit any authority to hamper the flow of Gulf oil under any circumstances.[86] For this purpose, the Carter administration deployed military forces in the region and established 'rapid deployment forces' to confront any urgent situations.[87]

In the same way, one of the crucial reasons for U.S. intervention in the 1990 Kuwait crisis and the expulsion of Iraqi armed forces from this country were associated with America's oil interest calculations in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.[88] During this crisis, the White House asserted that Saddam's military aggression against Kuwait threatened U.S. vital interests in the region as outlined by the Carter Doctrine in 1980.[89] Hence, George H. Bush decided to deploy military forces in Saudi Arabia to maintain the country and oilfields in the region.[90] On 8 August 1990, Bush emphasized that Iraq military aggression against Kuwait was the fundamental threat to U.S. interests in the region, because U.S. energy needs mainly depend on importing oil in this region.[91] Likewise,

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[81] Jones, America, Oil, and War in the Middle East, p. 212.
[82] Harvey, *New imperialism,* p. 20. Harms, *'*Straight power concepts in the Middle East: U.S. foreign policy', p.76.
[83] Dodge, 'US foreign policy in the Middle East', , pp. 198-218
[84] J. Carter, *State of the Union Address* (Washington, DC: January 23, 1980) <http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/speeches/su80jec.phtml> [Accessed 9 June 2014].
[85] ibid.
[86] ibid.
[87] Harvey, *New imperialism,* p. 21.
[88] Jones, 'America, Oil, and War in the Middle East', p. 216.
[89] M. T. Klare, 'Oil, Iraq, and American Foreign Policy: The Continuing Salience of the Carter Doctrine,' *International Journal* vol.62. 1 (Winter, 2006): pp. 31-42, p. 35.
[90] G. H. Bush, President George H.W. *Bush's Address on Iraq's Invasion of Kuwait, 199*0, (August 8, 1990),<http://www.cfr.org/iraq/president-george-hw-bushs-address-iraqs-invasion-kuwait-1990/p24117>[Accessed 5 January 2013].
[91] ibid.

George W. Bush administration's invasion of Iraq in 2003 was driven considerably by the control of Iraqi oilfields.[92] In this regard, Michael Klare argues that one of the significant factors for invading Iraq in 2003 was related to regional security and oil resources in Iraq and the Middle East. He stressed that the U.S. believed that maintaining security and stability in the Middle East was strongly associated with the protection of the flow of oil and increasing its production. Hence, the continuation of the Saddam regime would not stabilize the Gulf region and U.S. could not manage Iraqi oil output.[93]

Furthermore, many observers and commentators have interpreted and analysed America's oil policy in the Middle East in the broader framework and have connected this policy to its regional and global hegemony objectives in the 21st century. Michael T. Klare asserts that U.S. global hegemonic intention in the 21st century is governed by two underlying factors: oil and security.[94] In this regard he argued that:

> What we have, therefore, is a two pronged strategy that effectively governs U.S. policy toward much of the world. Although arising from different sets of concerns – one energy-driven, the other security driven – these two strategic principles have merged into a single, integrated design for American world dominance in the 21st Century.[95]

Similarly, David Harvey stresses that there has been a direct connection between global hegemonic power and controlling oilfields in the Middle East.[96] He argues that "Whoever controls the Middle East controls the global oil spigot, and whoever controls the global oil spigot can control the global economy, at least for the near future".[97] David Harvey argues that most of the oilfields that can provide oil for the next half century are located in Iraq, Kuwait, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Therefore, these states have held a strategic position for great powers like the U.S., China and Europe who import the majority of their oil from the Middle East.[98] Similarly, former Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham boldly emphasized that there

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[92] Klare, 'Oil, Iraq, and American Foreign Policy', pp. 31-36.

[93] Klare, *Blood and oil: the dangers and consequences of America's growing petroleum dependency*), p. 98.

[94] Quoted in S. Bromley, 'Blood for oil? 'New *Political Economy* vol.11, no.3 (09/01; 2013/07, 2006), pp. 419-434.

[95] Quoted in ibid., p. 419.

[96] Harvey, *New imperialism*, p. 19.

[97] ibid., p. 19.

[98] ibid., pp. 20- 23.

have been strong ties between controlling oilfields and being the dominant power in the world. In June 2002 during an address to the officials of American companies, he stated "You and your predecessors in the oil and gas industry played a large part in making the twentieth century the American century".[99] Even after new discoveries of natural resources the U.S. remains dependent on imported oil (an import dependence of 60% in the mid-2000s).[100] Therefore as a report carries out by senior US security and energy officials argued:

> At least for the next two decades, the Persian Gulf will be vital to U.S. interests in reliable oil supply, nonproliferation, combating terrorism, and encouraging political stability, democracy, and public welfare. Accordingly, the United States should expect and support a strong military posture that permits suitably rapid deployment to the region, if required.[101]

2.1.4 Weapons of Mass Destruction and Rogue States

One of the considerable concerns of the U.S. administration following the events of September 11 was related to WMD and rogue states. This U.S. concern stems from the equation that has emerged after the end of the Cold War in which some new countries obtained or tried to obtain nuclear weapons.[102] After September 11, confronting rogue states and autocratic regimes that support terrorist groups was identified as a major goal of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. The U.S. NSS document released in September 2002 focused on this goal and determined several common features of rogue states as follows; firstly, repressing their people and utilizing their national income to preserve their regimes. Secondly, violating international rules and agreements and being considered a major threat to their neighbour.[103] Thirdly, striving to attain WMD and developing armed technology and threatening to use these weapons to obtain their

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[99] Quoted in Klare, *Blood and oil: the dangers and consequences of America's growing petroleum dependency*, p. 10.
[100] J. Deutch , Schlesinger James R. and G. Victor David, *National Security Consequences of U.S. Oil Dependency* Report of an Independent Task Force (Council on Foreign Relations 2006) page 14 and rest of section.
[101] ibid., pp. 29-30.
[102] P. D Miller, 'Five Pillars of American Grand Strategy, ' *Survival* vol.54, no.5 (2012), pp. 7-44, p. 7.
[103] U.S. Department of State, *the National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (September 2002).

regime's goals. Fourthly, harbouring terrorists, refusing human rights and promoting a dislike of the U.S.[104]

Within this context, Bush emphasized on 29 January 2002 that U.S. strategy was to confront rogue states that back terrorist groups and strive to attain WMD.[105] In his speech Bush described North Korea, Iran and Iraq as 'an axis of evil'.[106] One of the major allegations regarding Iraq in 2003 was related to WMD. On 12 September 2002, Bush declared in the United Nations that the Saddam regime violated all of the Security Council resolutions of the UN regarding stopping support for terrorist organisations and terminating its military programs for developing WMD.[107] Avoiding confrontation with this regime would threaten the Middle East as a whole.[108]

However, under the Obama administration, the U.S. has pursued a different strategy from the previous administration to counter rogue states and prevent the proliferation of WMD. The strategy mostly depends on diplomacy tools and negotiation with Iran and other countries in order to prevent the spread of WMD and confront their nuclear weapons.[109]

2.1.5 Combating Terrorist Organizations

One of the significant pillars of U.S. policy in the 21st century, especially following the events of September 11, has been combating terrorist organizations in the Middle East, and one of the significant ramifications of this terrorist act was the declaration of a 'global war on terror' by the Bush administration.[110] In this respect, Bush declared on 20 September 2001 "every nation in every region now has a decision to make. Either you are with the U.S., or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbour or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a

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[104] U.S. Department of State, *the National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (September 2002).

[105] G. W. Bush, State *of the Union address*, (Jan. 29, 2002) <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/onpolitics/transcripts/sou012902.htm> [Accessed June, 2013].

[106] ibid.

[107] G. W. Bush, P*resident Bush's address to the United Nations*, (CNN, 12 September 2002), <http://archives.cnn.com/2002/U.S./09/12/bU.S.h.transcript/>[Accessed June, 2013].

[108] ibid.

[109] F. S. Larrabee, 'Obama's Foreign Policy: Opportunities and Challenges', *Insight Turkey,* vol. 11 .1 (2009), pp. 1-11.

[110] J. P. Kaufman, A *concise history of U.S. foreign policy* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010) , p. 141.

hostile regime".[111] This speech was an explicit message to all the states in the world that the U.S. would confront all terrorist organizations and the rogue states that support them. In order to achieve this goal, the U.S. administration intensified its efforts in the Security Council, and in September 2001, two crucial resolutions (1368 and 1373) were issued in which the right to 'self-defence' was guaranteed for all states; at the same time, it demanded that all countries work collectively to confront the terrorist threats.[112] Resolution 1373 identified many measures to counter terrorist groups. The main measures included taking all the necessary steps to stop and block financial support for terrorist groups, freezing their financial income and resources and outlawing any financial support by organizations, individuals and states directly or indirectly to terrorist groups.[113] In the same manner, after the September 11 attack, NATO invoked Article 5 for the first time on 12 September 2001 and stressed that it would support the U.S. in confronting the threat.[114]

It is notable that, following the September 11 events, the U.S. has attempted to expand the framework of the 'war on terror' to include all terrorist organizations and rogue states that have damaged U.S. national interests. Douglas J. Feith asserts that the United States did not want to limit the 'war on terror' to only the Al Qaida Islamic terrorist organization, but rather strived to exploit this event in order to extend the scope of the war on terror to embrace all terrorist organizations and the states that support them around the world.[115] This U.S. effort can be seen in the U.S. National Security Strategy which, for combating terrorism in 2003, had listed Iran, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Cuba, North Korea and Sudan as supporters and harbourers of terrorist groups.[116]

Afghanistan was the first step towards applying this strategy. After toppling the Taliban and destroying the bases of Al Qaida in this state,[117] the Bush administration invaded

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[111] G.W. Bush, *Address to the Nation* (Presidential Rhetoric, 20 September 2001), <http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/speeches/09.20.01.html> [Accessed July 2013].

[112] UN, *United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373*, (28 September 2001), <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N01/557/43/PDF/N0155743.pdf?OpenElement>[Accessed June, 2013] .; *UN, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1368*, (12 September 2001), <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N01/533/82/PDF/N0153382.pdf?OpenElement>[Accessed June, 2013].

[113] *United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373*.

[114] Kaufman, *A concise history of U.S. foreign policy*, pp. 143-144.

[115] D. J. Feith, *War and decision: inside the Pentagon at the dawn of the War on Terrorism* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009) , p. 9.

[116] CIA, *U.S. National Security Strategy For Combating Terrorism*, (February 2003), <https://www.cia.gov/news-information/cia-the-war-on-terrorism/Counter_Terrorism_Strategy.pdf> [Accessed July 2013].

[117] ibid., p. 88.

Iraq, and the U.S. justified this step by accusing Iraq of supporting terrorist groups.[118] It is obvious that the Bush doctrine strategy to counter terror differed from a Cold War 'containment strategy', and it relied mostly on taking preventive measures to confront threats.[119] The NSS document for combating terrorism contended this principle and stressed that "[we] cannot wait for terrorists to attack and then respond".[120] This was part of the justification for invading Iraq in 2003. In addition, under the Obama administration, confronting terrorist organizations is considered to be one of the major goals of its U.S. policy. This can be seen in the Obama speech that analysed U.S. policy towards the Middle East and Africa and the transformations that have been occurring in these regions. In May 2011, President Obama asserted that U.S. policy objectives were embodied by confronting terrorist organisations, preventing the proliferation of nuclear military programmes and maintaining the security of the Middle East and Africa.[121] Moreover, since the intrusion of ISIL into Iraq and then the attack against the KRI in 2014, the U.S., by formulating an international coalition, started a war against ISIL in Iraq and Syria.[122]

2.1.6 Democratization

Attempting to spread democracy has been considered one of the other U.S. foreign policy objectives, in particular during the Bush administration. However, democracy promotion has not been paid the same amount of attention in all the U.S. administrations. The U.S. administrations supported the installation of democracy when it contributed to its national interests and enhanced its regional hegemony. Woodrow Wilson was one of the predominant figures that supported the promotion of

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[118] Feith, *War and decision: inside the Pentagon at the dawn of the War on Terrorism,* pp.130-273.

[119] J. W. Knopf, 'Wrestling with Deterrence: Bush Administration Strategy After 9/11,' *Contemporary Security Policy* vol.29, no.2 (2008), 229-265, p. 229.

[120] CIA, *U.S. National Security Strategy for Combating Terrorism* (February 2003).

[121] B. Obama, Remarks *by the President on the Middle East and North Africa.* (19 May 2011), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/05/19/remarks-president-middle-east-and-north-africa> [accessed September 2013].

[122] B. Obama, *Statement by the President on ISIL* The White House, 10 September 2014) https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/10/statement-president-isil-1 accessed 19 May 2015; B. Obama, *Statement by the President on Iraq* (Washington: White House, August 09, 2014),< https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/08/09/statement-president-iraq>[accessed September 2014].

democracy.[123] Following the end of World War II the U.S. was important in establishing democracy in West Germany and Japan. But then for the next four decades anti-communism was more important to the U.S. that democracy promotion and this was especially the case in the Middle East.[124] The disintegration of the Soviet Union created a fertile ground for taking a step towards promoting democracy throughout the world. As Fukuyama argued that

> What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.[125]

During the Kuwait crisis in 1990, the Bush administration emphasized support of the democratic principle and stated, "We're beginning a new era. This new era can be full of promise, an age of freedom, a time of peace for all people".[126] In the same way, Clinton contended in his speech to the UN in 1993 that U.S. objectives had been manifested in expanding the framework of 'free institutions' throughout the world, and he encouraged states to support these institutions in their countries.[127] It is noticeable that, despite the increase in number of democratic countries in the world from 41 to 121 states during the period from 1974 to 2000, this has been less visible in the Middle East.[128] In this respect, Fareed Zakaria argued that, "an almost unthinkable reversal of a global pattern has occurred where almost every Arab country is less free than it was forty years ago".[129]

After September 11 2001, U.S. foreign policy under the George W. Bush administration heavily concentrated on installing democracy in this region. This policy was motivated by a variety of reasons; Firstly, following September 11 many viewpoints arose in the Bush administration arguing that the September 11 attacks explicitly showed that the

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[123] R. N. Haass, 'Toward greater democracy in the Muslim world,' (Dec, 2002), <http://www.cfr.org/religion-and-politics/towards-greater-democracy-muslim-world/p5283>[accessed November 22, 2014].

[124] See, Dionysis Markakis, *US Democracy Promotion in the Middle East: The Pursuit of Hegemony*.

[125] F. Fukuyama, Francis, Fukuyama., (1989). The End of History? *The National Interest,* (16), 3-18. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/24027184.

[126] G.H. Bush. *Address on Iraq's Invasion of Kuwait, 1990*, (8 August 1990).

[127] B. Clinton, *Address by President Bill Clinton to the UN General Assembly*, (27 September, 1993), <http://www.state.gov/p/io/potusunga/207375.htm> [accessed June 2013].

[128] Quoted in Hobson, 'A forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East': U.S. democracy promotion and the 'war on terror''. p. 39.

[129] Quoted in ibid., p. 39.

U.S. autocratic allies such as Saudi Arabia in the Middle East were major sources of growing Islamic terrorist groups, and therefore any effort aimed at confronting terrorist groups should be started by protecting democracy in these countries.[130] Secondly, people within the Bush administration as well as others outside this circle have taken the standpoint that the termination of 'anti-Americanism' in the long term cannot be achieved without consolidating democratic principles in the region.[131] To this effect, they criticized the European sceptical conceptions regarding the likelihood of success of this policy by referring to the installation of democracy in Germany, Japan and other countries in Eastern Europe as an example.[132] Thirdly, there have been other views arguing that the installation of democracy will maintain America's security, as it will lessen struggle and war among states, leading to peaceful environments.[133] They emphasize that the major threat to U.S. national interests is not embodied in war among states but rather the lack of democracy, freedom and respect for human rights within the autocratic states. Therefore, the spread of democracy will minimize threats and maintain U.S. national interests.[134]

These perspectives pushed the Bush administration to move forward in supporting democracy in the Middle East and the Arabic world. From 2002 to 2004, Bush declared four initiatives, all aimed at the democratization of the region.[135] In addition, the U.S. devoted financial support to some of the states in order to encourage democratic reform and, at the same time, indirectly backed educational programmes and civil society.[136]

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[130] T. Carothers, 'Promoting Democracy and Fighting Terror,' *Foreign Affairs*, sec. 82, pp. 84-97, pp. 91-92.

[131] Hobson, A forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East: U.S. democracy promotion and the 'war on terror', p. 39-53.; Philip H. Gordon, 'Bush's Middle East Vision', *Survival* vol.45, no.1 (2003), pp. 155-165. p. 158.

[132] Gordon, Bush's Middle East Vision, p. 158.

[133] A. A. Goldsmith, 'Making the World Safe for Partial Democracy?? Questioning the Premises of Democracy Promotion,' *International Security* vol.33, no.2 (2008), pp. 120-147, p. 131.

[134] S. R. David, 'American Foreign Policy towards the Middle East: A Necessary Change?' *Israel Affairs* vol.12, no.4 (10/01; 2013/08, 2006), pp. 614-641, p. 637.

[135] Bush's administration in order to install democracy in the Middle East has declared many initiatives, the most important of them are; "the broader Middle East and North Africa partnership initiative" (BMENA) declared in June 2004 at the G8 summit, "The Middle East partnership initiative" (MEPI), declared in 2002, and the " announcement of Foundation for the Future and Fund for the Future and America trade representative's" (USTR). See, P. Noël, 'The New U.S. Middle East Policy and Energy Security Challenges,' *International Journal* vol.62, no.1 (2006), pp. 43-54, p. 46.

[136] Hobson, 'A forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East: U.S. democracy promotion and the 'war on terror', p. 42.

Furthermore, one of the significant driving factors for invading Iraq was associated with the viewpoint that Iraq would be the beginning of the spread of democracy in the Middle East. David Harvey argued that the U.S. administration thought that regime change in Iraq and establishing a democratic system would be a supportive impulse for regime change in the region, especially in Iran and Syria, and by this transformation, the map of the Middle East would be reformulated.[137] On 6 November 2003, Bush explicitly mentioned this goal by asserting that installing democracy in Iraq "will send forth the news, from Damascus to Tehran, that freedom can be the future of every nation".[138] Similarly, on 28 February 2004, Condoleezza Rice, then U.S. National Security Advisor, stressed with regard to the democratization of Iraq and Afghanistan and the resulting ramifications in the region that the establishment of a democratic system in both these states would be a driving factor for spreading democratic reforms around the globe.[139]

Under the Obama administration, the U.S. pursued a different policy compared to the Bush administration in terms of external policy, the Obama administration stressed its commitment to support democratic transformation in the Middle East and Arabic world. To this effect, on 12 October 2012 at the Centre for Strategic and International Study (CSIS) Hilary Clinton argued in response to the uprising in Arab countries and the U.S. position toward these pursing it, that the U.S. would support the nations that strive to establish a democratic system, make reforms, improve their economic condition and maintain human rights. These allies would be more reliable and secure partners over a long period.[140] Similarly, with regard to the Arab Spring, President Obama emphasized backing democracy and argued that America backs democratic systems in the Middle East, Africa and other places. U.S. values and interests are major factors that push the

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[137] Harvey, *New imperialism*, p. 19.

[138] G. W. Bush, *President Bush Discusses Freedom in Iraq and Middle East* (6 November 2003),<http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/11/20031106-2.html> [accessed June 2013] .

[139] R. 'Condoleezza, *Condoleezza Rice Discusses War on Terror at Reagan Library and Museum* (Simi Valley, California, 28 February 2004). <http://georgewbushwhitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2004/02/20040228-1.html>[accessed June 2013] .

[140] R. C. Hillary, *Remarks on the Maghreb in Transition* (Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), 12 October 2012), http://csis.org/files/attachments/121012_csis_clinton_transcript_0.pdf.

U.S. to back people who have attempted to acquire freedom and liberation for a long time.[141]

However, despite the U.S. administration's efforts to promote democracy in the Middle East, many observers and scholars have been critical with regard to U.S. intentions and emphasize that there have been many contradictions in U.S. policy in democratizing the region. They argue that while the U.S. has asserted its support for democracy in the region, it still has strong relations with dictator states in the Arab world.[142] Moreover, U.S. attempts to spread democracy in the Middle East heavily targeted U.S. enemies in the region rather than its friends. In other words, U.S. support for democratization was in direct correlation with the victory of its alliances in the election; otherwise, it has not supported the results.[143] For instance, the victory of Hamas in Philistine via a free election was not welcomed by the Bush administration.[144] Noam Chomsky stressed that:

> The U.S. and its allies will do anything they can to prevent authentic democracy in the Arab world. The reason is very simple. Across the region [Middle East], an overwhelming majority of the population regards the United States as the main threat to their interests.[145]

He further argued that the U.S. did not want states in the Middle East to reflect the willingness and demand of its citizens because it fears that this would affect its policy to control the area and the U.S. would be forced to leave the Middle East.[146]

It is notable that there have been many distinctions between the Bush and Obama administrations in achieving the above outlined goals. Each administration has pursued a specific approach and strategy to implement its U.S. policy in the Middle East. U.S. strategy under the Bush administration heavily concentrated on military tools, unilateral action and 'hard power' to pursue its foreign policy goals and adopted a revolutionary

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[141] B. Obama, *Inaugural Address, (21 January 2013, United States Capitol,)*, <://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/01/21/inaugural-address-president-barack-obama>[accessed June, 2013] .

[142] Jeremy Pressman, 'Power without Influence: The Bush Administration's Foreign Policy Failure in the Middle East' *International Security* vol.33, no.4 (2009), pp. 149-179, pp. 163-164.

[143] ibid.

[144] N. Chomsky, 'GuillotiningGaza',<http://www.chomsky.info/articles/20070730.htm>[accessed June 2014].

[145] N. Chomsky, *the U.S. and its Allies Will do Anything to Prevent Democracy in the Arab World* , 11 May 2011), <http://www.democracynow.org/2011/5/11/noam_chomsky_the_us_and_its> [accessed 17 June 2014].

[146] ibid.

approach in its foreign policy.[147] After September 11 the Bush administration pursued a 'pre-emptive strategy' to confront terrorist groups and rogue states, and this strategy was clearly highlighted in the U.S. (NSS) document released in September 2002, which stated "We will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defence, acting pre-emptively against such terrorists".[148] On the other hand, Obama's foreign policy mostly relies on 'soft power', a common interest with other countries in dealing with international issues rather than military capacity.[149]

Conclusion

It can be argued that U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East has mostly concentrated on maintaining its strategic interests. Some of the factors remain vital to the U.S. – enhancing regional hegemony, maintaining stability, supporting its allies, maintaining energy supplies; preventing the spread of WMD, combating terrorist groups, and more recently democracy promotion. (These changing factors are particularly relevant to the Kurds as will be seen in later chapters).

The objectives which the U.S. desires to achieve in the region have not had the same degree of importance - not every administration gives the same degree of attention to all of these goals. For example, democratization and maintaining human rights do not have the same degree of attention and have only been used by the U.S. on occasion for specific purposes that preserve American national interests. During the Bush administration (2001-2009) the spreading of democracy in the Middle East was one of the main priorities of U.S. policy. In this regard the Bush administration believed that the promotion of democracy would be a key factor for maintaining its national interests, enhancing hegemony and confronting terrorist groups in the region. However under the

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[147] Dodge, 'US foreign policy in the Middle East', in *US foreign policy,* 198-218. F. A. Gerges, 'The Obama approach to the Middle East: the end of America's moment?' *International Affairs* vol.89, no.2 (2013, pp. 299-323, p. 301.

[148] *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (September 2002).

[149] U.S. foreign policy under the Obama administration is mostly gives priority to the economic challenges inside the U.S. for the purpose of enhancing and empowering U.S. economic conditions in the long term. In this regard, Obama's policy aimed at minimizing its responsibility and engagement in the world and the Middle East in particular. The Obama administration believes that negotiation and diplomacy are crucial factors in maintaining U.S. national interests and enhancing its relationship with their friends. See: Gerges, The Obama approach to the Middle East, pp. 302-305.; Schmidt , *Theories of U.S. foreign policy*, p. 19.; CNN, *Part 3 of CNN Democratic presidential debate, (21 Jan 2008), <http://edition.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/01/21/debate.transcript3/>* [accessed June 2013] .; Kaufman, *concise history of U.S. foreign policy* , p. 157.

Obama administration, this was not given the same degree of attention. The major Obama administration policy in Iraq and the Middle East has been concentrated on maintaining stability rather than democracy. Furthermore, the U.S. has used democratization and human rights issues to exert pressures on its enemies and confront them rather than its allies (for example Iran rather than Saudi Arabia).

Regarding U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East and Iraq and its ramifications for the Kurdistan region, it could be argued that U.S. efforts to maintain its strategic interests has had different effects for the Kurds and the Kurdistan region over the time. It is important to note that for long time, the U.S. policy aimed at maintaining the security of the area and regional hegemony in the Middle East and preserving the national interests of its allies (Arab countries and Turkey) has been conducted at the expense of Kurdish rights and the Kurdistan region, since the majority of these states have continually rejected the establishment of an independent state for the Kurds and continuously exerted pressure on U.S. authorities to overlook or limit the impact of the Kurds, especially in Iraq. At the same time, U.S. administrations have also long believed that creating a Kurdish state or Kurdish federal entity in Iraq will damage U.S. national interests and its hegemony especially since the Cold War to 2003. Therefore, the U.S. has behaved cautiously with regard to the Kurdish issue. However, since 2003 the U.S. perspective towards the Kurdish interests has changed and the U.S. authorities have closely worked with the KRI. This can be seen in particular after the departure of U.S. troops from Iraq in 2011,and the incursion of ISIL into Iraq in 2014 which have pushed the U.S. to be more flexible towards the Kurdistan region and its demands for more autonomy, independence and disputed areas, as during this period the Kurds became important as the U.S. pursued its grand strategy in the Middle East region.

Chapters four to seven of this thesis will elaborate on these points in detail and will comprehensively analyse U.S. foreign policy towards the Kurdistan region. The next chapter looks in more detail at the rise of the Kurdish issue in Middle Eastern politics over the last 15 years.

Chapter 3: The Kurds, the Kurdistan Region and U.S. Policy (1958- 2002)

Introduction

Iraq was an artificial state and it was established in 1921 by the external powers to maintain their national interests and pursue their policy in the region. In this regard British authorities due to political, economic and geographical considerations played a key role in the disintegration of Kurdistan within the region and incorporating South Kurdistan into Iraq. Since the creation of Iraq, internal conflict, instability and constant dictatorship has led Iraq into creating an external crisis (for example its invasion of Iran in 1980 and Kuwait in 1990) that resulted in the destabilization of this state and the region as a whole. Therefore, the position of the Kurds was in fact not only an internal matter to Iraq, it was crucial to the regional system and to the regional hegemony of the great powers in the region. In particular Iraq and Kurdistan have been crucial areas of competition among regional and international powers in order to maintain their national interests.

Within this context, the U.S.-Kurdish policy since the cold war has been part of the U.S.' wider strategy to confront its rivals, prevent of any power aimed at domination of region, increase its power and gain or maintain its regional hegemony. This chapter argues that during the period from 1958 to 2002, hegemony, oil and the U.S. allies' perspective and regional stability had a key impact over U.S-Kurdish policy.

In this regard, during the cold war due to the 'bipolar system', the key US strategy in the Middle East relied on confronting and containing the expansion of the USSR and its rivals, preventing disruption of oil, maintaining stability and the security of the flow of oil to the global market. Moreover the U.S. attempted to redistribute power and change the international system towards the 'unipolar' one, in favour of its hegemony.[150] For this purpose the U.S. administrations pursued various political and military strategies including the creation of networks of allies in the Middle East to achieve these strategic

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[150] See L. Christopher, *the Peace of Illusions: American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2006).

goals. During this period, the U.S. saw Kurds, and in particular Iraqi Kurdistan, as sources of instability in the region and a threat to its national interests, its position in the region and the security of its allies. Therefore, the U.S. used Kurds only as a tool for maintaining and increasing their influence in the area and changing the political equations, in particular in Iraq, in favour of its interests.

However, after the disintegration of the USSR and a change in the distribution of power in the international system to some extent, this affected U.S. policy and gave the U.S. more freedom to deal with Iraqi Kurds. In this regard, U.S. policy towards Kurdistan has been part of its wide policy towards Iraq and the whole region. During this period the U.S. goals were to enhance and maintain its regional hegemony, contain Iran and Iraq, maintain stability, thwart any rivals from imposing its hegemony over the region and spreading its democratic principle. To this extent, the U.S. supported the Kurds in terms of humanitarian aid. However, the U.S. did not have any intention of solving the Kurdish question. In this sense, there was no difference between the first and the second stage. In both periods, the U.S. did not have any intention of dealing with the Kurdish issue from a political point of view.

In order to analyse all above outlined aspects of U.S.-Kurdish policy, this chapter will examine three major areas, all of which provide a context for the later chapters. Firstly, the author will analyse the creation of Iraq and rise of the Kurdish question in Iraq and its continued crisis from 1921 to 2003. The second area that the chapter will discuss is U.S. foreign policy towards Iraqi Kurdistan from 1958 to 1989. In this regard the author will examine the key factors which have affected U.S. policy. The third area the chapter will focus on is the stage which started in 1990 and ended in 2002 and was marked by the 'unipolar system'. During this stage the U.S. intervention was of a humanitarian kind, without any direct intervention aimed at solving the Kurdish question. During this stage, the U.S. policy towards Iraqi Kurdistan was mainly affected by the transformations of the structure of the international system, Saddam's invasion of Kuwait, and the position of U.S. allies towards Kurds.

3.1 British Imperialism, the Creation of Iraq and Its Legacy

World War I has been considered to be the watershed in the modern history of the Kurds. The aftermath and repercussions of this war resulted in the partition of the Kurdish nation and its homeland among regional states. It saw any idea of a Kurdish nation ended, with Kurds deprived of all political and national rights. During and after World War I, the victorious allied powers (Great Britain, France and Russia) developed various treaties to attempt to reformulate the political map of the Middle East and divide the Ottoman Empire in accordance with their national interests.[151] In this context, the most important treaty which was signed in 1916 to dissolve the Ottoman Empire was the Sykes-Picot agreement.[152]

According to this treaty, the Kurdish nation and its homeland was divided among British, French and Russian zones of influence.[153] Despite that, the Sykes-Picot treaty was not implemented in its original form, especially after the withdrawal of Russia from this treaty and releasing its content to public opinion.[154] However, it was the cornerstone and roadmap for subsequent treaties which were signed after World War I. In this regard the most important treaties which addressed the fate of the Ottoman Empire, nations under its rule and Middle Eastern issues during 1919-1920 were the Peace Conference,[155] the San Remo conference[156] and the Sèvres treaties.[157] In these

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[151] McDowall, *A modern history of the Kurds* pp. 115-118.

[152] E. P. Fitzgerald, 'France's Middle Eastern Ambitions, the Sykes-Picot Negotiations, and the Oil Fields of Mosul, 1915-1918,' *The Journal of Modern History* vol.66, no.4 (1994), pp. 697-725, pp. 697- 718.; G. Chaliand (ed.), *A People Without a Country: The Kurds and Kurdistan*, trans. M. Pallis (London: Zed Press, 1980). pp. 37-38.

[153] The Sykes-Picot treaty was signed in May 1916 between France and Great Britain with assent of Russia, to divide the Ottoman Empire. This agreement remained a secret for nearly two years. According to this treaty, France, Great Britain and Russia approved the carving up of the Ottoman Empire that included a majority of the Kurdish territory. France was assigned to control Syria Lebanon, Iraqi Kurdistan and south-eastern Turkey (part of Northern Kurdistan). Britain was allocated the provinces of Basra, Baghdad, and some other areas. Further Russia was accorded a part of Turkey and a part of northern Kurdistan. See; McDowall, *A modern history of the Kurds,* pp.115-118.; L. Anderson and G. R. V. Stansfield, *The future of Iraq: dictatorship, democracy, or division* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd, 2005), p. 14.; Fitzgerald, 'France's Middle Eastern Ambitions, the Sykes-Picot Negotiations, and the Oil Fields of Mosul, 1915-1918', *The Journal of Modern History,* 66 (1994), PP. 697-725, pp. 697- 718.

[154] McDowall, *A modern history of the Kurds*, pp.115-118 A. Al Haj, *Al-Qasiya Al-Kurdiya Fi al-eshriniat* 2nd ed. (Baghdad: l-Moasesah Al-Arabiya Lel-Derasat Wa Neshar., 1985). P .15.

[155] The Peace Conferences had been held during the period from December-/January 1919 to March 1920. This Conference was devoted to discussing the fate of both, the Ottoman Empire and the German state. Despite the fact that, in this conference, the allied powers did not reach a final decision regarding the subjects related to the Middle East, but decided to detach and release Armenia, Kurdistan, Syria, Philistine, Mesopotamia and the Gulf Arabian Peninsula from the Ottoman Empire. See; H. M. Isa, *Al- Qasiya Al-Kurdiya Fi Al- Iraq Men Ehtelal Al-Beritaniya Ela Al-Qazo Al-*

agreements and conference, the Kurdish issue had been discussed, especially in the Sèvres treaty, which in Articles 62-63-64 stressed the right of self-determination and the creation of an independent state for Kurds.[158] However, transformations and developments that occurred after the Sèvres treaty, especially the rising struggle among the great powers to strengthen their economic, political and military position on the one hand, and the emergence of the Turkish national movement that was led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the victories which it had gained in war, on the other, had changed the political equations, and paved the way for the signing of the Lausanne agreement on 24th July 1923, which replaced the Sèvres treaty.[159]

The Lausanne agreement was at the expense of Kurdish national rights and any project of creating an independent Kurdish state. This agreement removed the likelihood of the establishment of any Kurdish autonomous administration, and the only issue which remained unsolvable was the fate of Southern Kurdistan (Iraqi Kurdistan) which on 16th December 1925 was incorporated into Iraq.[160] Furthermore, in doing so, the Kurdish

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Amriki(1914-2004), (Egypt: Maktabat Matboli, 2005). pp. 102-109.; H. M. Isa, *Al- Moshkelat Al-Kurdiya Fi Al-Sharq Al- Awsat,* (Egypt: Maktabat Matboli, 1992). P. 57. S. M. Hassan, 'Shareef Pasha Hayataho Wa Dawroho Al-Siyasi ' (MA diss, Duhok University 2004), p .156.

[156] The San Remo conference was held in April 1920 among the allied victorious powers in the WWI. In this conference, the Kurdish question had been addressed comprehensively. In addition, the allied powers offered a proposal regarding the Kurdish issue and later this proposal became the cornerstone of several treaties. Great Britain and France agreed on the outcome of these conferences. Great Britain had gained control of Iraqi Kurdistan from France, and the mandate system imposed over Iraq, Palestine, Jordon, and Syria. Regarding the fate of Kurdistan and Armenia, the allied powers did not put it under any mandate system. However late in the Sèvres treaty the final solution had been offered for these two nations, See; M. M. Al-Motawaly, 'Kurds Al-Iraq Fi Al-Moatamarat Wa Al-Moahedat Wa Al Etefaqiyat Al- Dawliya,' Majalat Sardam Al-Arabi vol.10 (Summer 2005), pp. 87-90.

[157] McDowall, *A modern history of the Kurds,* pp. 464-465.

[158] According to the Sèvres treaty, Article (62), a commission would be established to prepare a draft within 6 months for determining "local autonomy for the predominantly Kurdish areas, east of the Euphrates, south of the boundary of Armenia, north of the northern frontier of Syria, and Mesopotamia". Article (63) emphasized that the Turkish government would accept and implement all the decisions to be made according to Article (62). In Article (64), some preconditions were set out for the Kurdish independent state; firstly, after one year of implementation of the Sèvres treaty, if the majority of Kurds in predominant areas which had been outlined in Article (62) desired to be separated from Turkey and establish independent Kurdistan. Secondly, the council of league of nation should consider that the Kurds had the capability to govern this independent state. Finally, regarding Iraqi Kurdistan, it stressed that Iraqi Kurdistan (Mosul Vilayet) can join this independent state. McDowall, *A modern history of the Kurds,* pp. 464-465.; Chaliand, *A People Without a Country: The Kurds and Kurdistan.* pp. 41-44.

[159] R. Olson, 'The Second Time Around: British Policy Towards the Kurds (1921-22),' *Die Welt Des Islams* vol.27, no.1-3 (1987), pp. 91-102.; P. M. Brown, 'From Sèvres to Lausanne', *The American Journal of International Law* vol.18, no.1 (1924), p. 113-116.;S. Reeva S and E. H. Tejirian, *Creation of Iraq, 1914-1921.*Columbia University Press, 2005).pp. 99-104.

[160] Anderson and Stansfield, *The future of Iraq: dictatorship, democracy, or division,* pp. 15-16

territory was divided up amongst Iraq, Turkey, Syria and Iran.[161] Hence, most of the treaties of this period (Sykes-Picot etc.) had as a theme the denial of any Kurdish nation. The only one that gave any rights to the Kurds (Sèvres) was not implemented in any case and was running against the patterns of diplomacy and state action at that time. The key was the 'realist' moves by the great powers of the time for strategic advantage and stability in the area, and this crushed Kurdish hopes for independence.

With regard to the creation of Iraq, the incorporation of south Kurdistan into this state was part of the creation of an Iraq which was not in existence prior to the WWI. It was established as a ramification in the aftermath of this war, and disintegration of the former Ottoman Empire.[162] The process of creating this state passed through two underlying phases. The first stage was the creation of the Iraqi Arab state which included both the Basra and Baghdad provinces (Vilayet) and the majority of the inhabitants were Shia and Sunni Arabs.[163] The second stage was incorporating Iraqi Kurdistan (Mosul Vilayet) into this artificial state, where the majority of its people were Kurds. [164] The components of the population in these three provinces were different, and each had diverse characteristics, ambitions and aspirations.[165] In fact, ever since this country was founded, it has faced serious challenges in terms of the ethno-sectarian struggle and the unity of the state.[166]

With regard to the first stage of creating an Iraqi state, Britain's authorities during 1920-1921 saw that the majority of the Shia groups were against its policy. Marginalisation of the Shia Arabs was a part of the British strategy that was adopted in Iraq, and so Percy Cox, the British High Commissioner to Iraq, on 25th November 1920, had officially created an interim government which was headed by Abdul Rahman al-Naqib, and the mission of this government terminated after Prince Faisal Bin Al Hussein was chosen as King of Iraq on 23th August 1921.[167] It is remarkable that the

[161] Anderson and Stansfield, *The future of Iraq: dictatorship, democracy, or division*, pp. 15-16.
[162] A. Q. Mina, *Amni Setrategy Iraq Wa Segushaye Basiyan; Tarhil, Taarib Wa Tabbis* 2nd ed. (Sulaymaniya: Santery Likulinawaye Setrategy Kurdistan, 1999).p. 89.
[163] N. A. Hetuti, *Duzi Kurd La Iraq Wa Mechanizmakani Charasarkerdni- Dwaye 2003* (Erbil: Dazkaye Aras Bo chab O Balawkerdenawa, 2010). pp .17-30.
[164] ibid., pp.17-30.
[165] ibid.,pp . 17.30.
[166] Anderson and Stansfield, *The future of Iraq: dictatorship, democracy, or division*, p. 15.
[167] A. Al-hasni, *Turikh Alwazarat Aliraqiya,* 4th ed. section(1) (Baghdad: , Darsheon Saqafiay Alama, 1988).pp.18-19.;H. foster, *Nashaat Aliraq Alhadith* , trans. Salim Tekrity (Jordon: Alahahliya Lelnashr Wa Tawzih, 2006).pp. 186-187.;A. I. khalil and J. A. Hamdi, *Tarikh Aliraq Almoaser* (Musel: Modiriyat Dar Alktub Lel tabaat wa Alnasher, 1989).pp. 27-33.; A. H. Resheed, - *Aliraq Almoaser* (syria -Damascus: Dar Almada Lel Saqafa wa Alnasher, 2002). pp. 77-80.; S. A. Sabir,

first stage in the founding of Iraq was based on the sectarian principle, in the sense that the rule of a minority of Sunni Arabs was imposed over the majority of Shia Arabs. [168] In this context, there had been many factors which pushed Great Britain to pursue this policy and authorize the Sunni Arabs. Firstly, the British authorities understood that the ruling minority would be fragile at the domestic level, and would be constantly threatened by other groups due to the lack of internal majority support and legitimacy.[169] Hence, this minority could be more ready and willing than the majority to cooperate with the external and foreign power. [170] Thus, Great Britain, by pursuing this policy safeguarded its national interests in Iraq and across the region. Secondly, the tough position of the Shia leaderships, in particular religious clerics towards the British invasion of Iraq clearly had been manifested in the 1920 revolution.[171] Thirdly, the readiness of Sunni Arabs, especially the elites to cooperate with British policy in Iraq and integrate themselves with its interest was clearly evident at this time.[172]

The second steps in the British policy were to attach Mosul Province (Iraqi Kurdistan) to the new Iraq. It is notable that the British authorities had been convinced that attaching this part of Kurdistan to Iraq was vital for Britain's interests due to the presence of massive oilfield reserves there.[173] According to the Sykes–Picot Agreement, the majority of Iraqi Kurdistan was in France's influence zone.[174] Many sources and observers argued that the British government accepted this solution at that time to create a buffer zone between its colonies and Russia.[175] However, with the change of political equation on the ground and the withdrawal of Russia from this agreement due to the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917,[176] the British administration held some military

Kurdistan Men Bedayat Alharb Alalamiyat Alula Ela Nehayat Mushkelat Musel(1914-1924), Derasat Tarikhiya, Siyasiya Wa Wasaeqiya, (Erbil: Wezaret Al Tarbitya, 2001).p. 229.; Q. Al Atiya, *Ahiraq , Nashat Al Dawla (1921-1980)* , trans. Atta Abdulwahab (London: 1988). p. 464. ; S. H. Umar, *Hequq Al Shaab Al Kurdi Fi Al Dasatir Al Iraqiya, Derast Tahlilita Al Moqarena* (Sulaymaniyah: Markez Al Derasat Alstratejya, 2005). PP.24-25 .; M. Al Museli, *, Alqsiya Alkurdiya Fi Al Iraq, Roiyat Al Arabiya Lel Qsiya Al-Kurdiya* (Beirut: 2000).p.70.

[168] ibid.,pp.3-6.

[169] ibid., *Duzi Kurd La Iraq Wa Mechanizmakani Charasarkerdni- Dwaye 2003*.pp.3-6.

[170] ibid., pp.3-6.

[171] A. A. Al Arzi, *, Moshkelat Al Hukm Fi Al Iraq* (London: 1991)..; Committee Against Repression and for Democratic Rights in Iraq, *Saddam's Iraq: revolution or reaction?* (London: Zed Books, 1989), p. 4.

[172] Anderson and Stansfield, *The future of Iraq: dictatorship, democracy, or division*, pp. 14-28.

[173] W.M. Gibson, 'British strategy and oil, 1914-1923'(Doctoral thesis, University of Glasgow, 2012), pp. 115-126. <http://theses.gla.ac.uk/3160/1/2012gibsonphd.pdf> [accessed 4 November 2013].

[174] ibid., p. 46.

[175] Fitzgerald, 'France's Middle Eastern Ambitions, the Sykes-Picot Negotiations, and the Oil Fields of Mosul, 1915-1918', pp.697-725.

[176] McDowall, *A modern history of the Kurds* pp.15-18.

and diplomatic manoeuvres to control Iraqi Kurdistan. While, according to The Armistice of Mudros (30 October1918), military operations were stopped, even so during 1918, the British Army occupied Mosul Province.[177] To justify this action, they emphasised that Article 7 of the Mudros armistice allowed the occupancy of any strategic region that threatened them.[178]

At the diplomatic level, after holding intensive negotiations, British authorities managed to convince France to cede Mosul Province in favour of Great Britain.[179] In effect, there had been many key driving factors which influenced Great Britain to attach this part of Kurdistan to Iraq; firstly, oil considerations are considered as one of the most crucial factors[180] after British officials realised that Iraqi Kurdistan had large amounts of oil reserves.[181] Consequently, it believed that the proper strategy to use in order to impose its hegemony over these oilfields was to attach Iraqi Kurdistan to Iraq.[182] Secondly, Iraqi Kurdistan in terms of geographical location was crucial for the British government. It was now considered the major location for providing security for British colonies in Iraq and India, and was the central key to supplying oil for Navy ships and war vessels in the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea.[183] Thirdly, another contributing factor to incorporating Iraqi Kurdistan into Iraq was to make a degree of equilibrium between both sects of Shia and Sunni Muslims. As was mentioned before, at the first stage of establishing Iraq, Sunni Arab rule was imposed over the Shia Arabs, despite the fact that the Shia were 80% of Iraqi Arabs,[184] while the Sunni Arabs were only 20%.[185] Consequently, to create a balance between these two Muslim sects, the Kurds who were mostly Sunni, were drawn into Iraq.[186]

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[177] Committee Against Repression and for Democratic Rights in Iraq, *Saddam's Iraq: revolution or reaction?* (London: Zed Books, 1989), p. 178.

[178] Foster, *Nashaat Aliraq Alhadith* , p. 265.; G. Weimar, 'Mudros Agreement: Armistice with Turkey (October 30, 1918', *German Historical Institute,* < http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/armistice_turk_eng.pdf> [accessed 10 November, 2013].

[179] Fitzgerald, '*France's Middle Eastern Ambitions, the Sykes-Picot Negotiations, and the Oil Fields of Mosul,' 1915-1918*, pp.697-725.

[180] Foster, *Nashaat Aliraq Alhadith* , p. 44.

[181] Gibson, 'British strategy and oil, 1914-1923', pp 115-126.

[182] Foster, *Nashaat Aliraq Alhadith* , p.44.

[183] K. Ahmad. Amin, 'Kurdistan La Niwan Melmelani Niwdawlati Wa Nawchayeda (1890-1932). Tozinawayake Mejoye, Siyase Abory' (unpublished MA thesis, Salahaddin University, 1999), p. 120.

[184] S. Nawkhosh, *Hokarakani Lekandni Welayati Musel Ba Iraqawa* (Erbil: Chapkhanaye Hawler, 2000).p. 88.

[185] Anderson and Stansfield, *The future of Iraq: dictatorship, democracy, or division*, p. 19.

[186] Nawkhosh, *Hokarakani Lekandni Welayati Musel Ba Iraqawa*, p. 88.

It is notable that the British policy towards the Kurds in general and Iraqi Kurdistan in particular did not correspond with the self-determination of nations. After the end of World War I, British authorities claimed that they would respect and support Kurdish rights, and in this regard many statements had been released, such as a joint declaration on 24th December 1922 in which both the British authorities and the Iraqi government emphasised respecting Kurdish rights within the Iraqi framework.[187] However, by analysing the events and transformations on the ground, it can be demonstrated that Great Britain had used the Kurdish issue as a pressure card against the Iraqi government and Turkey to impose its conditions. This was obviously manifested in the Lausanne Treaty, where the British authorities completely abandoned the Kurds; the only issue that they focused on was the future of the oilfields in Iraqi Kurdistan.[188] Regarding whether this region became part of Iraq or Turkey, a deep dispute had started between Turkey and Great Britain, which did not reach a solution, so this issue was handed over to the League of Nations, and on 16th December 1925 Iraqi Kurdistan became attached to Iraq.[189]

The League of Nations after attaching Kurdistan to Iraq and the termination of the mandate system over this country in 1932, emphasised that Iraq should respect Kurdish rights and take all necessary measures to ensure the Kurds in this regard.[190] However, successive Iraqi governments did not implement these recommendations. Instead, the Iraqi governmental policy from 1921 to 2003 toward the Kurds was denial and the refusal of Kurdish rights and national identity. The Iraqi state continually argued that Iraqi Kurdistan and the Kurds were part of the Arab territory and were in effect Arab people, and in theory and practice attempted to achieve this goal. After the collapse of

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[187] Chaliand, *A People Without a Country: The Kurds and Kurdistan*, pp. 160-161.; K. Yildiz, *The Kurds in Iraq: the past, present and future* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), p. 12.

[188] Foster, *Nashaat Aliraq Alhadith* ,pp. 335-365.; A. S. Al-Zebari, *Al-Waseh Al-Qunoni Lel Aqlim Kurdistan al -Iarq Fi Zel Al-Qawaeed Al-Qanoni Al-Dawli- Derast Tahliliyat- Naqedat* (Erbil: Matbaat Wazarat Al-Tarbiya, Moasesat Mokoryani Erbil, 2000).pp. 115-165.

[189] the league of nation had established specific committee of inquire for deciding on the fate of Iraqi Kurdistan and determine the final border between Iraq and turkey on 24 October 1924.This committee emphasised that the Kurds were independent nation and encompass 5/8 of the people of the (Iraqi Kurdistan), and according to the ethnic factor the Kurds should have independent state. Moreover, this committee argued that the border between Iraq Kurdistan and Iraq was Jabal Hamrin Mountains. See; Chaliand, *A People Without a Country: The Kurds and Kurdistan*, pp. 161-162 .; J. Fathulla, *Yqasat Al-Kurd; Tarikh Siyasi(1900-1925)* (Erbil:) Dar Aras Lel Tabaat Wa Al-Nesher, 2002).p.325.;Jalili Jalil , Wa Akhron, *Al-Harakat Al-Kurdiya Fi Al-Aseer Al-Hadis*, trans. Abdi HajiDar Al-Razi Beirot, 1992). p. 153.; K. Yildiz, *The Kurds in Iraq: the past, present and future*, pp . 12- 13.

[190] Al-Zebari, *Al-Waseh Al-Qunoni Lel Aqlim Kurdistan al -Iarq Fi Zel Al-Qawaeed Al-Qanoni Al-Dawli- Derast Tahliliyat- Naqedat* p. 206.; Yildiz, *The Kurds in Iraq: the past, present and future*,pp. 13-14.

the monarchical system in Iraq and the seizing of power by Abdel Karim Qassim in 1958,[191] the majority of the constitutions which had theoretically written 'Iraqi Kurdistan' now considered Kurdistan as simply a part of the Arab territory and the Kurds as part of the Arab nation.[192]

Moreover, after the Ba'ath Party seized power for the second time (1969-2003) by military coup,[193] Arabization and changes to the demography and ethnography of the Iraqi Kurds and their homeland were the crucial pillars of its strategy.[194] During the era of Saddam's regime, Iraqi Kurds faced brutal operations which were embodied in Arabization, Anfal[195] and other genocidal operations. In the Arabization operation, Kurds were expelled, deported and forced to migrate from their land and Arab people were settled in their area.[196] Moreover, during 1988-1989 Kurds were faced with genocide, especially during the Anfal campaign, where Saddam's regime had used chemical weapons against Kurdish civilian people.[197] During this process nearly 150-200,000 Kurds were killed,[198] and nearly 4,000 Kurdish villages were destroyed,[199] and hundreds of thousands of Kurds were arrested, went missing or fled to the neighbour's states.[200]

Despite this repression rebellions have erupted many times in Iraqi Kurdistan, such as the Mustafa Barzani revolution (1961-1975),[201] and the uprising in Kurdistan in March 1991, which led to creating the 'no-fly zone' in Kurdistan by the international community.[202] After the creation of the 'no-fly zone', Kurds via a democratic and electoral process established their own parliament and government.[203] This *de facto*

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[191] Anderson and Stansfield, *The future of Iraq: dictatorship, democracy, or division*, p. 165

[192] See the Iraqi constitutions (1958 article 2, 1964 article 1 and 1970 article 3).

[193] P. Beaumont, 'From a Tikrit boy to butcher of Baghdad', *the Guardian* (2006).

[194] K. Esmail, *Al-Qasiyat Al-Kurdiyat Fi Al- Iraq, ,Wjud Am Hedud* (Erbil: 2006).p.24.

[195] Anfal is the name of one of the verses (sura) of the Koran that indicates the spoils "{holy} of war'. This Sura of the Koran was used by the Saddam regime against Kurds during the 'Anfal operations' in 1988. During these operations chemical weapons were used against the Kurds and hundreds of thousands of Kurds were killed and went missing, see: Yildiz, *The Kurds in Iraq: the past, present and future*, p. 25.

[196] K. Esmail, ' Alabat Al-Siyasiya Lekhatat Al-Taareb Fi Aqlim Kurdistan,' *Gufari Zanko* vol.21 (May 2004, .p.21.

[197] McDowall, *A modern history of the Kurds* pp. 361- 343.

[198] ibid,. 343-361.

[199] Anderson and Stansfield, *The future of Iraq: dictatorship, democracy, or division* ,p. 170.

[200] Yildiz, *The Kurds in Iraq: the past, present and future*, pp. 25-31.

[201] M. Barzani, *Al-Barzani Wa Al-Harakat Al-Taharuriya Al-Kurdiya, Sawrat Ailul(1961-1975)* vol. 3 (Erbil: Matbaat Wezarat Al- Tarbiya, 2002).

[202] UN, *United Nations Security Council, Resolution 688 (1991),* (5 April 1991, United Nations) <http://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/resolutions/1991.shtml> [accessed 7 November, 2013]

[203] Anderson and Stansfield, *The future of Iraq: dictatorship, democracy, or division* , pp. 172-173.

Kurdish autonomous entity continued until 2003 and the toppling of the Saddam Hussein regime. Removing Saddam's regime from power in 2003 was considered the turning point in the history of Iraq and the Kurds, in which for the first time, the national rights of the Kurds, their identity and the Kurdistan region had been recognized constitutionally within the new Iraq.[204]

To sum up, the Iraqi state was an artificial state that was created by the British in the aftermath of the First World War as part of their imperial strategy. The common and shared interests of nations and sects that live in this state were not the key factor for establishing this state, but rather the interests of external and colonial powers. Iraq was composed of Kurds, Shia and Sunni but ruled by Sunnis, who were close to the British. Therefore successive Iraqi governments, instead of maintaining the interests and rights of all ethnic and sectarian groups, instead engaged in divide and rule, and when that failed they used repression.

 The Sunni Arabs from 1921 to 2003 imposed their hegemony over this country and marginalized all other groups from power. During this period in particular the Saddam regime era, the Iraqi authorities attempted, by using military force, security police repression and genocidal operations like Anfal, to repress the Kurds particularly. This situation of constant dictatorship and internal instability led Iraq into creating an external crisis (for example its invasion of Iran in 1980 and Kuwait in 1990) that resulted in destabilization of this state and the region as a whole. In this regard the position of the Kurds was in fact not an internal matter for Iraq, it was crucial to the U.S. strategic interests, regional system and stability in the region and remains so today. This is why analyzing U.S.-Kurdish relations remains so important for understanding the Middle East. The situation is again that the future of the Kurds is important to the region and U.S. regional hegemony.

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[204] M. M. Gunter, *The Kurds ascending: the evolving solution to the Kurdish problem in Iraq and Turkey,* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). pp. 15-16.

3.2 U.S. Policy Towards Iraqi Kurdistan During the Cold War (1958-1989)

The U.S. policy preoccupation with the Kurds can be traced back to after World War I, when Woodrow Wilson declared fourteen famous principles regarding the right to 'autonomy' for all nations born from the collapsed Ottoman Empire. [205] Despite these declarations, the Kurdish situation on the ground did not change, due to the emerging Kamala's Movement in Turkey and Britain's strategy regarding Iraqi Kurdistan.[206] A second close diplomatic effort between the U.S. and the Kurdish population can be traced back to World War II, in particular during the Cold War era.[207] In fact during the Cold War, Iraq and Kurdistan played a crucial role in the competition between both the U.S. and the Soviet Union, in particular after the 14 July 1958 Revolution in Iraq.[208]

The endless conflict between the Kurds and Baghdad along with Abdul Karim Qazim's failure to address the Kurdish question caused a revolution (Eilul) in Iraqi Kurdistan in September 1961.[209] Only two years later, thanks to the involvement of the Iraqi troops, the Ba'ath party overthrew Abdul Karim Qazim.[210] This started a season of political instability with the succession of many coups between 1963 and 1968. Finally, in 1968 the Ba'ath Party seized power for the second time.[211] Between 1968 and 1969 Baghdad was again at war with the Kurds and, in order to maintain its continuing fragile power, the Iraqi government decided to change its policy towards them by reaching a deal with Mullah Mustafa Barzani.[212]

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[205] Gunter, 'The Five Stages of American Foreign Policy towards the Kurds,', pp. 93-106.

[206] ibid., pp. 93-106.

[207] Before starting relations between Iraqi Kurds and the US during the cold war, the Kurds in Iran formed their autonomous region that was called the republic of Mehabad, on 22 January 1946-14 December 1946) by Qazi Muhammad. This Kurdish region was established as a result of the aftermath of WWII. US policy towards this entity comprised of a hostile stance. Charountaki, *the Kurds and U.S. Foreign Policy: International Relations in the Middle East since 1945*, p 129.

[208] J. T. Khoshnaw, *Masalaye Kurd Wa Yasaye Niwdawlatan,* (Sulaymaniya: Balawkerawakani Santery Likolinawaye Strategy, 2002), p. 399.

[209] D. Little, 'The United States and the Kurds: A Cold War Story,' *Journal of Cold War Studies* vol.12, no.4 (2010), p. 63-98, pp. 68-69.

[210] G. S. Harris, 'Ethnic Conflict and the Kurds,' *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* vol.433, no.1 (1977), pp. 112-124, p. 119.

[211] M. A. Mawlud, *Al-Fidraliya Wa Emkaniyat Tatbiquha Fi Al- Iraq* (Erbil: Matbaat Wezarat Al-Tarbiya, 2000), p 137.

[212] B. Robert. Gibson, 'U.S. Foreign Policy, Iraq, and the Cold War1958---1975', (Doctoral thesis, The London School of Economics and Political Science, 2013), pp. 184-185 <http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/720/1/Gibson_US_foreign_policy_2013.pdf> [accessed 25 December, 2013].

Many were the reasons that led the Iraqi government to take this step. The first one was the strength of Kurdish Peshmarga forces and their ability to strike the Kirkuk oilfields when necessary.[213] The second factor was related to the rising problems between Iraq and foreign oil companies.[214] The third one was also related to Iran, which abrogated the 1937 Saadabad agreement in order to force Iraq to cede the waterway of Al Shat Arab. This was in addition to a Shah's attempt to overthrow the Ba'athist regime.[215] The fourth factor that contributed to the Ba'ath regime's approach to the Kurds was to be found in the Soviet Union's foreign policy.[216] Russia effectively attempted to intercede between the Kurds and the Iraqi regime in order to solve the conflict peacefully,[217] all of this was to avoid U.S. interference in the area.[218] The result of the negotiations between Baghdad and the Kurds was the so called manifesto of 11 March 1970.[219] According to this accord, the Kurds were given 'self-government' in Kurdistan.[220] The manifesto emphasized that the Iraqi provisional constitution had to be amended to mention that Iraq encompassed two major nations.[221] Moreover, the accord stressed that any Kurdish dominant area should enjoy its autonomy and this had to be determined by a population census to be held in the provinces inhabited by the Kurds.[222] In addition, both sides agreed that the population census had to be carried out within six months,[223] and that a full implementation of the agreement should be expected within four years.[224]

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[213] S. N. Jawad, *Al-Iraq Wa Al-Masalat Al-Kurdiya,(1958-1970* (London: Dar Al-Lam, 1990), p.157

[214] ibid., p.157

[215] Gibson, 'U.S. Foreign Policy, Iraq, and the Cold War 1958-1975', pp. 181-183.

[216] Harris, 'Ethnic Conflict and the Kurds', p.112-124, p. 120.

[217] Charountaki, The Kurds and U.S. Foreign Policy: International Relations in the Middle East Since 1945, p.137.

[218] ibid., 137.

[219] O. Noradini, , *Sistami New Jihani O Duzi Kurd, Kurdistani Iraq Wek Nemona (Likolinawayekei Shikari Siyasiya)* (Hewler: Chapxanaye Haji Hashem, 2002), p, 98.

[220] CIA, *The Kurdish Problem in Perspective,* 30 June, 1979), p. 8 <http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/89801/DOC_0000626727.pdf >[accessed 25 December 2013].

[221] A. Al-Berifkani , *Mustafa Al-Barzani Zaim Al-Harakat Al-Qawmiya Al-Kurdiya Al-Muasera* (Cairo: , Merkaz Dawli Leleelam, p. 203.; K. E. Muhammed , 'Rekawtenamaye 11 Adar We Diyari Kerdni Nishtemanek Bo Natawaye Kurd La Iraqda,' vol.2434 (*Xebat newspapre*, 11 March, 2007).

[222] A. Al-Berifkani , *Mustafa Al-Barzani Zaim Al-Harakat Al-Qawmiya Al-Kurdiya Al-Muasera* (Cairo: , Merkaz Dawli Leleelam, p. 203.; K. E. Muhammed , 'Rekawtenamaye 11 Adar We Diyari Kerdni Nishtemanek Bo Natawaye Kurd La Iraqda,' vol.2434 (*Xebat newspapre*, 11 March, 2007).

[223] CIA, *The Kurdish Problem in Perspective*, p. 8.; K. Kochera, *Kurd La Sadaye Nozda O Bistam Da* , trans. Hama Karim Aref 3rd ed. (Hawler: Chapkhanaye Shevan, 2006), p.360.

[224] Harris, 'Ethnic Conflict and the Kurds', p.120.; K. Kochera, *Bezutnawaye Kurd We Hiwaye Sarbexoye*, trans. Akrami Meherdad (Sulaymaniya: Santery Chap O Paxshi Nema, 2002), P . 34.

This agreement constituted the great achievement for the Soviet Union's Middle Eastern policy in Iraq since the 14 July 1958 Revolution.[225] because a peaceful resolution of the Kurdish question in Iraq, ally of the Soviet Union, would grant Russia better control of the Middle East. Just one day after the agreement Leonid Brezhnev, at that time Secretary-General of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, sent a special letter to Barzani emphasizing that this agreement meant another defeat for the enemies of colonialism.[226] However, despite Russia's intervention, its policy towards the Kurds was at times inconsistent.[227]

Instead of honoring the agreement, the Ba'ath regime used the ceasefire and the negotiations to strengthen its military and political power. Saddam's regime violated the accord and,[228] and in 1970 the Ba'athist regime did not hold the population census - preventing the solution of the disputed areas including Kirkuk.[229] In addition, the Ba'athist regime refused to discuss the Kurdish autonomy project presented on 9 March 1973, as established in the 11 March accord,[230] In addition, the Arabization of Kirkuk and the disputed area was heavily underway.[231] Furthermore, Saddam's regime in order to maintain its military power, it signed an accord of 'friendly cooperation agreement' with the USSR in April 1972.[232] Article (8) of this accord clearly emphasized the USSR's support for the Iraqi regime in the handling the Kurdish cause.[233] In exchange, the Soviets gained the right to exploit the oil production of the Rumellan oil fields.[234] By signing this agreement, the relations between both sides strengthened, and Iraq gained military power as a result.[235] In addition, on 17 July 1973 a national front

[225] Noradini, , *Sistami New Jihani O Duzi Kurd, Kurdistani Iraq Wek Nemona* , p. 99.

[226] M. Barzani, *Al-Barzani We Al-Harakat Al-Taharuriya Al-Kurdiya, Sewrat Eilul(1961-1975)* vol. Chapter 3, (Hewler: Matbaat Wezarat Al-Terbiya, 2002), p. 247.

[227]ibid., p. 275.

[228]A. Senjari, *Al-Qasiya Al-Kurdiya We Hezeb Al-Ba'ath Al-Eshteraki Fi Al-Iraq* , Part1 ed. (Erbil: Matbaat Hashem, 2006), p . 44.

[229]Kochera, *Bezutnawaye Kurd We Hiwaye Sarbexoye*, p. 35.

[230] M. A. Mawlud, *Al-Fidraliya Wa Emkaniyat Tatbiquha Fi Al- Iraq*, p. 212.

[231]J. Randl, *Bam Hamo Tawana Lebordni Chi*, trans. Salam Adin Ashti2003) ,p. 211.

[232] Little, 'The United States and the Kurds: A Cold War Story', p.63-98 , p. 74.; Harris, 'Ethnic Conflict and the Kurds', pp. 120-121.

[233] Gibson, 'U.S.ForeignPolicy,Iraq,and the Cold War1958---1975', pp. 203-204.

[234] Barzani, *Al-Barzani Wa Al-Harakat Al-Taharuriya Al-Kurdiya, Sawrat Ailul(1961-1975)* vol. 3 (Erbil: Matbaat Wezarat Al- Tarbiya, 2002) , p. 282.; Gibson, 'U.S.ForeignPolicy,Iraq,and the Cold War1958---1975', p. 207.

[235] Little, 'The United States and the Kurds: A Cold War Story', pp. 74-75.; Senjari, *Al-Qasiya Al-Kurdiya We Hezeb Al-Ba'ath Al-Eshteraki Fi Al-Iraq*, p. 50.

between the Saddam regime and the Iraqi Communist Party (under the supervision of the Soviet Union) was declared.[236]

The intervention of the Soviet Union in Iraq and the Middle East, and its role towards the Kurds and Iraq resulting in the manifesto of 11 March accord,[237] had raised concerns among the U.S. and its allies in the region. In the same way, the nationalization of Iraqi oil, the Iraqi economic and military agreement with the USSR signed on 9 April 1972,[238] and the Ba'athist party's aggressive stance towards Israel had further increased the U.S. and its partner's fears, and led them to strengthen relations between the U.S. and the Kurds.[239] The developing U.S.-Kurdish ties during the 1970s aimed to prevent Soviet expansion in the Persian Gulf, particularly, but the U.S. also recognized the expansionist nature of the Ba'ath regime and considered it as a threat to Israel and to the whole stability of the area, especially after 1967, when the relations between both sides deteriorated.[240]

It could be noted that the U.S. had serious concerns about the USSR's expansion policy in the Middle East and its policy of controlling oilfield sources.[241] In particular this region was strategically important for U.S. interests. Henry Kissinger argued that "The Middle East lies at the crossroads of three countries. Because of the area's strategic importance, and because it provides the energy on which much of the world depends, outside powers have continued to involve themselves in its conflict, often competitively". [242]

In this context, to confront the USSR's influence in Iraq and the region, in May 1972, Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger visited Iran, where they discussed the possibility of supporting the Iraqi Kurds with the Shah.[243] Barzani, who was deeply skeptical regarding the Saddam regime's intention to implement the 11 March manifesto, decided

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[236] Kochera, *Kurd La Sadaye Nozda O Bistam Da* , p. 372.

[237] Hetuti, *Duzi Kurd La Iraq Wa Mechanizmakani Charasarkerdni- Dwaye 2003*, pp. 62-63

[238] Gibson, 'U.S. Foreign Policy, Iraq, and the Cold War1958---1975', pp. 203- 207.

[239] Hetuti, *Duzi Kurd La Iraq Wa Mechanizmakani Charasarkerdni- Dwaye 2003* , pp. 67-68.

[240] U.S. Department of State, *Washington Meetings with Kurdish Representatives;Foreign Relations, 1969-1976,* Volume E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, *5 July 1972* (, <http://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/nixon/e4/69747.htm> [accessed 25 December, 2013].; U.S. Department of State, *Memorandum Of Conversation, Foreign Relations,* 1969-1976, Volume E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, (May 30, 1972).

[241] S. Telhami, 'The Persian Gulf Why is This In Capitals? Understanding the American oil strategy.' *Brookings Review* 20.2 (2002), pp. 32-35.

[242] Quoted in Stephen M, Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987) p. 13.

[243] U.S. Department of State, *Memorandum Of Conversation, Foreign Relations,* 1969-1976, Volume E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972.

to strengthen ties with Iran and the US administration. For this purpose, on June 30 1972 Kurdish representatives (Idris Barzani and Mahmud Othman) attended a meeting with the director of the CIA, Helms and Alexander Haig, Kissinger's deputy in Tehran.[244] During the meeting, Kurdish representatives appealed for "political, financial, military, and intelligence assistance".[245] Moreover, the Kurdish delegation demanded U.S. officers to recognize 'the Kurdish objective of autonomy', and in return they pledged that the Kurds would be a reliable ally of the U.S. in the Middle East and would support its interests in the region.[246] For their part, the U.S. officers promised the Kurds that they would support them against Iraq and the Soviet Union, and emphasized that the assistance would be channeled through Iran.[247] However, the main purpose of the U.S. administration was not to guarantee Kurdish independence, but to weaken Saddam's regime and prevent it from causing unrest in the region.[248] (This was confirmed by Kissinger's Middle East advisor Harold Saunders.[249])

Between 1974 and 1975 many political transformations occurred in Iraq and in the region which changed the fate of Iraqi Kurds. On 11 March 1974 the Ba'athist regime unilaterally declared the autonomous law,[250] breaching the 11 March accord, causing a war between the two sides.[251] However, despite military support from the USSR, Saddam's regime was not able to defeat the Kurds.[252] This situation led Saddam to move away from the USSR to look for new supporters in the U.S. and Iran,[253] signing a new agreement to tackle the Kurdish question.[254] For this purpose Iraq asked other Arabic states such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt to arbitrate among U.S. Iran with Iraq.[255] On this occasion, both the Shah of Jordan and the President of Egypt, Anwar

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[244] U.S. Department of State, *Washington Meetings with Kurdish Representatives ;Foreign Relations, 1969-1976*.

[245] ibid.

[246] ibid.

[247] ibid.

[248] Harris, 'Ethnic Conflict and the Kurds', p.112-124 ,p. 121.

[249] NSC, *Memorandum, Saunders to Kissinger, Message from Shah on Kurds*, (June 7, 1972), <http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/mr/060772_iraq.pdf>[accessed 26 December 2013].

[250] CIA, *The Kurdish Problem in Perspective*, p. 8.

[251] Anderson and Stansfield, *The future of Iraq: dictatorship, democracy, or division*, p. 167.

[252] Qader, *Qasaya Al-Qowmeyat We Asaruha Ala Al-Alaqat Al-Dawliya(Al-Qasiya Al-Kurdia Nmozejan)*, p. 170.

[253] Wikileaks, *Iranian/Iraqi Agreement, From Amembassy Tehran to Department of State / Secretary of the State* (March 10, 1957), <https://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1975TEHRAN02237_b.html> [accessed 1 January 2014].

[254] Hetuti, *Duzi Kurd La Iraq Wa Mechanizmakani Charasarkerdni- Dwaye 2003* , pp.68-74-.

[255] N. Entisar, *Etno Natawayate Kurdi*, trans. Atta Qaradaqi (sulaymaniyah: Chapkhanaye Tishk, 2004) , pp. 262-263.

Sadat played a crucial role in the negotiations between Iran and Iraq.[256] In winter 1974, the Iraqi and Iranian foreign ministers met secretly in Geneva, and later in Istanbul.[257] At the same time, in New York, Henry Kissinger and Talib Shabib, the Iraqi representative in the Security Council, met to discuss the USSR threat in the Middle East.[258] It is remarkable that, Nixon's administration pursued two separate policies towards Iraq and the Kurds.[259] While Richard Helms, former officer of the CIA in Tehran, had provided Kurds with weapons and money, the State Department through Arthur Lowrie in September 1972 attempted to cultivate ties between Washington and Baghdad.[260] From spring 1973 onwards, Iraqi-U.S. ties consolidated,[261] and commercial relations between both sides has improved.[262] In 1974 Kissinger with with the help of Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, Algeria, and Saudi Arabia formulated the framework of the Algiers agreement and then it signed on March 6 1975.[263]

With this agreement, Iraq had ceded the 'Half of Al-Shatt Al-Arab waterway' to Iran,[264] renouncing its claims on Khuzestan,[265] and recognizing Iranian sovereignty over Abu Musa and Tunb Island in the Gulf.[266] In return, Iran relinquished the Kurds, stopped its support for the Kurdish leaders, and promised to fight against them.[267] In response to these events, Mustafa Barzani sent a letter to Henry Kissinger denouncing that Iran and Iraq had reached a deal at the expense of the Kurds and that the U.S. was ultimately politically and morally responsible for this situation,[268] In the same letter, Mustafa Barzani demanded that the U.S. exert pressure on Iran in order to change its policy

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[256] Entisar, *Etno Natawayate Kurdi*, trans. Atta Qaradaqi) , pp. 262-263.

[257] J.Tawfiq, *Al-Aqubat Al-Jeupolitikiya LelamnAl-Qawmi Fi Aqlim Kurdistan* (sulaymaniyah: Markez Kurdistan Lel-Derasaat Strategy, 2005), p. 413.

[258] Noradini, *Sistami New Jihani O Duzi Kurd, Kurdistani Iraq Wek Nemona (Likolinawayekei Shikari Siyasiya)*, p. 103.

[259] Gibson, 'U.S.ForeignPolicy, Iraq and the Cold War 1958---1975' , pp. 215-216.

[260] ibid.,p. 2015.

[261] ibid., 221.

[262] Wikileaks, *Baghdad 00111 to Secretary of State, Commercial Opportunities in Iraqi Oil Sector* (13 March,1973),<https://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1973BAGHDA00111_b.htm>[accessed January, 2014].;Gibson, *U.S.Foreign Policy, Iraq,and the Cold War1958---1975* , p. 221.

[263] G. Dishner , *Kurd Gali La Kheshtaberawi Qader Le Keraw*, trans. Hama Karim Aref 2nd ed. (Hewler: Chapxaney Wezarety Roshanbiry, 1999), 290.; Noradini,, *Sistami New Jihani O Duzi Kurd, Kurdistani Iraq Wek Nemona*,p. 103.

[264] Charountaki, *The Kurds and US foreign policy: international relations in the Middle East since 1945* , 140.

[265] CIA, *The Kurdish Problem in Perspective*, pp. 8-9.

[266] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations Of The United States*, 1969-1976, Volume Xxvii, Iran; Iraq, 1973–1976, Document, Telegram From The Interests Section In Baghdad To TheDepartment Of State *8 March, 1975* (http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v27/d274 [accessed January, 2014].

[267] Harris, *Ethnic Conflict and the Kurds*, p.112-124, p.121.

[268] Little, *The United States and the Kurds: A Cold War Story*, p. 83.

towards the Kurds. This letter never received a response and in 1975 the Kurdish revolution collapsed.[269]

It can be argued that the U.S. was mostly responsible for this situation, having promised the Kurds that they would not betray them.[270] This had convinced Barzani to rely on the U.S. pledge and to mistrust the Shah.[271] This was clear from the Pike Committee report.[272] By playing this way, the U.S. managed to contain the expansion of the USSR's influence in the Middle East by making an alliance with Iraq. The Kurdish question was only a tool of exchange in international diplomacy.[273]

After the Algiers agreement and the election of Jimmy Carter (1977-1981),[274] the U.S.' major strategy was to guarantee the export of oil in the Persian Gulf and tackle the USSR's control of the region.[275] In this regard Jimmy Carter on 23 January 1980 regarding the expansion of USSR in the Middle East and its threat to follow of oil argued that:

> The region [Middle East] which is now threatened by Soviet troops in Afghanistan is of great strategic importance: It contains more than two-thirds of the world's exportable oil. The Soviet effort to dominate Afghanistan has brought Soviet military forces to within 300 miles of the Indian Ocean and close to the Straits of Hormuz, a waterway through which most of the world's oil must flow. The Soviet Union is now attempting to consolidate a strategic position, therefore, that poses a grave threat to the free movement of Middle East oil.[276]

Jimmy Carter stressed that the U.S. was committed to ensuring the flow of oil in the Middle East and preventing any attempt which aimed to impose its hegemony over the region, including using armed forces.[277] Moreover, the end of the 1970s, which was marked by the eruption of the Iranian revolution led by Khomeini, had further

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[269] Gibson, 'U.S. Foreign Policy, Iraq, and the Cold War 1958---1975', pp. 266-267.

[270] Entisar, *Etno Natawayate Kurdi*, p. 258.

[271] ibid., p. 258.

[272] The Pike Committee investigated US policy towards the Kurds during the 1970s. M. M. Gunter, 'Foreign Influences on the Kurdish Insurgency in Iraq', *Journal of Conflict Studies* vol.12, no.4 (1992) pp- 7-24, pp. 8-9.

[273] S. A. Pire, interview with author, 14 April 2014, Iraqi Kurdistan, Erbil.

[274] The White house, *President James Carter* (1977-1981*)* <https://www.whitehouse.gov/1600/presidents/jimmycarter>[accessed 23 February 2014].

[275] Carter, *State of the Union Address*, January 23, 1980.

[276] ibid.

[277] ibid.

complicated U.S.-Middle East policy and cemented the alliance between the U.S. and Saddam's regime.[278]

From 1981-1989 the U.S. Middle Eastern policy focused on destabilizing the new regime in Iran using the Iraqi card.[279] During this era, the U.S. improved Iraqi military ability in terms of chemical and biological weapons programs,[280] and the Kurdish cause was completely neglected. In 1988, the Kurds faced a massive genocide campaign and the chemical weapons provided to Iraq by the U.S. were used against them.[281] In this regard, despite their condemnation, the U.S. did not take any action against Iraq.[282] The U.S. indifference was due to the fact that the U.S. had considerable geopolitical and economic interests with Iraq,[283] and believed that their ties with Iraq were crucial to guarantee its long term economic and political goals in the region.[284] To sum up, during the Cold War, U.S. foreign policy toward the Kurds can be analyzed in the wider context of U.S. Middle Eastern policy which was mostly influenced by the struggle and competition among the U.S. and its allies on the one hand and the USSR and its partners on the other. Therefore during this stage, U.S. did not have any intention of supporting the Kurds in their political battle for their rights. on the contrary, during this period, the U.S. exploited the Kurdish issue as a tool in order to change the Iraqi aggressive stance towards America and its friends and to contain the influence of Russia in Iraq and U.S. abandoned the Kurds when t achieved these goals.

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[278] Little, 'the United States and the Kurds: A Cold War Story', pp. 85-87.

[279] ibid., pp. 85-87.

[280]ibid., p. 144.

[281] HRW, *Genocide In Iraq, The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds, A Middle East Watch Report* (USA: Human Rights Watch, July 1993) <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1993/iraqanfal/#Table> [accessed 5 January , 2014].

[282] Little, 'The United States and the Kurds: A Cold War Story', p. 89.

[283] Charountaki, *The Kurds and US foreign policy: international relations in the Middle East since 1945*, p. 147-153.

[284] The U.S. did not take any steps towards punishing the Iraqi government regarding the use of chemical weapons against the Kurds in 1988. Despite US administration condemning the use of chemical weapons, but this condemnation was limited to the use of chemical weapons and it was not against Iraq or in support of Iran. ibid., pp.147-153.

3.3 U.S. Policy Towards KRI (1990-2002)

The year 1990 constituted the turning point in terms of the international system. With the disintegration of the USSR and the demise of the Cold War, there has been a transformation in the international structure from a 'bipolar' to a 'unipolar' system. This change in the international structure was embodied by the increasing U.S. hegemony in the world.[285] These transformations coincided with the Presidency of George H. Bush (1989-1993).[286] Hence, from 1990 to 2002, the key U.S. policy manifested in maintaining and enhancing its regional hegemony in the Middle East by concentrating on pursuing a containment policy towards Iran and Iraq, maintaining regional stability, preventing the rise of any regional power, ensuring the flow of oil and supporting the democratic principle. In this regard, Christopher argues that since 1990s onwards the key U.S. policy has been to maintain and preserve the its 'unipolar moment' and hegemony by concentrating on regional stability, preventing the rise of any regional and international power, supporting the democratic principle and controlling the strategic region including the Middle East, due to security and economic interests.[287]

Prior to the end of the Cold War, George H. Bush's policy towards Iraq aimed at improving bilateral ties with Saddam's regime and at alienating the Iraqi Kurds. In this context, George H. Bush's administration made sure that the U.S. did not go back to the policy towards the Kurds that they had followed in the 1970s.[288] During the 1990's, the U.S. aimed to guarantee regional stability by containing Russia's presence in the area.[289] In the meantime, the U.S. attempted to normalize their relations with Baghdad, believing that by giving political and economic support to Iraqi authorities it would

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[285] Mastanduno, 'Hegemonic order, September 11, and the consequences of the Bush revolution', pp. 177-196.; J. Joffe 'Bismarck or Britain? Toward an American grand strategy after Bipolarity', *International Security,* 19. 4 (spring1995), pp. 94–117.

[286] The White house, *George HW Bush (1989.1993),* <http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/georgehwbush> [accessed November 2013].

[287] L. Christopher, 'America's Middle East grand strategy after Iraq: the moment for offshore balancing has arrived.' *Review of International Studies* 35.01 (2009): pp. 5-25.

[288] Little, 'The United States and the Kurds*:* A Cold War Story', p.63-98, p. 90.

[289] ibid., p.90 .; Charountaki, *The Kurds and US foreign policy: international relations in the Middle East since 1945*, p. 151.

push Iraq to pursue a more realistic and responsible policy in the region.[290] Furthermore, the U.S. aimed to pursue a policy of isolating the Iranian regime. [291]

However, the invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990 dramatically changed the U.S.' position towards Iraq;[292] it pushed former president George H. Bush to deploy military forces in the Gulf region.[293] The U.S.'s stance towards this crisis was influenced by many factors. Iraqi action posed a serious threat to the stability of the oil supply price which was crucial for the U.S. economy and regional stability.[294] In this regard U.S. interests were threatened by other actors and the U.S. portrayed that this aggressive stance would lead to the collapse of the equilibrium of power in the region.[295] Hence, the U.S. wanted to prevent of emergence of a power that would dominate the key oilfields in the Middle East.[296] In particular, the U.S. saw that this Saddam regime would want to take over the Saudi Arabian and Kuwaiti oilfields, which would threaten U.S. national interests. This is because Iraq would use oil as a tool for achieving its goals.[297] Additionally, the U.S. policy to oust the Iraqi army from Kuwait was described as a 'self-help' response in the international system, which was marked by a lack of high power that would have been able to tackle this dilemma.[298]

During the Gulf War and following the expulsion of the Saddam regime from Kuwait, George H. Bush made an appeal to the Iraqi people to topple Saddam's regime. On 15 February 1991 he stated that:

> there's another way for the bloodshed to stop, and that is for the Iraqi military and the Iraqi people to take matters into their own hands and force Saddam Hussein, the dictator, to step aside, and then comply with the United Nations resolutions and rejoin the family of peace-loving nations. We have no argument with the people of Iraq. Our differences are with that brutal dictator in Baghdad.[299]

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[290] Little, 'The United States and the Kurds: A Cold War Story', p.63-98, p. 90.
[291] p. 90.
[292] ibid., p. 90.
[293] Kegley and Wittkopf, Kegley, Charles W. and Eugene R. Wittkopf., *American Foreign Policy: Pattern and Process*, 5th edn (New York: Martin's Press, 1996) , p. 20.
[294] S. Telbami, 'Kenneth Waltz, neorealism, and foreign policy.' *Security Studies* 11.3 (2002): 158-170. *Studies*, 11:3, 2002, pp. 158-170.
[295] Kegley and Wittkopf, *American foreign policy: pattern and process*, p. 20.
[296] Christopher, 'America's Middle East grand strategy after Iraq: the moment for offshore balancing has arrived, pp. 5-25.
[297] ibid., pp. 5-25.
[298] Kegley and Wittkopf, *American foreign policy: pattern and process*, p. 20.
[299] G. Bush. Remarks to Raytheon Missile Systems Plant Employees in Andover, Massachusetts, *Public Papers of the Presidents: Administration of George Bush* (February 15, 1991),

Shortly after Bush's words, both the north and the south of Iraq rebelled, both the Kurds and the Shia defied Saddam's regime. Despite his initial support for the uprising, Bush's administration was against a regime change promoted by the Kurds and the Shia. [300] They preferred to remove Saddam and his inner circle through a military coup that would exclude any popular participation. A change in the internal politics of Iraq without U.S. control would undermine the U.S.' control in the region.[301] Therefore, shortly after the uprising, Bush changed his policy towards both the Kurds and the Shia and allowed Saddam's regime to crack down on the revolt. [302]

Bush's policy of indifference towards the Kurds allowed Saddam's regime to repress the uprising in Kurdistan and in southern Iraq and it was part of a wider strategy to enhance its hegemony and prevent a regional power from rising in the region. The U.S. believed that the collapse of the Iraqi regime would lead to a collapse of central authority in Baghdad and that this vacuum of power could pave the way for the intervention of external powers in the country.[303] In other words, the Bush administration thought that its support for the Kurds could destabilize the Iraqi state and this would negatively affect the stability of the Middle East as a whole, because such support would provoke the Kurds in other parts of Kurdistan.[304] Moreover, the U.S. feared that the Shia would create an Islamic state and the Kurds would establish an independent state.[305] Therefore, the U.S. concern was that supporting uprisings would spread instability in the region and the integrity of the Iraqi state would face serious challenges. Likewise, the major aim of the U.S. and its allies was the expulsion of Saddam's regime from Kuwait.[306] Therefore, the U.S. was under pressure by its regional and Arab allies, especially Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States who were interested in preventing the division of Iraq and a possible Shia hegemony in the country.[307]

<http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2711&year=1991&month=2%3E%20Access%20Date:%2015%20December%202009.> [accessed 5 January 2014].

[300] M. Khadduri and E. Ghareeb, *War in the Gulf, 1990-91: the Iraq-Kuwait conflict and its implications* (Oxford University Press, USA, 1997) , p. 205.

[301] ibid., p. 205.

[302] Little, 'The United States and the Kurds: A Cold War Story', pp.63-98.

[303] ibid. p. 91.

[304] Gunter, 'Foreign Influences on the Kurdish Insurgency in Iraq', p. 18.

[305] T. Judah, 'In Iraqi Kurdistan,' *Survival* vol.44, no.4 (2002), p. 39-51 .; Gunter, 'Foreign Influences on the Kurdish Insurgency in Iraq'', p. 18.

[306] M. Khadduri and G. Edmund, *War in the Gulf, 1990-91: the Iraq-Kuwait conflict and its implications* (UK: Oxford University Press, USA, 1997) P. 105.

[307] ibid., p. 205.

Despite the U.S.' official position towards the Kurds, many factors caused the U.S. administration to deal with the Kurdish question; firstly, the pressure of the mass media and the international community forced the U.S. administration to protect the Kurds against Saddam's brutality and to engage with the Kurdish question.[308] Secondly, the mass exodus of the Kurds to the Turkish and Iranian borders raised U.S. fears that the Saddam regime's violent policy towards the Kurds would pose a serious threat to the stability of the region.[309] Thirdly, the refugees' situation in Turkey constituted another contributing factor to the decision of the U.S. to establish a 'No fly zone' in Iraqi Kurdistan.[310] This happened after Turgut Özal, the president of Turkey (1989-1993), said that the mass exodus of the Kurds into Turkey would provoke the Kurdish minority living in the country, and he exerted pressure on the Bush administration to take action in order to return the refugees to Iraq.[311] Fourthly, the pressure of the UK and France was another factor that convinced the U.S. to change their policy regarding the Kurds in Iraq.[312] On this basis, on 4-5 April 1991 the UNSC issued Resolution 688 that demanded Saddam's regime to put an end to the repression of the people and to the violation of Kurdish peoples' rights.[313] As a result of this resolution the 'No fly zone' (above the 36th parallel) named Operation 'Safe Havens' was established.[314]

Despite all this, it is important to note that Bush's administration had not had any intention of interfering in Iraq's internal political affairs, including the Kurdish question. In this context, the creation of a 'safe haven' was based merely on humanitarian aid, as Pire A. Sadi Chief of PUK public policy relations in interviews with the author confirmed.[315] In this regard, President Bush on 16 April 1991 said: "I want to underscore that all that we are doing is motivated by humanitarian concerns....the United States is not going to intervene militarily in Iraq's internal affairs

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[308] Little, 'The United States and the Kurds: A Cold War Story', p.63-98 , p. 92

[309] Charountaki, *The Kurds and US foreign policy: international relations in the Middle East since 1945*, pp. 165-168.

[310] Gunter, 'Foreign Influences on the Kurdish Insurgency in Iraq*'*, pp. 18-19.

[311] Charountaki, *The Kurds and US foreign policy: international relations in the Middle East since 1945*, p. 169.

[312] Sciolino Elaine, 'After the War; How Bush Overcame Reluctance and Embraced Kurdish Relief ', *New York Times* (April 18, 1991) .

[313] UNSC, *'Resolution 688 (1991)'*, *United Nations,*
,<http://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/resolutions/1991.shtml>[accessed 7 November, 2013].

[314] A. Al-Sheail, 'the International, Regional and Legal Aspects of Iraq's Invasion of Kuwait 1990-1991' (Doctoral thesis, Durham University, 2000), p. 163.

[315] S. A. Pire, interview with author, 14 April 2014, Iraqi Kurdistan, Erbil.

and risk being drawn into a Vietnam-style quagmire".[316] Moreover, Jay Garner, the supervisor of 'Operation Provide Comfort' emphasized that the Bush administration's effort was for a short time and merely confined to humanitarian relief and would not include any Kurdish political entity such as 'autonomy or independence'.[317] In addition, the U.S. informed the Kurds that "we're here for two things...to stop the dying in the mountains and to create an environment in which they could resettle".[318]

Despite this U.S. stance, however, the transformations in Iraq, the formulation of Iraqi Opposition and the U.S. seeking to find an alternative to replace Saddam's regime were enough to reinstate cooperation with the Kurdish leadership. On this basis, in October 1991, for the first time the Iraqi Kurdistan Front led by Jalal Talabani travelled to the U.S. to visit Edward Djerejian the Assistant Secretary of State in Washington.[319] The State Department announced that this meeting with the Kurdish delegation came within the framework of a U.S. meeting with the Iraqi opposition and the aim of this step was not "to shape a government to succeed Saddam Hussein. That is a matter for the Iraqi people. Similarly, the United States supports peaceful political reform within Iraq, not Iraq's breakup".[320]

From 1992 onwards, many other developments occurred in Iraqi Kurdistan which had serious ramifications for the fate of Iraqi Kurds. After the collapse of the negotiations between Kurds and Baghdad, the Iraqi regime withdrew its forces in most of Iraqi Kurdistan and imposed a blockade over the Kurds. In return, the Kurdistan front,[321] decided to fill the political vacuum in Kurdistan by creating a local administration. For the first time in Kurdish history, in May 1992, elections were held in south

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[316] G.H. Bush, *Remarks on Assistance for Iraqi Refugees and a News Conference, Public Papers of the Presidents: Administration of George Bush* (16 April, 1991), <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=19479> [accessed November 2013]

[317] Little, 'The United States and the Kurds: A Cold War Story', p. 92.

[318] ibid., p. 92.

[319] U.S. Department of State, *Meeting with Iraqi Kurdistan Front, Statement released by the Office of Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs/ Department Spokesman, Washington, DC* (US Department of State: Department of State, 7 October 1991) http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/ERC/briefing/dispatch/1991/html/Dispatchv2no40.html [accessed 6 January 2014].

[320] ibid.

[321] The Kurdistan front was established in 1988, in which the majority of Iraqi Kurdish parties were part of this front including the PDK and the PUK. The Kurdistan front had prepared the project regarding the Kurdish right and autonomy in Iraqi Kurdistan. See Hetuti, *Duzi Kurd La Iraq Wa Mechanizmakani Charasarkerdni- Dwaye 2003*, p. 111.

Kurdistan.[322] This step increased the neighbouring states' concerns regarding the future of Iraq. In particular Iran, Turkey and Syria argued that this policy might destabilize the region.[323] In the same way, the U.S. was uncomfortable regarding this Kurdish policy.[324] In addition, just before the elections, Saddam's regime threatened the Kurds with its military forces in order to stop the process, but the U.S. warned him not to intervene in the north of Iraq.[325] During the elections, the U.S. and UN agency did not participate in the process and remained silent about it in order not to provoke the other regional states.[326] However, even if it was done cautiously, the U.S. welcomed the electoral process. On 15 May 1992 Margaret Tutwiler, the State Department spokeswoman, announced that the U.S. wanted this elections to improve the condition of people in the north of Iraq and the U.S. were reassured by the Kurdish leaders that this step did not imply the separation of the country.[327] Just after the elections, in October 1992, the Kurdish parliament declared federalism as the viable system for Iraqi Kurdistan.[328]

During both the Bush and Clinton administrations' periods, the U.S. pursued a containment policy towards Baghdad.[329] The major U.S. strategy in this regard from 1991 to 1996 was to topple the Iraqi regime by military coup to replace Saddam Hussein without a direct military intervention to change the regime.[330] Therefore during this period, the U.S. administration did not have any serious desire to deal with the Kurdish administration and it assumed that by removing Saddam's regime from power, the Iraqi authority would regain control of Kurdistan and so the possibility of any Kurdish entity remaining was out of U.S. calculations. From 1996 onwards, the U.S.

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[322] K R G, The Kurdistan Parliament (krg.org: 2014) http://www.krg.org/p/p.aspx?l=12&p=229 [accessed 6 January, 2014].

323 Y. Voller, 'From Rebellion to De Facto Statehood: International and Transnational Sources of the Transformation of the Kurdish National Liberation Movement in Iraq into the Kurdistan Regional Government' (Doctoral thesis, the London School of Economics and Political Science, (2012),<http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/474/ > [accessed 5 January, 2014], p. 150.

324 ibid., p. 150.

325 ibid., p. 150.

326 ibid., p. 150.

327 Mohammed J M , Shareef, 'President George W.Bush's Policy towards Iraq: Change Or Continuity?' (Doctoral thesis, Durham University, 2010) < http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/501/> [accessed 5 January 2014], p. 193.

328 K. Katzman, Kurds in Post-Saddam Iraq (CRS Report for Congress) (Washington: Federation of American Scientists, 1 October, 2010) p. 2. http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS22079.pdf [accessed 28 January 2014],

329 S. Metz, Iraq and the evolution of American strategy (Potomac Books, Washington, 2008), p. 66.

330 R. J. Smith and D.B Ottaway, 'Anti-Saddam Operation Cost CIA $100 Million', Washington Post.; V. Thomas et al., 'How the CIA's secret war in Iraq turned into utter fiasco,' Washington Post March 23,1998 .

policy towards Iraqi Kurdistan had to some extent witnessed different directions.[331] In this context many political calculations and transformations pushed the Clinton administration to revaluate its ties with the Kurds. the failure of the CIA's efforts to topple the Iraqi regime by military coup in September 1996[332], the emerging new U.S. intention to change the regime through military intervention,[333] the defeat of both the Iraqi National Congress (INC) and Iraqi National Accord (INA) to propose an effective opposition able to replace Saddam's regime,[334] and the U.S. intention aimed at minimizing the influence and impact of both Iraq and Iran in Iraqi Kurdistan.[335] Therefore in 1997-1998 the U.S. seriously negotiated a ceasefire between the PUK and the PDK.[336] As a result of these efforts, under the direct supervision of Clinton's administration, on 17 September 1998 Jalal Talabani and Mused Barzani signed the 'Washington agreement'.[337] This Agreement put an end to the fratricide conflict among the Kurds that had begun in 1994.[338] During this period, Washington assured the Kurds of its protection against Saddam's regime.[339] On 31 October 1998, the U.S. Congress passed the Iraqi Liberation Act,[340] this was the harshest U.S. position towards Baghdad since 1992 and indicated the U.S. shift to regime change.[341]

From 2001 to 2003 relations between the Kurds and the U.S. therefore improved. This period coincided with the presidency of George W. Bush (2001-2009).[342] The new U.S. administration, under neoconservative influence, aimed at regime change in Iraq

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[331] See Charountaki, *The Kurds and US foreign policy: international relations in the Middle East since 1945* , pp. 171-186.

[332] Smith and Ottaway, 'Anti-Saddam Operation Cost CIA $100 Millio*n'*.; Thomas et al., 'How the CIA's secret war in Iraq turned into utter fiasco'.

[333] Charountaki, *The Kurds and US foreign policy: international relations in the Middle East since 1945* , p. 171.

[334] ibid., pp. 183-184.

[335] ibid., p.186.

[336] S. A. Pire, interview with author, 14 April 2014 , Iraqi Kurdistan, Erbil.

[337] G. R. V. Stansfield, 'Iraqi Kurdistan: An Analysis and Assessment of the Development and Operation of the Political System' (Doctoral thesis, Durham University, 2010) University), PP. 195-197< http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/1205/1/1205.pdf >[accessed January 27, 2014].

[338] A. Makovsky 'Kurdish Agreement Signals New U.S. Commitment' *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy* (September 29, 1998), <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/kurdish-agreement-signals-new-u.s.-commitment> [accessed 5 January, 2014].

[339] ibid.

[340] M. Laurie, *Senate Unanimously Passes Iraq Liberation Act,* CRS Report for Congress. *(Order Code* H.R. 4665). (Washington:. Congressional Research Service, 7 October, 1998).

[341] Charountaki, *The Kurds and US foreign policy: international relations in the Middle East since 1945*, p 187.

[342] The White house, *George W. Bush (2001-2009),*<http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/georgewbush> [accessed 25 January 2014].

especially after the 11 September 2001 attacks.[343] In this context, in April 2002 the Kurdish leaders Masoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani were invited to Washington and George Tenet, the CIA director, assured them that the U.S. would topple Saddam's regime. At the same time, U.S .officers stressed the Kurdish right to representation and to respond immediately to any threats from any Iraqi attack.[344] This new U.S. stance encouraged Kurdish leaders to remove the aftermath of civil war in Kurdistan. On this basis, on 5 October 2002 for the first time after the civil war the Kurdish parliament met.[345] U.S. Secretary of State Colin L. Powell supported this Kurdish step towards unity and said: "I am proud you are among the United States' partners in the fight against tyranny and injustice and that you share our vision of Iraq's future".[346] In another unprecedented development which increasingly encouraged the Kurds to cooperate with the Bush administration, a press conference was held in March 2003 in which, for the first time George Bush supported federalism as a model for a post-Saddam Iraq.[347] In this way, U.S.-Kurdish ties entered a new phase marked by the post-Saddam regime era. Later in the study, the researcher will comprehensively evaluate the new U.S. policy towards Iraqi Kurdistan.

Conclusion

It can be said that during the Cold War, U.S. foreign policy toward the Kurds can be seen and analyzed in the wider context of U.S. Middle Eastern policy. In this regard, U.S. policy was mostly influenced by the struggle and competition among the U.S. and its allies on the one hand and the USSR and its partners on the other. In this regard regional factors had a profound influence on U.S. policy in the Middle East generally and Iraqi Kurdistan. During this period, the U.S.' major strategy focused on enhancing its influence and changing the distribution of power in favor of a 'unipolar' system and

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[343] B. O'Leary et al., *The future of Kurdistan in Iraq* (Univ of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), p 270.

[344] Mohammed , Shareef,, 'President George W. Bush's Policy towards Iraq: Change or Continuity?' pp. 201-202.

[345] C. S. Smith, 'Threats and Responses: Ethnic Issues; Rival Iraqi Kurdish Groups Meet To Resolve Differences,' New York Times, October 5, 2002 .

346 ibid.

[347] G. W. Bush, *President George Bush discusses Iraq in national press conferenc*e, 6 March (2003),<http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030306-8.html> [accessed 26 January 26, 2014].

attaining regional hegemony by supporting its key security allies, containing Russia's ambitions in the region, and guaranteeing the flow of oil to a global market.

Therefore, during this stage, the U.S. did not have any specific policy towards Iraqi Kurds, and did not have any intention of supporting the Kurds in their political battle for their rights. On the contrary, the U.S. administrations considered the Kurds as a source of instability in the region for them and their allies. The U.S. administrations saw that any Kurdish move towards independence threatened its national interests and weakened its influence in the region. For this reason, it is clear that during this period, the U.S. exploited the Kurdish issue as a tool in order to change the Iraqi aggressive stance towards America and its friends and to contain the influence of Russia in Iraq. This situation made the Kurdish issue almost invisible to the international community, leaving the Ba'ath regime in a position to commit genocide against the Kurds without fear of any external intervention.

From 1990 to 2002, U.S. policy towards Iraq and the Middle East was mostly driven by a new transformation in the international system and a redistribution of power in favour of U.S. hegemony in the world and moving the international system towards a 'unipolar system'. The key U.S. policy was to enhance and install its global hegemony and in this regard the U.S. policy towards Iraq and Kurdistan was determined by its broader policy of maintaining its interests and enhancing its regional hegemony in the Middle East. For this purpose, U.S. policy concentrated on a containment policy towards Iraq and Iran, preventing the Saddam regime from posing a threat to regional stability, thwarting the rise of regional hegemony in the region and supporting the democratic principle in the region. Within this context, The U.S. administration believed that the 'no fly zone' in Iraqi Kurdistan would be an influential factor in the containment policy towards Iraq and Iran and therefore they supported the Kurds in Iraq. Moreover, the U.S. policy of enhancing a moralization principle in the region affected the U.S. policy of supporting the Kurds in terms of humanitarian aid.

However, U.S. foreign policy towards Kurdistan between 1991 and 2002 limited itself to supporting the Kurdish community on the principle of humanitarian aid without any political aim. During the Kurdish uprising of 1991 the U.S. did not want to support the Kurds, due to the larger political effects this might have: the U.S. did not want such instability in Iraq that Saddam might be overthrown and chaos take his place. The U.S. also thought that chaos after Saddam might easily lead to the partition of the Iraqi state,

and this would pave the way for Iran to impose its hegemony on Iraq and in the region and this would undermine U.S. strategic interests. Finally the U.S. administration was under pressure by its allies (Turkey) not to support the uprising, because they feared any step in this regard would threaten their own territorial integrity.

Chapter 4: Regime Change in Iraq: Iraqi Domestic Factors Affecting U.S. Policy Towards the KRI (2003-2011)

Introduction

The U.S. policy towards Iraq and the Kurdistan region from 2003 to 2011 was mostly driven by the U.S. interests in maintaining hegemony, stability and removing all constraints which prevented the U.S. to restructure the regional system in the Middle East. Since the end of the Cold War, U.S. strategy has moved towards maintaining its interests and enhancing hegemony in the region. The U.S. administration saw the redistribution of power in the international system in favour of its interests and increase in its power after the Cold War would be enable it to restructure the regional system in the Middle East in the way that contributed to enhancing its position and defending its core interests. In particular, the Bush administration believed that the regional dynamic of the region manifested in a rise of radical Islamic groups, an ineffective containment policy towards Iraq and Iran and a lack of democracy were challenging and hampering its policy and threatening its position. Hence, the U.S. by taking opportunities from redistribution of power internationally in favour of its power to move forwards with 'regional transformations' and the removal of anti-U.S. systems via military intervention.

Within this context, the Bush administration thought that removing Saddam's regime, creating stable, democratic, strategic partners in Baghdad and keeping Kurds inside this state would make Iraq a major and new base for maintaining its hegemony. In this regards the key U.S. strategy in Iraq and region focused on enhancing regional hegemony, containing or removing anti U.S. regimes, keeping Iran under control, securing oil supplies in the region, supporting the promotion of democracy, maintaining stability and confronting terrorists groups. This and the next chapter of this thesis will broadly discuss all these arguments and their impact on the Kurdistan region.

This chapter will address the Iraqi domestic factors affecting U.S.-Kurdish policy. This chapter argues that with deterioration of Iraqi stability, the KRI was seen by the U.S. as a key partner to pursue its strategy, which is manifested in keeping Iraq united, being a democratic partner, confronting any Iraqi insurgency and terrorist groups, maintaining

stability and tackling the role of Shia religious groups. This considered to be the most important reason which pushed the U.S. authorities to change its position towards the Kurds and support the Kurdish demands for federal region. However, this chapter argues that during this stage, U.S. policy was to keep the Kurds inside Iraq and block any Kurdish attempt to incorporate Kirkuk and the disputed areas into the Kurdistan region. In this regards the U.S. wanted to maintain the territorial integrity of Iraq and transform it into a strategic partner to enable the U.S. to control the Middle East.

Within this context, it can be argued that Iraq as whole was considered vital for U.S. new strategy in the region. According to the U.S. perspective, Iraq is considered as an important state in the region, which has huge oilfields and would play a major role in stabilizing the price of global energy. Moreover, making Iraq a strategic partner would maintain U.S. energy interests and give the U.S. opportunities to expand its partners, especially in terms of energy sources. Additionally, since 2003, the U.S. was interested in alienating the influence of Shia religious parties in Iraq and thought that this would be achieved within the context of the creation of a democratic, unified and stable Iraq. Hence, the U.S.' policy towards the Kurdistan region was based on the principle of to what extent backing the Kurds maintained the territorial integrity of Iraq and contributed to maintaining its interests. In this regard the U.S. saw that Kurdish independence, its claim regarding Kirkuk and the disputed areas and the struggle between Baghdad and Erbil as a major threat to its policy and interests in Iraq and the region. Therefore, from 2003 to 2011, the key U.S. policy had concentrated on keeping Kurds inside Iraq and stressing a strong central government in Baghdad.

However, at the same time, Kurdistan has been the most stable and pro-democratic area in the whole of Iraq and with the deterioration of security, the expansion of terrorist groups and the rise in the influence of Shia religious groups, this all created a serious threat and challenges to U.S. strategy and therefore the U.S. authorities looked to the KRI as a key partner to tackle these challenges and preserve stability in Iraq. Therefore, the U.S. then turned to support the KRG and showed some flexibility towards Kurdish demands for federal region. In particular, the Kurds became important for the U.S. strategy in Iraq and there was an alliance of interests on both sides. This was evident in the 2003-2011 periods.

This chapter looks broadly at all these arguments within the context of the Iraqi domestic factors which have affected U.S. policy towards Iraqi Kurdistan. First, an

overview of the U.S. policy development in Iraq is provided. Secondly, the U.S. objectives of stressing the territorial integrity of Iraq are addressed. The U.S. position towards the Kurds was often based on whether the Kurds were helping to keep Iraq together as a political unit, or were encouraging its further fragmentation. For example, this often led the U.S. to shift away from the Kurds and towards the Iraqi government, especially during Maliki's rule, even though it pursued a sectarian and dictatorial policy towards Kurds and Sunnis seemingly violated the permanent constitution. Alternatively the security situation in Iraq at times was so disastrous that the U.S. turned to Kurdistan and revised its policy towards the KRG and the federal system in Iraq. Third, Kirkuk and the disputed areas are examined due to the way that they highlight the attitude of the U.S. towards the Kurdistan Regional Government. Generally, the U.S. position towards the contested areas had not been in favour of the KRG. Thus, the U.S. administration constantly directly or indirectly exerted pressure on the KRG to seek a compromise settlement regarding the contested territories. Fourthly, the conflict between Erbil and Baghdad is examined although this connects with the Kirkuk issue, since the struggle was mostly related to the distribution of oil and political power in Iraq. These issues are interconnected, but for the U.S. the important point by the 2000s was that maintaining Iraqi integrity was the main way by which its hegemony could be achieved.

4.1 Overview of The U.S. Policy Development in Iraq 2003-2011

The terrorist attacks in United States in 2001dramatically changed U.S. policy in the Middle East. This event forced Bush's administration to adopt different policies in the region in order to fight terrorism, rogue states, to stop the proliferation of WMD and favour democratization in the area.[348] In this context, the new administration was influenced by the perspective of 'neoconservatives' aimed at regime change in Iraq as a major part of the 'war on terror'.[349] Bush's doctrine argued that regime change in Iraq

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[348] CIA, *US National Security Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, (February 2003), pp. 1-30 <https://www.cia.gov/news-information/cia-the-war-on-terrorism/Counter_Terrorism_Strategy.pdf> [accessed February 2014].

[349] E. Drew, 'The Neocons in Power,' *New York Review of Books* vol.50, no.10 (2003). It is notable that two major perspectives were prevailing inside the Bush cabinet during his authorities. Some of them were influenced by the 'Wilsonian School' which they strongly stressed installing and spreading democracy in the region. While others who were affected by the 'Jacksonian School', asked the U.S.

would favour the establishment of a democratic system throughout the Middle East, especially in Iran, Syria and other Arab states.[350] All this meant a dramatic change in the U.S.' Middle Eastern policy. For the first time the U.S. took serious steps towards the establishment of a democratic system in Iraq, which had to include all groups; Shia, Kurds and Sunni. Under this clear policy 'Operation Iraqi Freedom' began on 19 March and on 9 April 2003 led to the fall of Saddam's regime.[351]

Soon after the invasion of Iraq, Bush's administration intensified its efforts to create a structure for the new political system, and in this regard established the 'Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance' (ORHA) in early 2003, that was led by General Jay M. Garner.[352] This was quickly later replaced by the 'coalition provisional authority' (CPA) on 16 May 2003 led by Paul Bremer.[353] Bremer's main mission, according to the White house statement released on 6 May 2003, was to supervise the rebuilding of Iraq and support the Iraqi people in the creation of their democratic institutions and political system.[354] Moreover, Bremer had to report to the U.S. President and its administration regarding preserving CPA objectives in Iraq.[355] To this purpose, and in order to guarantee the participation of all Iraqi groups in the democratic process, on 13 July 2003 the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) was established, which

administration to use unilaterally military forces to maintain US national interests. The supporters of the 'Wilsonian School' mostly stressed democracy promotion and removing a dictatorial system. However, the 'Jacksonian school's proponent, who were a majority of nationalists concentrated on WMD as a key threat to US vital interests and they saw that the key US priority should be given to confronting the proliferation of WMD. These two major perspectives formed the 'neoconservative' coalition inside the U.S. administration. See R. Haar, 'Explaining George W. Bush's Adoption of the Neoconservative Agenda after 9/11,' *Politics & Policy* vol.38, no.5 (2010), p. 965-990.pp. 970-984;. Mohammed, Shareef, 'President George W. Bush's Policy towards Iraq: Change or Continuity?' p. 65.; R. Singh (ed.), *Neo-conservatism; Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2009).32-46.

[350] G. W. Bush, *President Bush Discusses Freedom in Iraq and Middle East,* (6 November 2003)<http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/11/20031106-2.html>[accessed February 2014].

[351] K. Katzman, *Iraq: US Regime Change Efforts and Post-Saddam Governance,* CRS Report for congress. (Order Code RL31339). (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 5 July 2005). pp. 2-12.

[352] L. Elaine Halchin, *The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA): Origin, Characteristics, and Institutional Authorities,* CRS Report for congress. (Order Code RL32370). (Washington:. Congressional Research Service, June 6, 2005): pp. 1-32 .

[353] C. P. Authority, *CPA Regulation Number One*, (16 May 2003), <http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030516_CPAREG_1_The_Coalition_Provisional_Authority_.pdf> [accessed 3 February 2014].

[354] The White House, *President Names Envoy to Iraq, Statement by the Press Secretary* (6 May 2003),http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/05/20030506-5.html [accessed 3 February 2014].

[355] The White House, *President Names Envoy to Iraq, Statement by the Press Secretary* (6 May 2003)

included Shia, Sunni, Kurds and other minorities.[356] The major mission of this Council was to represent the interests of the Iraqi people and reflect their aspirations during the provisional administration until the creation of a permanent recognized Iraqi government.[357] It is notable that the IGC had limited authority and according to UNSR 1483 (22 May 2003) [358] the CPA had real authority and enjoyed the right of veto over any decision taken by this council.[359]

Furthermore, in March 2004 after intensive effort, the Iraqi interim constitution (TAL) was drafted.[360] The TAL did not meet Kurdish aspirations and generally it was in favour of a strong central authority. Despite this, this law to some extent was important for the Kurds, because for the first time it guaranteed that any Iraqi permanent constitution had to be drafted with the consensus among all Iraqi groups.[361] To advance the Iraqi political process, in 2005, the Iraqi permanent constitution was drafted.[362]

The two years from 2006 to 2008 which were marked by the civil war between the Shia and Sunni, led to a new U.S. policy to deal with the increasingly unsafe situation on the ground. From 2006 onwards, during the new Iraqi government led by the Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, Iraq entered into a new sectarian war between the Shia and Sunni, in particular, after the bombing of the Shia shrine in Samara in February 2006.[363] In March 2006 Bush declared a new strategy to handle the insurgency and maintain security in Iraq. [364] In this context, the U.S. strategy was comprehensive and included

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[356] C. P. Authority, *CPA Regulation Number 6*, (13July 2003), <http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030713_CPAREG_6_Governing_Council_of_Iraq_.pdf > [accessed 3February 2014].

[357] ibid.

[358] UNCC, *United Nations Security Council, 'Resolution 1483',* <http://www.uncc.ch/resolutio/res1483.pdf > [accessed 10 February 2014].

[359] The Iraqi governing council included 25 members from all ethnic and religious groups in Iraq. In fact this council did not have a real authority, because it was appointed by the occupation authority. The occupation authority had a veto over any decision in Iraq. In this council Kurds had five members including Masoud Barzani (PDK), Salahaddin Mohammed Bahaddin (KIU), Jalal Talabani (PUK), and Mahmoud Othman and Dara Nor al-Din(both were independent members) see: Iraq: Iraq's Governing Council see.; P. E. Tyler, 'After the War: Leadership; Iraqi Factions Agree on Members of Governing Council,' *New York Times* , 13 July 2003 .

[360] *Iraq's Interim Constitution: Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period 8 March 2004,* (8 March 2004).

[361] ibid.

[362] *Iraqi Permanent Constitution 2005,*

[363] K. Katzman. *Iraq: Politics, Governance, and Human Rights,* CRS Report for Congress. (Order Code RS21968). (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 6 January 2014), p. 4.

[364] The White House*, The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, (*16 March, 2006), < http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2006/sectionI.html >[accessed 5 February, 2014].

all aspects of politics, security, and the economy.[365] In terms of politics, the new strategy focused on eradicating and tackling extremists who did not have the desire to engage with a peaceful process and the engagement of others who had the intention of participating in the Iraqi political process and giving up violence.[366] In terms of security, the strategy stressed confronting terrorist groups, increasing the number of military forces and improving the capacity of Iraqi military forces.[367] In addition, in terms of economy, the NSS aimed at improving the capacity of the Iraqi infrastructure.[368] In another step for revising U.S. policy in Iraq, the Iraqi study groups (Baker-Hamilton) were established and their recommendations published in December 2006, which stressed the creation of a strong government in Baghdad.[369] Despite this, some of the recommendations were ignored by George Bush.[370] However, some others had been implemented, in particular the postponement of the referendum on Kirkuk and the disputed areas.[371]

In the final year of Bush's presidency (2008-2009), the intensity of the sectarian conflict decreased, and therefore the U.S. intensified their efforts to determine a long term policy in the country and certify the framework of cooperation and bilateral ties with Iraq. In this context, on 17 November 2008 two major accords were signed between both sides, which included the 'Strategic Framework Agreement' (SFA) and the 'Security Agreement' (SA).[372] These accords stressed many points which maintained the common interest of both states. In accordance with these agreements, the U.S.

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[365] ibid.

[366] ibid.

[367] ibid.

[368] ibid.

[369] L. Hamilton and J. Addison Baker, *Iraq Study Group Report: The Way Forward-a New Approach,*(Washington: United States Institute of Peace, 2006) <http://media.usip.org/reports/iraq_study_group_report.pdf> [accessed 12 January, 2013].

[370] Gunter, 'The Five Stages of American Foreign Policy towards the Kurds', p. 101.

[371] K. Ridolfo, Iraq: Kirkuk Referendum Delayed By Six Months (21 December 2007), <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1079288.html>[accessed January 2013] .; However, in contrast to Iraqi study groups, on 26 September 2007 the Congress passed a 'non-binding resolution' which demanded the Bush administration to create three federal regions in Iraq for Shia, Sunni and Kurds. See: J. Biden and L. Gelb, 'Federalism, not Partition', *Washington Post,* 3 October 2007 .;G. Bruno, 'Plans for Iraqis Future: Federalism, Separatism, and Partition,' (Council on Foreign Relations (October 2007), <http://www.cfr.org/iraq/plans-iraqs-future-federalism-separatism-partition/p14547 >[accessed 5 February 2014].

[372] U.S. Department of State, *Strategic Framework Agreement for a Relationship of Friendship and Cooperation between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq* (17 November, 2008),<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/122076.pdf >[accessed 10 February 2014].; U.S. Department of State, *Security Agreement between Iraq and the United States of America,* (17 November 2008) < http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/122074.pdf> [accessed 2 February 2014].

would not use Iraqi territory to attack regional states and the U.S. would not ask to establish a permanent military base.[373]

Moreover, in terms of democracy, both the SFA and SA stressed that the U.S. would support democracy and a federal system in Iraq and would back Iraq at the regional and international level.[374] The SA also stressed that in a situation in which the democratic system and the integrity of Iraq faced internal and foreign threats, both parties would take immediate action to tackle the threats.[375] In terms of economy and national resources, both sides would attempt to improve the Iraqi economy and Iraqi national and oil sectors.[376] Finally, in terms of security and stability, the SA stressed improving Iraqi military power and on establishing close and strong ties between both sides.[377] On this basis, both sides in accordance with the SA agreed to withdraw U.S. military forces on 31 December 2011.[378] It was clear that both agreements were very important for bilateral relations between the two countries.

From 2009 to 2011 to some extent the U.S. policy in Iraq and the Middle East witnessed a change of direction, in comparison to the Bush administration, which tended to intervene directly in Iraq and the Kurdistan region.[379] In this context, one of the major U.S. priorities was the withdrawal of its military forces from Iraq.[380] For this purpose, in May 2010 the U.S. NSS report made public the U.S. approach in Iraq stressing the need for the Iraqi security forces to take over from the U.S. and for the improvement of Iraq's economy and diplomatic presence in and outside the region.[381] Within this framework in December 2011 the U.S. withdrew their troops from Iraq.[382] Additionally, during this period, Nouri al-Maliki who was elected for the second term

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[373] ibid.

[374] ibid.

[375] U.S. Department of State, *Security Agreement between Iraq and the United States of America*.

[376] U.S. Department of State, *Strategic Framework Agreement for a Relationship of Friendship and Cooperation between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq*.; U.S. Department of State, *Security Agreement between Iraq and the United States of America*.

[377] U.S. Department of State, *Security Agreement between Iraq and the United States of America.*

[378] ibid.

[379] S. Akbarzadeh, *America's Challenges in the Greater Middle East : The Obama Administration's Policies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd, 2011) , P. 19.

[380] B. Obama, *Remarks by the President at Disabled Veterans of America Conference in Atlanta, Georgia* (02 August 2010),< http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-disabled-veterans-america-conference-atlanta-georgia > [accessed 5 February 2014].

[381] The White House, N*ational security strategy*, (May 2010), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf> [accessed 13 June 2014].

[382] B. Obama, *Remarks by the President and First Lady on the End of the War in Iraq* (14 December 2011), https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/12/14/remarks-president-and-first-lady-end-war-iraq [accessed 12 June 2014].

as Iraqi Prime Minister in 2010 [383] pursued two crucial policies in order to maintain his power; marginalizing the Kurds and targeting Sunni Arabs.

Soon after the withdrawal of U.S. troops, in December 2011, he issued a warrant against Tariq al-Hashemi the vice president of Iraq and a main figure in Sunni politics accusing him of supporting terrorist groups in Iraq,[384] and later targeted another senior Sunni figure, Rafi al-Issawi, and the finance minister accusing him of the same crime.[385] This provoked protests in Sunni dominant cities increasing the sectarian polarization,[386] and causing the deterioration of security in Iraq. Furthermore, Nouri al-Maliki pursed the same policy towards Iraqi Kurdistan.[387] It is notable that there were sceptical opinions inside the U.S., especially in Congress, with regard to Nouri al-Maliki's sectarian policy toward the Kurds and Sunni Arabs, because they argued that this policy would increase instability in the country.[388]

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[383] K. Katzman, *Iraq: Politics, Governance, and Human Rights,* CRS Report for Congress. (Order Code RS21968). (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 9 August, 2011), pp. 1.37.

[384] M.M. Gunter, 'The Kurdish Spring,' *Third World Quarterly* vol.34, no.3 (2013), p. 445-446.

[385] Al Jazeera, *Maliki's Dilemma: The Crisis of the System of Quotas and Exclusion*, 29 January 2013) <http://studies.aljazeera.net/en/positionpapers/2013/01/201312885617985214.htm > [accessed 4 February 2014].

[386] ibid.

[387] Gunter, 'The Kurdish Spring', p. 446.

[388] New York Times*, Senators' Letter to President Obama on Iraq, New York Times*, 29 October 2013 .

4.2 Iraqi Domestic Factors Affecting U.S. Policy Towards the KRI (2003-2011)

4.2.1 Keeping Iraq a United Stable and Strategic Partner

One of the U.S.' explicit goals after the removal of Saddam's regime in 2003 was the creation of a stable, unified, democratic and pro-U.S. government in Iraq.[389] The U.S. and its allies' have had serious concerns in respect of the territorial integrity of Iraq. Therefore, in order to declare that it opposed any attempt at secession, one day before the starting of the military operations in Iraq the U.S. delivered this message. In a common statement released by Bush, Blair and Aznar during the summit in the Azores on 16 March 2003, they announced as their main objective the removal of Saddam from power, but at the same time they stressed that the coalition power would respect Iraq's territorial integrity.[390] They also stressed that all Iraq components, Kurds, Shias, Sunnis and other groups "should enjoy freedom, prosperity, and equality in a united country".[391] Hence, following 2003, one of the priorities of U.S. administrations has been the preservation of Iraqi territorial integrity.[392]

However, the Kurds remained as the fourth biggest ethnic nation in the Middle East without a state [393] and with a history of confronting successive Iraqi governments in order to obtain their rights. Since 1992 the Kurds had had their own enclave in Iraq.[394] Following 2003, the presence of this autonomous Kurdistan region continually raised regional state concerns of a possible breakup of the country.[395] In particular, from 2003 onwards, the Kurdish aspirations of establishing its independent state entered a new stage. During the Iraqi parliamentary election in January 2005, for the first time, Iraqi Kurds held an unofficial referendum regarding the right to self-determination and asked

[389] G. W. Bush, *The Struggle for Democracy in Iraq: Speech to the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia*, (12 December 2005) <http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/speeches/12.12.05.html> [accessed 19 January 2015].

[390] U.S. Department of State, *Statement of the Atlantic Summit: A Vision for Iraq and the Iraqi People,* U.S. Department of State, March 16, 2003) <http://2001-2009.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2003/18761.htm> [accessed 15 August 2014].

391 ibid.

[392] U.S. Department of State, *Security Agreement between Iraq and the United States of America.*

[393] G. E. Fuller, 'The Fate of the Kurds,' *Foreign Affairs* vol.72, no.2 (spring, 1993), pp. 108- 109.

[394] K. Katzman, *Kurds in Post-Saddam Iraq,* CRS Report for Congress. (Order Code RS22079). (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 1 October 2010), pp.1-12.

[395] Ibid.

the voters to decide whether they wanted to become part of Iraq or become an independent state. Nearly 98% of the Kurds voted in favour of Kurdish independence.[396] Despite the fact that Kurdish leaders insisted on the right of the Kurds to self-determination, they chose to become part of the new Iraq and participate in the new democratic process.[397] In this regard in December 2010 Nechirvan Barzani stressed that "The Kurdish people have the right to claim self-determination, but we decided to stay within a united Iraq".[398] He continued by saying that "If we had opted for independence, we would have announced it, but we have not decided a thing. We want to remain in a united and federal Iraq".[399]

On the same note, The President of Iraq Jalal Talabani in interviews with Sabah daily news even in 2009 stressed that it was in favour of the Iraqi Kurds politically, economically and culturally staying with Iraq and remaining as part of it and moving towards independence was not in the interests of the Kurds.[400] Regarding this Kurdish position, Kenneth Katzman argued that Kurds preferred to stay with Iraq, because they were aware of opposition and rejection by the Iraqi Arab and regional states.[401] Hence it can be noted that from 2003 to 2011, despite the KRG's intention to be part of the Iraqi process and respect the territorial integrity of Iraq its major strategy concentrated on expanding the KRG's autonomy,[402] and therefore its participation in the new political process was linked to determining the border of Iraqi Kurdistan by solving the question of the disputed territory between Erbil and the central government, obtaining constitutional assurance to protect them in the face of Baghdad's oppression and maintaining and enhancing the freedom and autonomy it had experienced since 1991.[403]

However the deterioration of the Iraqi situation since 2004 raised serious doubts about the establishment of a successful democratic system in Iraq and keeping this state stable and unified. In this context, many political analysts contended that the territorial

[396] E. Wong, 'For an Iraq Cut in 3, Cast a Wary Glance at Kurdistan,' *New York Times*, 27 August 2006.

[397] Ekurd, *Barzani's nephew: No Kurdish secession from Iraq*, *"Kurd Net (EKurd daily),* http://ekurd.net/mismas/articles/misc2010/12/state4434.htm [accessed 12 January 2014].

[398] ibid.

[399] ibid.

[400] Quoted in Reuters, Kurdish independence just a dream, Talabani tells Turkey', *Reuters,* <http://www.reuters.com/article/2009/03/16/idUSLG519166 > [accessed 12 September 2014].

[401] Katzman, *Kurds in Post-Saddam Iraq,* pp. 1-12.

[402] G. Stansfield, 'The Unravelling of the post-First World War State System? the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and the Transformation of the Middle East', *International Affairs,* 89 (2013), pp. 259-282, P. 267.

403 Anderson and Stansfield, 'avoiding ethnic conflict in Iraq: Some lessons from the Åland Islands', p. 221.

integrity of Iraq could not be maintained through the establishment of a strong central authority, and they encouraged the U.S. administration to think about a new formula for keeping Iraq together and creating a real partnership among all Iraqi groups. Josef Biden, the head of foreign relations of the U.S. Congress, and Leslie H. Gelb submitted a proposal to Congress on 26 September 2007 approved with 75 votes.[404] Their proposal suggested that Iraq should be divided into three federal regions: one for the Kurds, one for the Shia and one for the Sunni.[405] Biden thought that this was the only way to keep Iraq together and maintain its integrity preventing an inevitable, violent division of the country.[406] Bidden outlined many points for applying this proposal. Firstly, according to the constitution, Iraq should be divided into three federal regions, as stated above, with a weaker central government whose authority should be controlled.[407] Secondly, he pointed out that a fair distribution of the oil revenue between these three groups would convince the Arab Sunnis, currently a minority in Iraq, to support this idea.[408] Thirdly, he proposed an international conference in support of Iraq and pushed the regional states to respect Iraq's integrity and not to intervene in its

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[404] J. Biden and L. Gelb, 'Federalism, not Partition,' *Washington Post* , 3 October 2007.; G. Bruno, 'Plans for Iraqis Future: Federalism, Separatism, and Partition,' *Council on Foreign Relations* (October 2007),<http://www.cfr.org/iraq/plans-iraqs-future-federalism-separatism-partition/p14547> [accessed 5 February 2014]. It can be noted that according to the U.S constitution, Congress is authorized in various areas in terms of foreign policy. Constitutionally it is granted the authority to fund military forces. Furthermore, Congress has the authority to regulate commerce with the other states. In addition, confirming ambassadors and 'president's appointments' are considered the authorities of Congress. Both Congress and the House of Representatives have two committees: 'Senate Foreign Relations' and 'the Foreign Affairs Committee', which mostly participate in external policy and their substantive functions are to observe and oversee allegations against executive authority. Jentleson, *American foreign policy: the dynamics of choice in the 21st century* , pp. p 30-40.; R. Zoellick, 'Congress and the Making of US Foreign Policy', *Survival,* 41.4 (1999): PP. 20-41.; Cameron, *US foreign policy after the Cold War: global hegemon or reluctant sheriff?,* p. 37.; G. Epps, 'The Authority to 'Declare War': A Power Barack Obama Does Not Have," *The Atlantic* (15 October 2013) .; R. F. Grimmett, *The War Powers Resolution After Thirty Years,* Congressional Report. (Order Code RL32267). (Washington:. Congressional Research Service, 11 March 2004: pp. 1-77.; Jentleson, *American foreign policy: the dynamics of choice in the 21st century*.; R. 'McMahon, 'Balance of War Powers: The U.S. President and Congress',20 June 2011. Council on Foreign *Relations*,<http://www.cfr.org/united-states/balance-war-powers-us-president-congress/p13092# >[accessed 15 October 2013].; Kegley and Wittkopf, *American foreign policy: pattern and process* , pp. 453-460.; J. Dumbrell and D. M. Barrett, *The making of U.S. foreign policy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 116 .; M. Charountaki, *The Kurds and US foreign policy: international relations in the Middle East since 1945*, p.77.; S. B. Prakash and M. D. Ramsey, 'The Executive Power over Foreign Affairs,' *The Yale Law Journal* vol.111, no.2 (2001), p. 231-356, P. 242.

[405] C. Pascual, *A Conversation On Iraq With Senator Joseph R. Biden Jr*. (The Brookings Institution (15 February,2007),
<http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/events/2007/2/15iraq/20070215.pdf>[accessedJune 2014]

[406] ibid

[407] ibid.

[408] ibid.

internal issues.[409] Peter Galbraith had a similar perspective and preferred a confederation formula for Iraq. Galbraith stressed that Iraq should be divided into three parts: Kurds, Shia and Sunni as in the case of Yugoslavia, and that this was the only way to prevent its violent partition.[410] The KRG then declared its support for the partition of Iraq into three federal regions.[411] It can be argued that this KRG perspective is based on the assumption that any partition of Iraq could pave the way to a further dissolution of the country and to an independent Kurdistan and therefore it supported any formula for Iraqi partition.

It was notable that besides stressing territorial integrity and keeping the Kurds inside Iraq, the U.S. had some crucial internal and external objectives to achieve through the establishment of a new democratic and pro-U.S. state in Iraq. The U.S. believed that transforming Iraq into strategic partners is essential for its hegemony. Regarding the internal factors which this chapter concentrated on were the following points: Oil interests in Iraq were vital to the U.S. Iraq contains nearly 141 billion barrels of "proven oil reserves' and it takes fifth place among states in the world in terms of 'proven crude oil".[412] Moreover, Iraq in 2035 would be the second largest oil exporter in the world.[413] According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), "Iraq can hit 6.1m bpd by 2020 and 8.3m bpd in 2035 mainly in and around Basra in the south".[414] Moreover, U.S. saw that keeping Iraq as a united states would enhance security and stability and this would Increase Iraqi oil production[415] and avoid any disruption which threatens the U.S. economy growing.[416] Additionally, for the U.S., it would be easier to deal with one Iraqi state rather than two or three.

[409] Pascual, *A Conversation On Iraq With Senator Joseph R. Biden Jr*. (The Brookings Institution (15 February,2007)

[410] G. Ó. Tuathail,'A Conversation with Peter Galbraith about Iraq and State Building,' *Geopolitics* vol.10, no.1 (2005), pp. 167-183, p.173.

[411] Bruno, 'Plans for Iraqis Future: Federalism, Separatism, and Partition'.

[412] U.S. Department of Energy, *Iraq has the fifth largest proven crude oil reserves in the world, and it passed Iran as the second largest producer of crude oil in OPEC at the end of 2012* (Washington: EIA, 2 April 2013) <http://www.eia.gov/countries/cab.cfm?fips=IZ> [accessed 30 July 2014].

[413] IEA*., Iraq Energy Outlook* (World Energy Outlook Special Report), (International Energy Agency (IEA), 9 October 2012) <http://www.worldenergyoutlook.org/media/weowebsite/2012/iraqenergyoutlook/Fullreport.pdf> [accessed May 2015]

[414] ibid.

[415] ibid.

[416] M. Knights, 'the Long Haul: Rebooting US Security Cooperation in Iraq,' the (Washington Institute for Near East Policy) (2015), 1-74.

Moreover, after 2003, the U.S. aimed to replace the regime with a new pro-U.S. state which would allow the U.S. to have military bases.[417] In this regard Iraq has a strategic location in the region, and it constitutes the gateway for the U.S. presence in the Persian Gulf.[418] In addition, the U.S. administration saw that Iraqi instability would directly affect U.S. hegemony and interests in Iraq and the region and would lead to the expansion of terrorist groups in Iraq,[419] and on a wider scale would lead to a further disintegration and endless conflicts in Iraq,[420] with new tensions among Iraqi ethnic and religious groups,[421] and possible further ethnic cleansing among sects and ethnic groups.[422] All of these factors pushed the U.S. to concentrate on keeping Iraq stable and united and to pressure the Kurds to stay within the framework of Iraq.

4.2.2 U.S. Concerns Regarding Its Interests Affected Its Position Towards Kirkuk and The Disputed Areas

After 2003, one of the major challenges facing U.S. policy towards the KRG was the problem of Kirkuk and other contested territories. These regions, at the centre of a long battle between Baghdad and Erbil, threatened the territorial integrity of Iraq, and increased the danger of a potential ethnic war in Iraq. In this context, the U.S. as a key player, was constantly involved in this conflict and influenced the direction of this struggle. The U.S. policy towards these areas was part of its broader policy towards Iraq and the whole of the Middle East in order to keep its influence in the area [423] and enhance its regional hegemony in the Middle East. This pushed the U.S. authorities to pursue a policy which did not favour the Kurds when considering the disputed region and the implementation of Articles 58-140.[424] This was due to the incorporation of

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[417] D. Stokes, 'The War Gamble: Understanding US Interests in Iraq,' *Globalizations* vol.6, no.1 (2009), pp. 107-112.

[418] Kahl et al., *Risk and Rivalry*, p. 1.

[419] Hamilton and Baker *Iraq Study Group Report: The Way Forward-a New Approach.*

[420] K.M. Pollack, and Daniel L. Byman, *Things Fall Apart: Containing the Spillover from an Iraqi Civil War* (Brookings Institution Press, 2007).

[421] A. Rafaat, 'US-Kurdish relations in post-invasion Iraq,' *Middle East Review of International Affairs* vol.11, no.4 (2007); .A. Rafaat, 'An Independent Kurdish State: Achievable or Merely a Kurdish Dream?' *Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies* vol.32, no.3 (2007), PP. 280-286.

[422] E. P. Joseph and E. O'Hanlon. Michael, 'The Case for Soft Partition in Iraq', (The Saban Centre at Brooking Institution, 2007).

[423] G. Nasri and A. Salimi, 'The Politics of Kirkuk: Policy Implication for Iran,' p. 87.

[424] ibid., p. 87.

Kirkuk and the disputed areas being the key threat to U.S. regional hegemony and interests in Iraq and the region.

As already stated above, under successive Iraqi regimes, Kurdistan as a whole and these territories in particular, have faced massive operations of Arabization, and the Kurds were compelled to migrate.[425] Moreover, the authorities in Baghdad attempted to remove all characteristics of Kurdish identity in these territories, especially after the 1975 Algiers Agreement.[426] The Baghdad authorities changed and manipulated administrative boundaries of disputed territories to decrease the rate of the Kurdish population.[427] After the removal of Saddam's regime in 2003, the Kurds intensified their attempts to find a peaceful resolution regarding the disputed areas while trying to annexe them democratically into the Kurdistan region.[428]

From a constitutional point of view, despite Arab opposition, the Kurds politically managed to stipulate article 58 in TAL in 2004, and then the clause of 140 in the permanent Constitution of 2005 with the vision of settling this long challenge through "census, normalization and referendum".[429] The (TAL) issued on 8 March 2004, in article 58 tackled the settlement of Kirkuk and the disputed territories,[430] by a number

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[425] J. Qadir, *qazaya kurdiya moasera, kirkuk-Anfal- al-kurd we Trkya* (Erbil: Dar Aras lel- tabaat we al-nesher, 2006) pp. 11-118.

[426] N. Talabani, *mentaqet kirkuk wa mohawelat taqir waqeoha al-qawmi,* 3rd ed. (Erbil: manshorat Aras, 2004), PP. 33-81.; K. Maxmori, *ba arabkrdni kurdistan(bearabkrn w matersiyakani-berengarbonewey)* (Erbil: chapxanay dara, 2002), pp. 35-45.;S. Haji, *Taribi kirkuk le do towi heshta begrda,* (Sulaymaniya: Wazarati hkomati harimi kurdistan, 2004); ibid. , pp. 114.; N. Talabany, 'Who Owns Kirkuk? The Kurdish Case,'*Middle East Quarterly* (2007) .; P. Letayf, 'An Ethnic Tug-of-War? The Struggle Over the Status of Kirkuk,' *Institute for Global Leadership;* (2011), 65-72.

[427] Since the creation of the Iraqi state and the incorporation Iraqi Kurdistan into it, the Kurds attempted to determine their boundaries from Iraq. This Kurdish attempt was continually refused by successive Iraqi governments. After signing the agreement of 11 March 1970 for the first time both the Iraqi government and the Kurdish leaders agreed to solve this problem by having a census in these areas. According to that accord, the majority of the territories where Kurds live would be part of the Kurdish autonomous region. However, later the Iraqi regime did not fulfil its promises. After the second Gulf War and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait with the U.S. and its allies' intervention, an armed uprising took place in Kurdistan. The Kurds during the uprising liberated the majority of its territories including Kirkuk. However, after the collapse of the uprising, Kirkuk and the disputed territories were once again recaptured by the Saddam regime. therefore these territories remained under Saddam's regime's control until 2003. The first the new Iraqi government in Baghdad agreed to solve the problem of these territories, as provided for in the TAL. It is notable that Kirkuk and the disputed territories include 51,4 km of total of Iraqi Kurdistan's territories, which is 78,736 km. This situation was very confused until 2003 when the Kurds entered the city. R, Weisi Xalid, *Moshkelat Al-Manateq Al-Motanazeh Alaiha Fi Al-Iraq, Aqlim Kurdistan Nemozejan,* (Dehouk: matbeat jameat dehouk, 2012) pp. 64-73.

[428] M. Falah , Interview with Author, 20 April 2014, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Erbil.

[429] E. Ferris and K. Stoltz, 'The Future of Kirkuk: The Referendum and its Potential Impact on Displacement,' *The Brookings Institution* vol.3 (2008), p.2.

[430] *Iraq's Interim Constitution: Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period.*

of measures. Firstly, the ITG and its relevant commissions would intensify their efforts to remove all injustice and illegal actions taken by Saddam's regime in Kirkuk and the disputed areas. [431] For this purpose, the TAL stressed that the ITG should supervise the return of the individuals to their original governorates and compensates them taking all the necessary measures to fulfil these goals.[432] Moreover, regarding "nationality correction" the ITG should abolish 'all relevant decrees' and provide full freedom for all the people to determine their own ethnic and national identity.[433]

Secondly, Saddam's regime during the Arabization process changed the 'administrative boundaries' in the contested territories; therefore the ITG should act to remove this discriminating policy.[434] Thirdly, in the final stage, this process would be completed by taking measures to ensure that "a fair and transparent census has been conducted and the permanent constitution has been ratified this resolution shall be consistent with the principle of justice, taking into account the willingness of the people of those territories".[435]

On the same note, Article 140 of the permanent constitution of 2005 stressed the implementation of Article 58 and the resolution of Kirkuk and the disputed areas.[436] The executive authorities should have taken all the necessary steps for the implementation of these two Articles by guaranteeing that the 'normalization, census referendum' should be held not later than the 31 December 2007.[437] The KRG was confident that the Kurds in Kirkuk and the contested territories were the majority and that in any referendum in this region people would vote in favour of the Kurdistan region as had been shown in previous elections held in these areas.[438]

As we have seen, the U.S. did not support the KRG in its territorial claims. Following this strategy, with the fall of Kirkuk and the disputed areas into hands of the Kurdish

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[431] *Iraq's Interim Constitution: Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period.*
[432] ibid.
[433] ibid.
[434] ibid.
[435] ibid.
[436] *Iraqi Permanent Constitution 2005.*
[437] ibid.
[438] In all elections in Kirkuk 2005, 2010 and 2014 the majority of the voters, voted in favour of Kurdish lists. In 2005 the Kurds gained nearly 60% of Kirkuk votes and in 2010 Kurds gained nearly half of the votes and in 2014 the Kurds gained 8 seats from a total of 12 Kirkuk seats see; K. Katzman, Congressional Research Service, *Iraq: Politics, Elections and Benchmarks* (July 1, 2010).; K. Katzman, 'Iraq: Elections and new government' 2005).;Waladbagi, S., 'Results of Iraqi parliamentary elections have been beyond expectations,' *Kurdish Globe*, <http://kurdishglobe.net/article,> [accessed 27 July 2014] .

forces, on 10 April 2003 the U.S. showed that they were not going to support Kurdish policy,[439] as Fouad Hussein confirmed in an interview with the author.[440] Brigade 173 of the U.S. troops headed by William Mayville ordered Kurdish forces' immediate withdrawal from Kirkuk.[441] Furthermore, the U.S. Army raided the Kurdish party's offices in the city to disarm the Kurdish Peshmarga forces that fought alongside U.S. troops to topple Saddam's regime in 2003.[442] In addition, despite Kurdish opposition, by the direct support of the U.S. authorities, the Kirkuk Oil Company remained under Arab control,[443] and the CPA prevented the 'wafadeen Arabs' from going back to their original homeland.[444]

Moreover, despite the fact that the TAL in Article 58 made provision for the solving of the issue of Kirkuk and the contested regions, at the same time other articles in the TAL, such as 53B and 53C prevented the incorporation of this city into the Kurdistan region by refusing any border change of Iraqi provinces.[445] These two articles clearly meant that during the transitional period, the Kurds were not able to reverse the Arabization process and normalize the situation in the disputed regions.

It is remarkable that the U.S. had not officially refused the implementation of Articles 58-140, but they pursued the policy to delay their implementation.[446] The U.S. authorities and its representatives in Iraq and in the region attempted by different ways to prevent the holding of a referendum in Kirkuk and the disputed areas. In this context, Zalmay Khalilzad U.S. ambassador in Iraq, in August 2005 stressed that the U.S. did not support the idea that the Arabs which under Saddam's regime settled in and around Kirkuk should be deported to their original homeland.[447] This meant that the U.S. did not support the first step of the normalization of Kirkuk and the disputed area according to Article 140 of the permanent constitution.[448] On the same note, Ryan Crocker, former U.S. ambassador to Iraq, on 16 August 2007 stressed that "it seemed highly improbable

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[439] L. D. Anderson and G. R. V. Stansfield, *Crisis in Kirkuk: the ethnopolitics of conflict and compromise* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press Philadelphia, 2009), p.92.

[440] H. Fouad , Interview with Author, 10 April 2014, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Erbil.

[441] Anderson and Stansfield, *Crisis in Kirkuk: the ethnopolitics of conflict and compromise* , pp. 96-97.

[442] ibid., p. 97.

[443] Xalid, *moshkelat al-manateq al-motanazeh alaiha fi al-iraq, aqlim kurdistan nemozejan,* pp. 210-2013.

[444] Ferris and Stoltz, *The Future of Kirkuk: The Referendum and its Potential Impact on Displacement*, p. 9.

[445] See; Article 53B and 53C of the TAL *Iraq's Interim Constitution: Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period.*

[446] H. Fouad, Interview with Author, 10 April 2014, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Erbil.

[447] Quoted in Nasri and Salimi, *The Politics of Kirkuk: Policy Implication for Iran*, p. 87.

[448] ibid., p. 87.

that the referendum would take place by the end of the year, citing the lack of preparation, sectarian wrangling, and missed deadlines".[449] The most unambiguous stance towards the disputed territories can be seen in the report of the Iraqi Study Group established by the Bush administration to formulate the new U.S. strategy regarding Iraq and the sectarian war between the Shia and the Sunni in 2006. This report urged the U.S. administration to prevent the implementation of Article 140.[450] In this regard, number 30 of its recommendations argued that:

> Given the very dangerous situation in Kirkuk, international arbitration is necessary to avert communal violence. Kirkuk's mix of Kurdish, Arab, and Turkmen populations could make it a powder keg. A referendum on the future of Kirkuk (as required by the Iraqi Constitution before the end of 2007) would be explosive and should be delayed. This issue should be placed on the agenda of the International Iraq Support Group as part of the New Diplomatic Offensive. [451]

Indeed, it was clear that the Arabs and Turkmens living in Iraq strongly refused the implementation of this Article,[452] as did Turkey, because this country was always against holding a referendum these areas.[453]

It was clear that, during 2007, the Bush administration involved the UN in this process in order to postpone the implementation of this Article. In particular, during this period, the U.S. had launched a new strategy for confronting insurgency in Iraq, with the help of Arab Sunnis who established awaking (sahwa) councils.[454] During this stage, the U.S.-Sunni Arab alliance against Al-Qaida had negative consequences over the Kurdish demands especially regarding Kirkuk and the disputed territories.[455]

Towards the end of 2007 and the deadline for the implementation of Article 140, the U.S. sought to defer it and found a compromised solution outside of the permanent constitution.[456] For this purpose, by direct support from the Bush administration, in

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[449] Quoted in Sumedha Senanayake, 'Iraq: Kirkuk Referendum Likely To Be Delayed', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, (2007), <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1078655.html> [accessed 14 July 2014].

[450] Hamilton and Baker, *Iraq Study Group Report: The Way Forward-a New Approach*.

[451] ibid.

[452] J. Dargin, 'Securing the Peace: The Battle over Ethnicity and Energy in Modern Iraq,' *Oil, Gas & Energy Law Journal (OGEL)* vol.7, no.1 (2009), p. 7.

[453] H. Fouad , Interview with Author, 10 April 2014, Kurdistan Region of Iraq , Erbil.

[454] Crisis Group, *Oil for Soil: Toward a Grand Bargain on Iraq and the Kurds,* International Crisis Group, 2008), pp. 1-41.

[455] ibid. , pp. 1-41.

[456] ibid., pp. 1-41.

August 2007 UNSC passed Regulation of 1770, which required UNAMI to take steps towards the solution of the problem of the disputed areas in Iraq. Shortly after this resolution, Staffan de Mistura who was appointed as a representative of the UN in Iraq asked Iraqi leaders to delay the implementation of the Article.[457] This UN stance was driven by the U.S. administration policy in Iraq which aimed at delaying holding referendum in disputed areas. Moreover, the UN resolution was in favour of the central government, because it demanded a solution to the 'disputed internal boundaries' that satisfied the Iraqi government - without mentioning any involvement by the KRG.[458] As a consequence of these pressures, the deadline for implementing Article 140 passed without any political intervention and with the UN only promising a resolution within the next six months.[459]

After its investigation, the UNAMI submitted its first and second recommendations to the KRG and the central government on 5 June 2008, and 22 April 2009 respectively.[460] The final report presented by the UN indicated four options for dealing with the Kirkuk problem. Firstly, option one stressed that it was vital to clarify the concept of the referendum, voters' registration, the areas that embrace the referendum and all the questions should be precisely explained and clarified. Moreover, it contended that it was essential to clarify if Kirkuk had to become part of Kurdistan or Iraq and if it would be a province or a region.[461] The second option in the report argued that the Kirkuk governorate could remain as a province without any need for annexation into any other region.[462] The third recommendation proposed a shared jurisdiction over Kirkuk.[463] The last option pointed out that Kirkuk could have its own specific status, which included a federal region or governorate with little influence from Baghdad and the Kurdistan region.[464] It can be noted that the majority of UNAMI recommendations were against Article 140 and were heading to a compromised solution.

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[457] Crisis Group, *Oil for Soil: Toward a Grand Bargain on Iraq and the Kurds,* International Crisis Group, 2008) pp .1-41

[458] ibid., pp. 1-41.

[459] Crisis Group, *Oil for Soil: Toward a Grand Bargain on Iraq and the Kurds* , p. 2-8.

[460] UN News centre, UN mission submits reports on disputed internal boundaries in northern Iraq, (2009),<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=30553&Cr=iraq&Cr1#.U8PuHJJdXTy> [accessed 14 July 2014].; L. Hanauer et al., *Managing Arab-Kurd Tensions in Northern Iraq After the Withdrawal of US Troops* (Rand National Defense Research Inst, Santa Monica, 2011) p. 7-9.

[461] S. Wolff, 'Governing (in) Kirkuk: resolving the status of a disputed territory in post-American Iraq,' *International Affairs* vol.86, no.6 (2010), PP. 1361-1379, p. 1375.

[462] ibid., p. 1375.

[463] ibid., p 1376.

[464] ibid., p. 1376.

From 2008 onwards, the disputed regions became a central point of conflict between Nouri al-Maliki's government and the Kurdistan region to the point of causing an armed conflict. In this regard, in August 2008 the Iraqi army attempted to enter the Khanaqin area.[465] This tension was avoided with the withdrawal of the military forces from both sides and the takeover of the security mission of the local policy.[466]

The U.S. authorities, in order to maintain the stability in Iraq and avoid armed conflict, encouraged both sides to ease their struggle and work together. For this purpose, in 2009 by U.S. initiative, a common checkpoint was established between the Iraqi and Kurdish Army.[467] Moreover, during the discussion regarding the new Iraqi law election in 2010, the Kurds obtained U.S. support for the implementation of Article 140 in return for their participation in the 2010 elections.[468] However, the U.S. administration has not fulfilled its promise regarding the disputed areas.[469] All these promises and commitments were aimed at encouraging the Kurds to participate in the Iraqi process, but arguably the U.S. never put pressure or took action to fundamentally solve this problem,[470] and this was even clearer when they withdrew from the country without tackling it. In this regard it can be argued that the key behind this U.S. stance was to maintain the territorial integrity of Iraq and transform Iraq into strategic partners to control the region. Therefore the U.S. did not want the KRG to expand its territory in Iraq, because this would encourage the KRG to move towards independence, jeopardizing U.S. vital interests and its hegemony. However, the consequence of the incursion of ISIL into Iraq in 2014 and the fall of Mosul again led to a considerable change in the U.S. policy towards this area and to Iraq overall. (See chapter 6).

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[465] Hanauer et al., *Managing Arab-Kurd Tensions in Northern Iraq After the Withdrawal of US Troops*, p. 6.

[466] ibid., p. 6.

[467] ibid., p. 1.

[468] Eli Lake, 'U.S. makes political pledge to Kurds in Iraq: Deal commits to brokering Kirkuk disputes with Baghdad,' *Washington Times*, 2009 .; The White House, *Statement by the President, Office of the Press Secretary*, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/08/07/statement-president> [accessed 7 December 2014].

[469] M. Falah , Interview with Author, 20 April 2014, Kurdistan region of , Erbil.

[470] ibid.

4.2.3 The Struggle Between Baghdad and Erbil

The struggle between Baghdad and Erbil after 2003 is considered one of the most significant political challenges that threatened the stability and territorial integrity of Iraq. The U.S. administration has continually raised concerns regarding this conflict by arguing that this tension would pose dire consequences for Iraq and the region and would threaten U.S. national interests. Hence, the U.S. administration's viewpoints regarding Iraq and the Kurdistan region stemmed from the principle that this country can be stabilized by political consensus among Iraqi groups and that they can solve their problems peacefully. For this purpose, the U.S. has continually mediated between Erbil and Baghdad and encouraged them to play a constructive role in the political equation and stability of Iraq. However, due to many political reasons in Iraq, the Middle East and its national interests, the U.S. authorities has supported the central government especially in terms of oil resources, arming the Peshmarga, disputed territories and the distribution of power. Likewise, despite the overt dictatorial nature of Maliki's government, the U.S. did not put enough pressure on Baghdad to prevent this trend. This pushed the KRG and some political observers to criticise U.S. policy and accuse Washington of taking the side of Baghdad without respecting its commitments with the KRG.

The origin of the conflict between the KRG and Baghdad has been associated with two major different perspectives which after 2003 have dominated the Iraqi political scene. The first conception backed by the U.S. administrations and Iraqi Arabs insisted on the establishment of a strong central government at the expense of the federal regions.[471] This viewpoint, stipulated in the TAL in 2004, gave all major powers, in terms of military forces, security, foreign policy natural oil and economic power to the government in Baghdad.[472] According to the U.S., this step was considered a major guarantee in order to maintain the territorial integrity of Iraq and prevent its breakup. The successive Iraqi governments established after 2003 pursued this policy and tried to marginalize the KRI. Within this context, Michael Gunter argued that the ties between the KRG and the Iraqi central government were marked by "suspicion, animosity and

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[471] Rafaat, 'US-Kurdish relations in post-invasion Iraq', pp. 79-89.
[472] C. P. Authority, *Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period.*

brinkmanship" which threatened the stability of the country.[473] He asserted that despite the fact that the Iraqi constitution in 2005 recognized the federal system and has given real authority to the Kurdish autonomous region, the Iraqi authorities by strengthening their position attempted to impose their hegemony over the KRG.[474] Michael Gunter pointed out that confronting the Kurdish autonomous region and a recentralization of power reflected the Arab point of view that preventing the breakup of Iraq would be beneficial for the country and for the region.[475] Likewise, Gareth Stansfield and Liam Anderson indicated that one of the causes of the tension between Erbil and Baghdad was mostly related to the effort made by the authorities in Baghdad to monopolize power and strengthen central authorities. In this regard Maliki in 2008 insisted on revising the permanent constitution in favour of Baghdad.[476]

However, the other perspective strongly supported by the KRG concentrated on establishing a democratic and federal system based on the distribution of power between Baghdad and Erbil in order to prevent the rise of a new dictator in Iraq.[477] Fouad Hussein, Chief of Staff to the Presidency of the KRG contended that the reason behind the conflict between the Kurds and Iraqi Arabs was that most of the political parties in Baghdad do not have a democratic experience and did not wish to create a democratic and federal system in Iraq, whereas the KRG's and the Kurdish authorities', major goal is to install a federal and democratic system.[478] Moreover, Fouad Hussein stressed that ignoring and not implementing the constitution based on federalism and democracy, has been the major cause of conflict between both sides.[479] On the same note, Falah Mustafa, Head of the Department of Foreign Relations argued that the KRG wanted the central authorities to respect "Kurdish identity, equality, power sharing" and the Iraqi constitution. However, the Iraqi government did not have the willingness to treat the KRG as an entity and federal region and the Kurds as real partners in Baghdad.[480]

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[473] M. Gunter, 'Kurdish-Arab Tensions and Irbil-Baghdad Relations,' *The Jamestown Foundation, Terrorism Monitor* vol.8, no.12 (2010), pp. 1623-1635.

[474] ibid.,pp. 1623-1635.

[475] ibid., pp. 1623-1635.

[476] G. Stansfield, and L. Anderson , 'Kurds in Iraq: The Struggle between Baghdad and Erbil', *Middle East Policy,* 16 (2009), PP. 134-145.

[477] Rafaat, 'US-Kurdish relations in post-invasion Iraq', pp. 79-89.

[478] H. Fouad Interview with Author, April 10 2014, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Erbil.

[479] ibid.

[480] M Falah , Interview with Author, 20 April 2014, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Erbil

The crisis in relations between Baghdad and Erbil was therefore in part based on the Kurds' distrust of the authoritarian tendencies of the central government in Iraq (tendencies which were one factor in later leading to the instability in Iraq which saw the rise of ISIL) The U.S. administrations constantly contended that one of the major challenges facing U.S. policy in Iraq is associated with the Kurdish-Arab tension. In this context, the Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community in 2010, stressed that:

> Arab-Kurd tensions have the potential to derail Iraq's generally positive security trajectory, including triggering conflict among Iraq's ethno-sectarian groups. Many of the drivers of Arab-Kurd tensions—disputed territories, revenue sharing and control of oil resources and integration of Peshmerga forces–still need to be worked out, and miscalculations or misperceptions on either side risk an inadvertent escalation of violence. US involvement both diplomatic and military—will remain critical in defusing crises in this sphere.[481]

On the same note, Brett McGurk, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary for Iraq and Iran, argued that one of the challenges and threats for U.S. interests in Iraq was related to the conflict between Baghdad and Erbil manifested in the struggle for power sharing, structure of federalism, revenue sharing, the balance of power and the disputed territories. This conflict threatens Iraqi stability and U.S. national interests not only in Iraq, but throughout the Middle East.[482] According to U.S. Army General Raymond Odierno, the commander of multi-national forces in Iraq, Kurdish-Arab tension not only threatened stability but also could favour al-Qaeda's presence and aims in Iraq.[483] Overall, despite the fact that from 2003 to 2011 the U.S. administration mediated between Erbil and Baghdad in order to solve their outstanding problems, its position in respect to many aspects has been in favour of the central government.[484]

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[481] D. C. Blair, *Annual Threat Assessment of the Intelligence Community for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (2010),* <http://www.intelligence.senate.gov/100202/blair.pdf>[accessed May 2015].

[482] B. McGurk , *U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Iraq , House Foreign Affairs Committee (Testimony)* (Washington: The U.S. State Department, 13 November 2013) http://www.state.gov/p/nea/rls/rm/217546.htm accessed 12August 2014.

[483] R. T. Odierno, *Interview with Joint Force Quarterly (JFQ)* (Washington: National Defense University Press, 2009) http://intelros.ru/pdf/jfq_55/20.pdf accessed 12 August 2015.

[484] M. Othman, interview with Author, 21 April 2014, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Erbil.

4.2.4 Stability and Instability in Kurdistan and Iraq

Security and stability in the Kurdistan region is considered to be one of the key factors which, since 2003, has affected U.S. policy towards the Iraqi KRG. Different U.S. administrations have seen the Kurdistan region, stable and pro-U.S., and they considered it as an opportunity to exercise and pursue its influence and interests in Iraq and in the whole region. After the 1991 uprising and the establishment the 'no-fly zone',[485] Kurdish parties through the holding of elections in 1992, created the KRG and the Kurdish parliament.[486] This was the first time that the Kurds governed their territories and attempted to build democratic institutions. From 1991 to 2003, despite huge internal and external challenges encountered by the Kurdish first experience of self-government, the KRI was able to define clear goals, in particular a democratic and federalist system as a solution for the Kurdish cause in Iraq.[487]

In contrast to the accusations which have repeatedly argued that the Kurds would be regarded as a destabilizing factor for Iraq and the region, since 2003, the KRG proved itself as a factor of stability and security in Iraq and it is now considered one of the most secure and stable areas, for this reason it has been called the 'other Iraq'.[488] Many scholars argue that the stability of the KRG plays a major role in securing its position in Iraq and the region. Within this context, Gareth Stansfield argued that one of the factors that distinguish the Kurdistan region is its ability to reinforce the federalist idea and its provision of a stable and secure area.[489] On the same note, Michael Williams argued that the Kurdistan region, since the fall of Saddam's regime, has been considered an island of security and stability in the region.[490] Likewise the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee in January 2015 released a report regarding UK policy towards the KRG. This report, focusing on the political system, stability and democracy of KRG points out that:

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[485] Anderson and Stansfield, 'Avoiding ethnic conflict in Iraq: Some lessons from the Åland Islands', pp , 220-132 .; G. R. V. Stansfield, 'Chapter 7: The Kurdish Dilemma: The Golden Era Threatened,' *The Adelphi Papers* vol.43, no.354 (01/01; 2013/08, 2003),   pp. 131-148.

[486] M. M. Gunter, 'Kurdish Future in a Post-Saddam Iraq,' *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* vol.23, no.1 (2003), P. 11.; Stansfield, The Kurdish Dilemma, pp. 131-148.

[487] Anderson and Stansfield, 'Avoiding ethnic conflict in Iraq: Some lessons from the Åland Islands', p. 132 .; Gunter, 'Kurdish Future in a Post-Saddam Iraq', p. 11.

488 L, Sly, ' Kurdistan: the other Iraq,' *Washington post*, May 28, 2011.

[489] Stansfield, 'The unravelling of the post-First World War state system? The Kurdistan Region of Iraq and the transformation of the Middle East', p.265.

[490] Williams, M., 'Goodbye to Sykes-Picot?' (17June 2014) ,<http://www.chathamhouse.org/expert/comment/14903>. [accessed 20 May 2015].

> The Kurdistan Region of Iraq is a genuine democracy, albeit an imperfect and still developing one, and a beacon of tolerance and moderation in a wider region where extremism and instability are on the rise. Its values are broadly our values. The UK is fortunate to have in such a volatile part of the world a partner as relatively moderate, pragmatic, stable, democratic, secular and reflexively pro-Western as the KRG.[491]

Within this context, stability-instability and the prospect of a pro-U.S. government in Iraq and in the Kurdistan region has always affected the directions of U.S. policy. Soon after the toppling of Saddam's regime in 2003, when Iraq for a short time was relatively stable and secure, the U.S. aimed to create a strong central government and a pro-U.S. in Baghdad. This drove Paul Bremer the head of the CPA to increase its pressure on the KRG in favor of an Iraqi government.[492] Within this context, the major contrasts between the KRG and the U.S. administration regarding the new Iraqi political system, the political structures of the central state, the future of Kurds and their demands surfaced. Kurdish policy was to maintain its autonomous region and reinforce its entities on a federal basis. On the contrary, U.S. policy was to build a strong central government with administrative federalism based on 18 provinces.[493]

This was a key difference between both sides especially during Paul Bremer's authority. In effect, the first year after the invasion, Paul Bremer, in order to achieve this goal and maintain the unity of Iraq, had taken some steps to weaken the KRG. He attempted to dissolve the Kurdish military forces known as Peshmarga in favour of a united Iraqi army.[494] A step considered 'unrealistic and undesirable' by Galbraith, because it was impossible for the Kurds to abandon their militarily forces and accept an Iraqi army dominated by Arabs - the main enemies of the Kurds.[495] Moreover, Paul Bremer intensified his efforts to implement administrative federalism based on 18 provinces.[496] He pursued this policy when he signed the

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[491] UK Parliament (Foreign Affairs) ; *UK Government policy on the Kurdistan Region of Iraq* (UK parliament: parliament, 13 January 2015), <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmfaff/564/56409.htm#a16 >[accessed 19 May 2015].

[492] P. W. Galbraith, *The end of Iraq: How American incompetence created a war without end, (*Simonand Schuster. com, 2006), pp. 2235-4833 (Kindle).

[493] Rafaat, 'US-Kurdish relations in post-invasion Iraq', pp. 79-89.

[494] Galbraith, *The end of Iraq: How American incompetence created a war without end ,* p. 2235 (Kindle).

[495] ibid., pp. 2664-2668,(Kindle).

[496] ibid., pp. 2728-2731), (Kindle).

agreement with the IGC in November 2003 based on this plan. [497] This agreement ignored federalism along ethnic or geographical principles.[498] It is notable that the U.S.' intentions regarding federalism did not meet with Kurdish aspirations. In this regard, Galbraith argued that the U.S. policy of creating a non-ethnic Iraq was impossible.[499] At this regard, Michael Gunter stressed that federalism based on non-ethnic federalism will threaten the minorities and pave the way for the oppression of one minority over the other.[500] In addition there had been some attempts by the White House not to include the KRG in the TAL.[501] For their part, the Kurdish leaders were uncomfortable with Paul Bremer's policy. In this context, Masoud Barzani in December 2003 rejected the implementation of administrative federalism and the dissolution of the Peshmarga and argued that the Kurds would not give up the autonomy they had enjoyed since 1991.[502]

There were many factors which drove the U.S. to pursue this policy. Firstly, as discussed early in this chapter, the major U.S. policy after 2003 was to create a strong stable, strategic partner in Baghdad and the U.S. believed that keeping the Kurds inside Iraq was central to maintaining the stability of Iraq. Secondly, the U.S. desired Iraq to be a future strategic partner in the Middle East, keeping Iran under control and taking into account the interests of its security ally in the region (see chapter 5). Thirdly, the U.S. did not have an informed perspective on the situation in Iraq and they did not take into account the sectarian and ethnic polarization among different factions[503], as Galbraith argued, George Bush's administration was not precisely aware of the internal conflicts among the Iraqi people.[504] The U.S. administration thought that "Iraq was a blank slate on which the United States could

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[497]C. P. Authority., *The November 15 Agreement: Timeline To A Sovereignty, Democracy And Secure Iraq,* (November 15, 2003), <http://www.iraqcoalition.org/government/AgreementNov15.pdf > [accessed 3 February 2014] .

[498] ibid.

[499]Galbraith, *The end of Iraq: How American incompetence created a war without end*, pp. 2734-2738, (Kindle).

[500] M. M. Gunter, 'The Permanent and New Realities Facing the Kurdistan Regional Government: Options and Prospects[' *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* vol.28, no.2 (2008)p. 240.

[501]Galbraith, *The end of Iraq: How American incompetence created a war without end ,*pp. 2728-2731 (Kindle).

[502] Crisis Group, *Iraq's Kurds: Toward an Historic Compromise? International Crisis Group, Middle East Report* (8 April 2004), <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Iraq%20Syria%20 Lebanon/Iraq/Iraqs%20Kurds%20Toward%20an%20Historic%20Compromise > [accessed 4 February 2014], p.2.

[503] Galbraith, *The end of Iraq: How American incompetence created a war without end*, pp. 1364-1371(Kindle).

[504] ibid., pp. 1364-1371(Kindle).

impose its vision of a pluralistic democratic society".[505] Moreover, Bremer did not have experience in dealing with 'a post-conflict society' and 'nation-building', especially in the context of Iraq.[506] Fourthly, the U.S. at the beginning of the invasion aimed to establish a unified Iraq with a non-sectarian and ethnic society and therefore attempted to impose administrative federalism over the Kurds.[507] This U.S. attempt was the result of the U.S. idea that they could apply American federalism in Iraq.[508] All this contributed to increasing U.S. pressure on the Kurds and preventing Kurdish leaders from leading the country during this interim period[509] especially after the transformation of sovereignty to the Iraqi interim government on 30 June 2004 which was led by Ayad Allawi.[510]

However, the deterioration of the stability and security in Iraq starting from 2004 onwards[511] changed the situation on the ground. The Kurdistan region was a secure and stable area[512] and pro-U.S.[513] This combined with pressure from the Kurdish leaders,[514] pushed the Bush administration to revise and change its previous policy towards the Kurdish position in Iraq. In this regard the U.S. supported the KRI as a federal region as stipulated in the TAL 2004.[515] The TAL document recognized the KRG in three provinces as a legitimate region in Iraq.[516] Moreover, according to Article 54A, during the transition period, the KRG would run its own internal affairs and the authority of policy and security forces in Kurdistan was the responsibility of the Kurdistan region.[517] In addition, this law recognized federalism as the political system for Iraq and Kurdistan based on 'geographic and historic fact'.[518] This was the first and key political change in U.S. policy towards Kurdistan since the Iraqi

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[505] Galbraith, *The end of Iraq: How American incompetence created a war without end*, pp. 1364-1371(Kindle).

[506] ibid., pp . 1963-1967, (Kindle).

[507] ibid., pp , 2731 – 2734, (Kindle).

[508] ibid., pp , 2731 – 2734, (Kindle).

[509] KRG, *Letter from Barzani and Talabani to President Bush,* Kurdistan Region Government, (KRG, June 1, 2004) < http://www.krg.org/a/d.aspx?a=89&l=12&r=223&s=010000 > [accessed 5 February2014].

[510] The White House, *Bush remarks on the iraqi interim government*, 1 June2004), <http://2001-2009.state.gov/p/nea/rls/rm/33042.htm> [accessed 5 February2014].

[511] Eisenstadt and White, *Assessing Iraq's Sunni Arab Insurgency* , pp. 1-37.

[512] M. Falah , Interview with Author, 20 April 2014, Iraqi Kurdistan, Erbil.

[513] *Letter from Barzani and Talabani to President Bush.*

[514] Crisis Group, *Iraq's Kurds: Toward an Historic Compromise*, pp. 1-33.

[515] Crisis Group, Iraq's Kurds: *Toward an Historic Compromise? International Crisis Group*, *Middle East Report* (8 April2004), pp. 1-33.

[516] ibid. see the Article 53.

[517] ibid.

[518] ibid.

state was established in 1921. For the first time, the U.S. administration officially accepted federalism based on geographic fact as a solution for the Kurdish region. This change coincided with the intensifying of the insurgency against U.S. troops,[519] and the worsening of the security situation posed serious challenges for U.S. policy and threatened its vital interests in Iraq and the region. The U.S. administration was concerned that the failure to restore stability would lead to the spread of uncontrolled violence, with serious consequences for the whole region.[520] In this regard, the U.S. NSS report released in November 2005 stressed that:

> Iraq is the central front in the global war on terror. Failure in Iraq will embolden terrorists and expand their reach'…..Iraq would become a safe haven from which terrorists could plan attacks against America, American interests abroad, and our allies.[521]

On the same note, in December 2005, George W Bush contended that Iraq faced key challenges; the first one was related to the security situation. He continued:

> As the Iraqi people struggle to build their democracy, adversaries continue their war on a free Iraq…..The terrorists' stated objective is to drive U.S. and coalition forces out of Iraq and gain control of that country, and then use Iraq as a base from which to launch attacks against America, overthrow moderate governments in the Middle East, and establish a totalitarian Islamic empire that reaches from Spain to Indonesia.[522]

The security challenges, the strengthening of terrorist groups and the defeat of pro-U.S. allies from both Shia and Sunni groups in the first freely held election in Iraq on 31 January 2005, and later in December 2005,[523] pushed the U.S. to further advance its policy towards the KRI, as a representative of the most reliable and secular faction in Iraq.[524] The U.S. saw the Kurdistan region as a major partner for

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[519] For more information see; J. Dobbins, *Occupying Iraq: A history of the coalition provisional authority* vol. 847 (Rand Corporation, 2009), pp. 92-105.; T. Dodge, "Chapter one: Order and violence in post-Saddam Iraq," *The Adelphi Papers* vol.45, no.372 (2005), pp. 10-23.

[520] U.S. Department of Defense, *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq (*November 2005), <http://www.dod.mil/pubs/iraq_national_strategy_20051130%5B1%5D.pdf> [accessed2 February2014].

[521] ibid.

[522] G.W. Bush, *The Struggle for Democracy in Iraq: Speech to the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia Philadelphia, Pennsylvania* (presidential rhetoric, 12 December2005), <http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/speeches/12.12.05.html > [accessed 12 December2014].

[523] K. Katzman, Iraq: Elections, Government, and Constitution, CRS Report for Congress. (Order Code RS21968). (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 20 November 2006) pp. 1-6.

[524] Rafaat, 'US-Kurdish relations in post-invasion Iraq', pp. 82-83.

maintaining stability and security in Iraq.[525] In this regards, after 2003, the position and role of the Kurdistan region for the U.S. strategy in Iraq has increased and the U.S. authorities looked to the KRI as a key partner to preserve stability in Iraq, confront terrorists groups and contain the influence of Shia religious groups backed by Iran over the political process. Therefore, the U.S. then turned to support the KRG and its demands for autonomy.

Following the enhancement of the Kurdistan position and the easing of U.S. pressure, the Kurds stipulated most of their demands in the permanent constitution in 2005.[526] The permanent constitution was a great achievement for the Kurds and the majority of the rights they ceded in the TAL were retained in the permanent constitution.[527] The major characteristic of the permanent constitution was a weak central authority with a strong federal power. This constitution fully recognized Iraq as a democratic and federal system.[528] Regarding Iraqi identity, it was stressed that Iraq was multi-cultural and multi ethnic composed of two major nations; Kurds and Arabs.[529] In addition, the constitution assigned less authority to the central government compared with the TAL regarding oil and other national resources by stressing the cooperation between Baghdad and the KRG.[530] In short, the permanent constitution limited the central government's authority over Kurdistan.

From 2005-2011 there was a supportive trend in U.S. policy towards the KRI and diplomatic relations between both sides reached an unprecedented level. While during Bremer's period the Kurds were under pressure, from 2005 onwards the U.S. saw the Kurds and Iraqi Kurdistan as an ally. In May 2005 when the Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice travelled to Iraq she visited Masoud Barzani,[531] in Kurdistan

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[525] M. Falah , Interview with Author, 20 April2014, Iraqi Kurdistan, Erbil.

[526] Iraqi Permanent Constitution 2005.,

[527] Galbraith, The end of Iraq: How American incompetence created a war without end, pp. 1364-1371(Kindle).

[528] ibid.

[529] ibid.

[530] ibid.

[531] Masoud Barzani was elected as a president of Iraqi Kurdistan by Kurdish parliament on 12 June 2005, and for the second time was elected thorugh free elections that were held on 25 July 2009, by acquiring 70% of the vote. It is notable that due to differences between Kurdish parties regarding how to elect the president of Kurdistan for the third time by parliament or people. the election for the presidency of Kurdistan was not held and Masoud Barzani presidential term was extended on 30 June 2013 for two years, until all parties reached a consensus regarding this matter for more information see; Masoud Barzani, *A message from the President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, KRG* (16 July 2013), <http://www.krp.org/english/articledisplay.aspx?id=xPmlmbAJrgE=/ [accessed 6 February 2014] .; 'helbejartnie seroki herem,' *Rojnamey Xebat,* vol.No (1823) (13 June 2005).

before going to Baghdad. In fact this visit reflected the strengthened Kurdish position in Iraq. In this regard Michael Rubin argued "by going first to Barzani's headquarters rather than to Baghdad, she bolstered the Kurdish leader's position in the eyes of his constituents and among the other Iraqi political leaders negotiating in the nation's capital".[532] During this meeting both sides discussed the political process in Iraq and Kurdistan and stressed reconciliation among all Iraqi groups in the drafting of the constitution and in the participation of Sunni Arabs in the process.[533] During her visit Condoleezza Rice emphasised that the U.S. would support the security and stability of Iraqi Kurdistan. In addition, she stressed that the best guarantee for the protection of the Kurds and Iraq was the drafting of a democratic constitution.[534]

Moreover, on 25 October 2005 Masoud Barzani was invited to Washington and convened an official meeting with George W. Bush in the White House.[535] It was the first time in Kurdish and U.S. history that a U.S. president officially invited a Kurdish leader. In can be argued that this limited change in U.S. policy towards the Kurdistan region was based on an assumption that Kurds as a reliable ally would contribute to the implementation of U.S. policy in Iraq aimed at creating strategic partners in Baghdad and confronting terrorist groups and enhancing its hegemony in the region.

Furthermore, in 2009 during the signing of the strategic agreements between the U.S. and Iraq, the Kurds wanted U.S. assurance to protect the Kurds from any threat. In this regard the U.S. administration stressed its commitment towards a democratic and federal system in Iraq. The Security Agreement stressed that in the eventuality that the Iraqi elected institutions and federal system faced any threat, the U.S. would take the necessary measures to tackle it.[536] This was the most important point for the Kurds, because the Kurdish leaders did not trust the central government and they believed that with the withdrawal of the U.S. from Iraq, the Iraqi authorities would attempt to disintegrate the federal system and centralize the authorities in Baghdad.

[532] M. Rubin, 'The Arafat Mode' *The Middle East Forum* (12 September 2005).

[533] KRG, *Joint press conference Barzani and Rice; YouTube: Online video* October 15, 2005)<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HgSX6dg5ELE>[accessed 6 February 2014]

[534] ibid.

[535] The White house, *President Bush Meets with President Barzani of Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq*, *Office of the Press Secretary* (25 October 2005), <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2005/10/20051025-7.html > [accessed 4 February 2014].

[536] U.S. Department of State, *Security Agreement between Iraq and the United States of America*.

Furthermore, the Kurdish leaders intensified their efforts to discuss closely with Obama's administration the new course of U.S. policy towards the KRG. This was the topic of a meeting between Masoud Barzani and the U.S. defence minister Robert Gates held in Erbil in December 2009. [537]

Masoud Barzani after this meeting reported that Secretary Gates confirmed that the U.S. would maintain close ties with Iraqi Kurdistan and would not abandon them.[538] In another step in July 2011, the U.S. administration opened its consulate in Erbil on 10 July 2011.[539] Regarding this U.S. step, Falah Mustafa the KRG's Head of Foreign Relations stressed that opening this consulate was considered to be "a significant step forward in cementing the existing relations between the Kurdistan Region and the United States of America, and it prepares the way for a strategic partnership".[540]

However, despite this advance and limited change in U.S. policy towards Kurds during this period, the struggle between the U.S. and the KRG regarding a strong central government versus a weak federal government has continued. The U.S. administration, especially during the Obama Presidency, has moved forwards to support a strong central government due to a number of reasons: firstly, Maliki who launched a major attack against militant groups in Iraq including Shia militia in 2006-2008,[541] presented himself as a nationalist and non-religious leader,[542] and he tried to strengthen the central authorities and reduce the authority of provinces and regions.[543] Secondly, the majority of Sunni factions between 2006 and 2010 called for a strong central authority and refused a federal system by arguing that federalism would lead to the partition of Iraq.[544] Thirdly, Baker-Hamilton's recommendations

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[537] KRG, President Barzani and Defense Secretary Gates in Erbil reaffirm long-term KRG-US relations, (December 11, 2009), <http://www.krg.org/a/d.aspx?s=02010100&l=12&r=223&a=32869&s=010000 > [accessed 6 February 2014].

[538] ibid.

[539] KRG, US *Consulate General opens in Erbil* (11 July 2011), <http://www.krg.org/a/d.aspx?s=02010100&l=12&r=223&a=40688&s=010000 >[accessed 11 February 2014].

[540] ibid.

[541] A. H. Cordesman and J. Ramos, Sadr and the Mahdi Army: 'evolution, capabilities, and a new direction', *Center for Strategic and International Studies* vol.4 (2008), pp. 1-30.

[542] P. Cockburn , ' A coup for Maliki and a secular Iraq,' *Independent,* 30 February 2009 .; A. Shadid, 'New Alliances In Iraq Cross Sectarian Lines,' *Washington Post,* March 20, 2009.; T. Dodge, 'Bush's war: drawdown in Iraq' (2010), <http://www.lse.ac.uk/IDEAS/publications/reports/pdf/SR003/dodge.pdf>.

[543] J.S. Yaphe, ' Maliki's maneuvering in Iraq,' *Foreign Policy, 6* June 2012.

[544] For more information see; E. P. Joseph and M. E. O'Hanlon, 'The Case for Soft Partition in Iraq,' *The Saban Centre at Brooking Institution* vol.12 (June 2007).; . Morrow, *Weak Viability: The Iraqi*

which suggested the creation of a strong central government to maintain stability and the security of Iraq constituted another factor affecting the U.S. administration's policy.[545] Fourthly, the U.S. administration thought that among the Shia, Maliki was considered to be one of the leaders less influenced by Iran, especially after he managed to defeat the pro-Iran Shia militia in Iraq.[546] Fifthly, the Obama administration's policy aimed at withdrawing its troops from Iraq in 2011 and therefore supported a central government,[547] All these factors contributed to drive the Obama administration in support of Maliki, a policy which then saw the KRG and the U.S. at a distance – until the later rise of ISIS.

Conclusion

From 2003-2011, the U.S. policy towards KRI had witnessed some change, and for the first time of the U.S.-Kurdish history, the U.S. authorities officially backed Kurdish demands for federal region in Iraq. However, this U.S. position was limited by its support of Iraqi territorial integrity. In this regard, the U.S. saw that the KRG's ambition for more power, Kirkuk and the disputed areas and a Kurdish independent state would threaten its hegemony and vital interests in Iraq and the region. Within this context, one of the major reasons which pushed the U.S. to stress the territorial integrity of Iraq was to make Iraq a strategic partner and secure Iraq's oil supply and expand its partners in terms of energy sources. The U.S. saw that creating a stable, democratic, united and pro-U.S. state in Iraq which has huge oilfields would enhance its position. Furthermore, US support for Iraq's territorial integrity and keeping the Kurds inside Iraq was based on the view that any partition would leave the rest of Iraq under increasing Iranian influence. Further, the U.S. was concerned that any partition of the country could lead to a further partition and expansion activity of terrorist groups leaving Iraq and the region in deep crisis and threatening its regional policy.

Federal State and the Constitutional Amendment Process (Washington: The United States Institute of Peace, 1 July 2006) h<ttp://www.usip.org/publications/weak-viability-the-iraqi-federal-state-and-the-constitutional-amendment-process> [accessed 21 May 2015].
[545] Hamilton and Baker, *Iraq Study Group Report: The Way Forward-a New Approach.*
[546] A. Khedery, ' Why we stuck with Maliki — and lost Iraq,' *Washington post, 3* July 2014.
[547] C. Salih, 'If he really wants to stop Isis, Obama must make new friends in Iraq – fast', *The Guardian Newspaper,* 11 August 2014 .; Dodge, 'Bush's war: drawdown in Iraq'.

Kirkuk and the disputed territories were of central importance to U.S. policy in Iraq and the region. The U.S., after 2003, did not try to solve these problems and continually put pressure on the Kurds not to hold a referendum in these regions. The U.S. believed that the best way to keep the Kurds inside Iraq was to prevent the incorporation of these areas into the KRI. Therefore the U.S. had the key role of delaying the referendum as scheduled in 2007 in Kirkuk and disputed areas. On the same note, the struggle between Baghdad and Erbil since 2003 has been a challenge for U.S. policy in Iraq and has threatened the stability of the country and the whole of the Middle East. During this period, the U.S. authorities mainly supported the central government perspective especially in terms of oil resources, military forces, disputed territories and the distribution of power. In this regards U.S. policy was mostly driven by its concerns that losing Iraq or its partition would create a serious threat to its vital interests in Iraq and region.

However, despite U.S. policy to create strong stable and strategic partners in Baghdad and keep the Kurds inside Iraq (and pressure from U.S. allies to limit the KRG's position and its demands) from 2003-2011, U.S. policy towards the KRG's demands had showed some flexibility and change. In particular with deterioration of stability and rise insurgency in Iraq, the role and position of the KRI to the U.S. strategy had increased. The U.S. saw that supporting the Kurdish federal region with limited authority would help U.S. policy to confront terrorist groups and keep Iraq stable, united and a strategic partner as a base for enhancing its hegemony. In particular shortly after the removal of the Saddam regime from power, the U.S. strategy faced serious challenge in Iraq and this pushed the U.S. to depend on the Kurds as a key partners to maintain stability and security and defend its policy. Further, there has been a convergence of interests on both sides to establish democratic and secular government in Baghdad and prevent the Shia religious parties dominating the political equation in Iraq.

Within this context, in Iraq since 2004, the U.S. supported the KRI as an autonomous region as stipulated in both the TAL and the Iraqi Constitution (in 2004-2005). Both documents, in particular, the permanent constitution, recognised the KRG in three provinces as a legitimate region of Iraq. The U.S. also recognized federalism as a political system for Kurdistan based on "geographic and history fact." This was an important change in U.S. policy towards the KRI.This shift in policy allowed the Kurds

to demonstrate some influence on the U.S. Between 2005 and 20011, despite U.S. support for a strong central government, U.S. policy towards the KRG was improved and the U.S. paid more attention to the KRI. In both the SFA and SA signed with the Iraqi Government, the U.S. stressed supporting democracy and a federal system in Iraq. Additionally, in 2009, the U.S. formally declared its commitment regarding the defence of Kurdistan and opened their consulate in Erbil. The KRG during this stage did not demand an independent state, but they declared that they wanted to follow what had been established in the Iraqi constitution.

Chapter 5: The External Factors Affecting U.S. Policy Towards the KRI (2003-2011)

Introduction

In the previous chapter this thesis discussed the major Iraqi internal factors which affected U.S. policy towards Kurdistan from 2003 to 2011. In this regard the thesis argued that the key factors which influenced U.S.-Kurdish policy were confronting terrorist groups, guaranteeing stability in Iraq and creating reliable, democratic and strategic partners in Baghdad.

In this chapter the author examines the impact of the major external factors affecting U.S. policy towards the Kurdistan region. Moreover, this chapter argues that the key reasons behind U.S policy to prevent the disintegration of Iraq and Kurdish independence were mostly associated with external factors and the U.S.' interest in maintaining its hegemony and ensuring stability in the Middle East. However, the importance of the role of the Kurds for the U.S. strategy became evident as Iraq descended into civil war and the U.S. needed to confront the Iranian influence in Iraq. These are major external reasons which pushed the U.S. to be more flexible towards Kurdish demands for autonomy and the federal region in Iraq.

The rise of U.S. power since the end of the Cold War and a change in the distribution of power internationally, pushed the U.S. to maintain and enhance its hegemony and position in the Middle East. This was accelerated by the terrorist attacks of 2001 which encouraged U.S. policymakers to reshape the Middle East. The main U.S. aims were to replace Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq and convert it into a stable partner, support the security of its major allies such as Turkey and Saudi Arabia, contain Iran, secure oil supplies, and prevent the emergence of hostile regional states to dominate the region and it will be noted that there is some overlap between domestic and external factors and U.S. policy – for example if Iraq was to descend into civil war, this would then affect its ability to be a U.S. partner and it would affect Turkish security and also the supply of oil.

Within this context, U.S. administrations saw that supporting Kurdish independent state would lead to a change in the geographical borders of other states in the Middle East, including U.S. allies and this would mean the emerge of a new regional system. This change in the borders might actually in the end change the balance of power against U.S. interests in the region. The U.S. feared such policy might lead to the establishment of strong alliances between both U.S. allies and its rivals and that the end of Iraq might mean the beginning of a coalition against its hegemony. Moreover, even if the Kurds were pro-American, the U.S. was concerned that supporting the Kurdish independent state would provoke the Kurds and other minorities in the region to take the same steps and this would spread instability throughout the Middle East. However, deterioration of Iraqi stability as mentioned previously and the rise the influence of Iran in Iraq, increased the role of KRI to the U.S. strategy and this pushed U.S. to make limited change in its policy towards KRI, believing that this would help the U.S. to confront Iran and make Iraq as a key platform for its regional hegemony.

In order to analyze comprehensively all dimensions of the regional and external challenges affecting U.S. policy towards the KRI and to analyse the issues outlined above, the structure of this chapter is as follows. Firstly, this chapter will address the U.S. desire to maintain the Middle East's security system in terms of the challenges for a U.S. policy towards the KRI. The chapter will concentrate on U.S. concerns about the change in the security system and the consequent decline of its regional hegemony as key factors which have pushed the U.S. to behave cautiously when dealing with the Kurdish issue. Secondly, the chapter will examine U.S. concerns about regional instability and its impact over U.S. policy towards Iraqi Kurdistan. The third point will address the influence of the regional states over U.S. policy towards Iraqi Kurdistan. In this regard, the author will focus on the role of Turkey and the Arab states and U.S. competition with Iran concerning U.S. policy towards the KRI.

5.1 U.S. Desire to Maintain the Middle East's Security System as a Challenge to U.S. Policy Towards the KRI

The Middle East order was the result of some secret and overt accords signed by the great powers during and after the First World War. The Sykes-Picot (1916), San Remo conference (1920), and other subsequent agreements led to the division of the Ottoman

Empire's territories, which fell under the influence of the European great powers.[548] Hence, the Middle East's order was born in the aftermath of the WWI as part of the process of settlement among the dominant powers.[549] Britain and France carved up the region between in their respective zones of influence,[550] thinking that these would be easier to control.[551] As a consequence of this arbitrary partition, new states were born and new borders established in an artificial way without taking into account the social reality on the ground. This meant that many minorities like the Kurds were deprived of their rights.[552]

The U.S. which did not have any role in drawing the current Middle Eastern order, after WWII became one of the world's major powers, exerting its influence in many areas of the world including the MEA. With the decline of Britain's hegemony and its withdrawal from the region due to economic difficulties in 1971, the U.S. became a key player in maintaining Western interests.[553] It is notable that the U.S. and the UK during the Cold War shared the task of supporting pro-Western powers in the region against the incursions of the USSR.[554] Moreover, the U.S. attempted to establish a regional system that included its allies in an effort to confront Russia's expansionistic policy.[555] Within this framework, the U.S., by arming its allies it aimed to maintain stability and attack USSR expansion.[556] The consequences of the dissolution of the USSR and the end of the Cold War were embodied by the U.S.' increase in power and domination of

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[548] A. I. Ahram, 'The Middle East quasi-state system,' *Washington post,* 27 May 2014 .; K. Neilson, 'A Line in the Sand: Britain, France, and the Struggle that Shaped the Middle East' (review),' *Mediterranean Quarterly* vol.23, no.3 (2012), pp. 119-122 .; J. Gee, 'The Ottoman Empire and World War I: it could all have been very different,' *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* vol.33, no.7 (2014), p. 24.

[549] P. Salem, 'The Middle East Evolution of a Broken Regional Order,' The *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* vol.9 (June 2008), p. 1-19.

[550] M. Khadduri, 'the problem of regional security in the Middle East: an appraisal,' *The Middle East Journal* vol.11, no.1 (1957), pp. 12-22.

[551] ibid., p. 14.

[552] R. Peters, 'Blood borders: How a better Middle East would look,' *Armed Forces Journal*, no.6 , 2006.

[553] F. G. Gause, 'British and American policies in the Persian Gulf, 1968–1973,' *Review of International Studies* vol.11, no.4 (1985) , pp. 249-252.; K. Ulrichsen, 'Gulf Security: Changing Internal and External Dynamics', (The Centre for the Study Global Governance, May 2009)<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/25237/1/Ulrichsen_2009.pdf [accessed June 2014] .

[554] A. Edwards, 'A Neoclassical Realist Analysis of American 'Dual Containment' Policy in the Persian Gulf: 1991-2001' (Doctoral thesis, Department of International Relations of the London School of Economics, 2013), <http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/704/1/Edwards_Neoclassical_realist_analysis_2013.pdf> [accessed 1 December 2014], pp. 65-67.

[555] Gause, 'British and American policies in the Persian Gulf, 1968–1973' , pp. 249-273.

[556] ibid. pp. 249-273.

the world, especially in economic, military and technological aspects.[557] After this period, American strategy has relied on enhancing and preserving its power and dominant position, especially in the MEA, Europe and East Asia.[558] Within this broad and global strategy framework, the key and major U.S. Middle Eastern policy has manifested itself in the installation and safeguarding of its regional hegemony. This itself is based on: controlling the oil fields in the Middle East,[559] confronting terrorist groups, preventing the proliferation of WMD,[560] and preventing any hostile power imposing its hegemony over the region,[561] and replacing unfriendly system with friendly and democratic allies.

 Hence, from 2003-2011, Iraq was considered to be one of the key states in the region which the U.S. believed would play a central role in this U.S. hegemonic ambition. The U.S. administration believed that establishing a united, strong, democratic and pro-U.S. government in Baghdad would be the key element for its hegemony. Within this framework, the U.S. policy to keep the Kurds inside Iraq was part of this wider regional strategy. The U.S. saw that supporting the Kurds and their demands, especially for independence, would undercut its hegemony and national interests due to the following reasons:

5.1.1 Fear of Undermining U.S. Regional Hegemony

After the Gulf War and the withdrawal of Saddam's regime from Kuwait, the U.S. did not support regime change in Iraq and did not back the uprising in northern and

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[557] G.J. Ikenberry, M. Michael and W.C. William C., 'Introduction: Unipolarity, State Behavior, and Systemic Consequences', *World Politics,* 61 (2009), 1-27, pp. 1-27.

[558] Maynes, 'Principled Hegemony*, pp. 31-36, p 31* .; M. Mastanduno, 'Hegemonic order, September 11, and the consequences of the Bush revolution,' *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* vol.5, no.2 (2005), pp. 177-196.

[559] Harvey, *New imperialism, pp. 19*-25.

[560] U.S. Department of State, *Remarks: Robert Pelletreau on Update on Middle East Bureau of Near Eastern Affair* (Washington, D.C: U.S. Department of State, 25 January 1996) <http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/ERC/bureaus/nea/960125PelletreauUpdate.html> [accessed 18 January 2015] .; U.S. embassy, *Pelletreau Outlines U.S. Middle East Policy (Iraq, Iran, Egypt, Algeria, peace process highlighted)* (Tel Aviv: US embassy- Tel Aviv, 25 September 1996) <http://usembassy-israel.org.il/publish/press/state/archive/septmbr/sd2_9-26.htm> [accessed 18 January 2015].

[561] I. O. Lesser et al., 'Sources of conflict in the Greater Middle East,' *Eds, Khalilzad, Z.and Ian O.Lesser, IO, Sources of Conflict in the 21st Century: Regional Futures and US Strategy* (1998), pp. 171-228 .; A. Brock, *Summary Report on Regional Cooperation in a New Middle East* (Egypt: CFR's International Institutions and Global Governance program, 10-11 November 2012), p. 5 .; I. O. Lesser et al., 'Sources of conflict in the Greater Middle East' , pp. 171-229.

southern Iraq in 1991.[562] The U.S. viewed the end of Saddam's Iraq as a danger to the whole region,[563] and it could damage the U.S.' regional hegemony. The U.S. strategy aimed at keeping Saddam's regime in power was for three reasons: firstly, the U.S. did not want to make major changes to the security system in the Gulf region.[564] Secondly, the U.S. was concerned that this would be exploited by its hostile rival, Iran, who would be free to impose its hegemony over the region.[565.] Thirdly, America and its regional allies feared that regime change would spread instability in the region.[566] All these concerns and political calculations pushed the U.S. administration to keep Saddam in power and later to pursue a 'dual containment' strategy during the Clinton administration towards Iraq and Iran.[567] Moreover, as discussed in chapter three, during the 1990s the U.S. pursued a containment policy towards Iraq and Iran in order to enhance its regional hegemony.

However, the U.S. invasion of Iraq and its policy of pursuing regime change was the key signal of an alteration in U.S. policy and approach to the region in order to install and enhance its regional hegemony as bases for global domination. In particular, despite the rise of U.S. hegemony since 1991 and the presence of U.S. military forces in the MEA, the regional dynamic was to challenge and constrain U.S. hegemony. This was particularly the case with regard to the ineffective and weakening containment policy pursued by the U.S. towards Iran and Iraq, the rise of Islamic radical groups in the Arab worlds and lack of democracy which were challenge and threat for the installation of U.S. hegemony.[568] Therefore, during the Bush administration, priority was given to regional transformations and creating a new platform for U.S. hegemony in the

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[562] Khadduri and Ghareeb, *War in the Gulf, 1990-91: the Iraq-Kuwait conflict and its implications*, p. 96.; Edwards, 'A Neoclassical Realist Analysis of American 'Dual Containment' Policy in the Persian Gulf: 1991-2001, pp. 112-113.

[563] Khadduri and Ghareeb, *War in the Gulf, 1990-91: the Iraq-Kuwait conflict and its implications*, p. 96 .; Edwards, 'A Neoclassical Realist Analysis of American 'Dual Containment' Policy in the Persian Gulf: 1991-2001, pp. 112-113.

[564] Edwards, 'A Neoclassical Realist Analysis of American 'Dual Containment' Policy in the Persian Gulf': 1991-2001, pp. 112-113.

[565] ibid., pp. 112-113.

[566] Khadduri and Ghareeb, *War in the Gulf, 1990-91: the Iraq-Kuwait conflict and its implications*, pp. 204-206.; Edwards, 'A Neoclassical Realist Analysis of American 'Dual Containment' Policy in the Persian Gulf: 1991-2001', pp. 112-113.

[567] M. Indyk, 'The Clinton Administration's Approach to the Middle East' (The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1993) <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-clinton-administrations-approach-to-the-middle-east> [accessed 19 January 2015].

[568] S. Hurst, Steven, *The United States and Iraq since 1979; Hegemony, Oil and War* (Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 153-175.

MEA.[569] Within this framework, after 2003 and the fall of Saddam's regime, Bush's policy was to transform Iraq into a strategic partner to control the Middle East and thus enhance and maintain U.S. regional and global hegemony.[570] In particular Iraq's geographical position was crucial, it has borders with Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Jordan, Turkey and Kuwait and has significant oil supplies and a large population.[571] The U.S. thought that establishing a reliable alliance in Iraq, which has the largest oilfields after Saudi Arabia, would improve and enhance its regional hegemony.[572] Noam Chomsky argued that one of the key reasons which pushed the U.S. and UK to invade Iraq was related to enhancing the U.S.' position and power in the world. In this regard he emphasised that:

> It [Iraq] is the last corner of the world in which there are massive petroleum resources pretty much unexplored, maybe the largest in the world or close to it. Now they are very easy to gain access to. The profits from that must flow primarily to the right pockets, that is, US and secondarily UK energy corporations. And controlling that resource puts the US in a very powerful position, even more powerful than today, to exert influence over the world.[573]

On the same note, Brzezinski argued that "victory and control in Iraq would give the U.S. what he called critical leverage over Asian and European economies, so the U.S. will have its hand on the spigot".[574] In particular the Iraq oil sources were important for the stabilization of global oil markets and U.S. economic sectors.[575] Greg Muttitt in his book 'Fuel on the Fire' disclosed that the security of the flow of oil and stability of the global oil market played a key role in U.S. and UK policy to remove Saddam's regime in 2003.[576] He argued that, "The most important strategic interest lay in expanding

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[569] Hurst, Steven, *The United States and Iraq since 1979; Hegemony, Oil and War*, pp. 153-175.

[570] R. Hinnebusch, 'The US Invasion of Iraq: Explanations and Implications,' Critique*: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* vol.16, no. 3 (2007), pp. 209-228.; Hurst, *The United States and Iraq since 1979: hegemony, oil and war*, pp. 1-65.

[571] S. Paul, 'Iraq's Tangled Foreign Interests and Relations', *Carnegie Middle East Centre*, December 2013 <http://carnegieendowment.org/files/Iraqs_Tangled_Foreign_Interests_and_Relations.pdf>[accessed May 2014].;Blanchard.; M. Christopher. and others, *Iraq: Regional Perspectives and US Policy,* Congressional Report. Congressional Report. (*Order Code* RL33793). (Washington:. Congressional Research Service, 6 October 2009), pp. 1-35.

[572] Stokes, 'the War Gamble: Understanding US Interests in Iraq', p. 8.

[573] N. Chomsky, *On the War in Iraq*, interviewed by David McNeill, 31 January 2005 <http://chomsky.info/20050131/> [accessed 19 January 2015].

[574] Quoted in ibid.

[575] I. Gendzier, 'Oil, Iraq and US foreign policy in the Middle East,' Situation *Analysis* vol.2, (2003), pp. 18-28.; Rosenthal, 'U.S. to Be World's Top Oil Producer in 5 Years, Report Says,' *The New York Times*, November12, 2012.

[576] Quoted in N. Ahmed, 'Iraq Invasion was about Oil', *The Guardian,* 20 March 2014.

global energy supplies, through foreign investment, in some of the world's largest oil reserves – in particular Iraq".[577]

Furthermore, since 2003 the Bush administration which was influenced by the neoconservatives saw that Iraq would be a model for the region and the U.S. would make a new ally in the region that contributed to U.S. security.[578] The U.S. administration saw that a lack of democracy and dictatorial system and lack of common value in the region was considered a challenge for U.S. interests and their ambition of regional hegemony and therefore the promotion of democracy would be an effective tool for installing U.S. hegemony.[579] In particular, the Bush administration believed that spreading democracy throughout the Middle East would remove and reduce resentment and anti-U.S. sentiment in the region and would push the region towards dramatic change in undertaking democratic reform and increasing the amount of pressure on its rivals.[580] In this regard, Bush in December 2005 stressed that installing democracy in the Middle East depended on establishing a democratic system in Iraq. Stabilising and backing a democratic system in Iraq would be a factor in spreading democracy in the region. This would favour U.S. interests in the region. The U.S. would have new partners and this would enhance U.S. security.[581] On the same note, Condoleezza Rice in 2003 stressed that one of the key U.S. goals of regime change in Iraq was to remove the threat that was posed by the Saddam regime to the U.S. and world security and this threat was removed.[582]

Within this context, it can be said that U.S. policy towards Kurdistan from 2003-2011, which was manifested in maintaining Iraq's territorial integrity and in keeping the Kurds inside this state, was also part of its broader strategy to make Iraq a strategic partner to control the MEA and enhance its regional hegemony. The U.S. administration believed that supporting the Kurdish independent state would pose dire ramifications for U.S. hegemony and its new policy.[583] In this regard, many perspectives argued that the fate of Iraq and the creation of the Kurdish state would

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[577] Quoted in ibid.

[578] G. W. Bush, *The Struggle for Democracy in Iraq: Speech to the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia* (The White House, 12 December 2005) <http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/speeches/12.12.05.html;> [accessed 19 January 2015].

[579] Hurst, *The United States and Iraq since 1979; Hegemony, Oil and War* , 153-175

[580] ibid, pp. 153-175

[581] Bush, *the Struggle for Democracy in Iraq: Speech to the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia 2005.*

[582] C. Rice., 'Transforming the Middle East', *Washington Post,* 7 August 2003.

[583] S.A. Najar, Interview with Author, 20 April 2014, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Erbil.

affect the political equation in the region. Graham E Fuller argued that establishing a Kurdish state would change or affect the balance of power in the Middle East through the change of the current geographical borders, and this would constitute a dramatic change in the geopolitics of the region.[584] Therefore, pushing the Kurds towards independence from Iraq would be perceived as supporting this change.[585]

Furthermore, N. A. Özcan, argued that the creation of a Kurdish state in Iraq would raise concerns of the regional states including Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey, because they feared that this would fuel Kurdish aspirations in the other parts of Kurdistan and this would pose a major security challenge in the region in the long term.[586] Michael M. Gunter also argued that the establishment of Kurdish statehood is unlikely, since the Kurds are settled in Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey. Secondly, the international community would reject a change of border not considered in the decolonization process.[587] Moreover, the establishment of a Kurdish state in Iraq would pose serious challenges for U.S. policy in the Middle East. This would likely increase anti-American hostility in the region and pushes its allies to distance themselves from the U.S.[588] Hence it can be said that this might then lead to the formation of a strong axis against U.S. policy in the Middle East, damaging its interests and its hegemony in the region. The consequences of resistance from U.S. allies and regional states since 2003 over U.S. policy regarding Iraq constitutes a clear influence on U.S. policy and has heavily damaged its interests in the region. The majority of U.S. Arab states allies did not back the U.S. policy in Iraq,[589] and some of these states supported the Sunnis' insurgency in Iraq.[590] Turkey in 2003 refused the U.S.' request to use its military bases, due to its concern over the

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[584] Fuller, 'the Fate of the Kurds', p. 120.
[585] Ozcan, 'Could a Kurdish State be set up in Iraq?' , pp. 119-122.
[586] ibid., pp. 119-122.
[587] M. M. Gunter, 'The Kurds in Iraq: Why Kurdish Statehood Is Unlikely,' *Middle East Policy* vol.11, no.1 (2004), p. 106.
[588] Ozcan, 'Could a Kurdish State be set up in Iraq?', pp. 119-122.
[589] *Erarat Mjles Jameat Al-Arabiya Ala Mstawa Al-Quwma- Al- Dwret Al-Adadiya (15) Sherm Al-Shikh.* 15, *Mjles Jameat Al-Arabiya,* (Egypt (Sherm Al-Shikh): 1 March 2003, <http://www.gn4me.com/las/arabic/details_ar.jsp?art_id=1857&level_id=236> [accessed 22 November 2014].
[590] *M. Eisenstadt and W. Jeffrey, '*Assessing Iraq's Sunni Arab Insurgency*'* (Washington Institute for Near East policy, December 2005*),* p. 17. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/assessing-iraqs-sunni-arab-insurgency> [accessed 19 January 2015] .

Kurdish issue.[591] On the same note, states hostile to the U.S. in the region like Iran and Syria intensified their efforts to destabilize Iraq.[592]

It is remarkable that regime change and its consequences were not in favour of the U.S. policy and strategy in Iraq and the region. The Iraq war has had an impact on the balance of power in the region and increased competition among rival states.[593] The removal of Saddam's regime created the opportunity for Iran to become an influential power in Iraq and this shifted the regional balance of power from Arab states to non-Arab states.[594] It is notable that 'superpowers' like the U.S., China and Russia, were competing with each other to impose and strengthen their hegemony over the major oil fields in the world generally and, more specifically, in the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea.[595] In this context, the U.S. major strategy in the region was to maintain its interests by enhancing the regional order in order to ensure a flow of oil at a reasonable price confronting Iran and its ambition to become the hegemonic regional power in the Middle East.[596]

The U.S.' key rivals in the region like China, Russia and Iran confronted U.S. hegemony in the region. Within this context China's engagement in the Middle East has been related to a variety of interests. Firstly, the flow of gas and oil from this region to China.[597] Secondly, the Middle East is an important area of growth for the Chinese economy. Thirdly, China is considered the second biggest buyer of energy in the world,[598] and it is estimated that its need for oil and gas from the Middle East and North Africa will increase of 70% by 2020.[599] This has increased the possibility of competition between the U.S. and China over Saudi oil resources.[600] Instability and the challenge of Iraqi oil production has pushed China to improve its ties with other oil

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[591] Park, 'Iraq's Kurds and Turkey: Challenges for US Policy', pp. 21-22.

[592] K. Katzman, *Iran's activities and influence in Iraq (CRS Report for Congress)* (Washington: Federation of American Scientists, December 2007), pp. 1-6,.; Blanchard et al, *Iraq: Regional Perspectives and US Policy*, pp. 1-36.

[593] F. Wehrey et al., *The Iraq Effect: The Middle East After the Iraq War,* Rand Corporation, 2010), p.21.

[594] ibid., p.21.

[595] M. T. Klare, *Blood and oil: the dangers and consequences of America's growing petroleum dependency,* pp. 146-147.

[596] M. Kaim., *Great Powers and Regional Orders: The United States and the Persian Gulf* (New York: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 1-11.

[597] F. Leverett and J. Bader,'Managing China-US energy competition in the Middle East,' *The Washington Quarterly* vol.29, no.1 (2005), pp. 187-201.

[598] Wehrey et al., The Iraq Effect: The Middle East After the Iraq War p. 57.

[599] ibid., pp. 57-58.

[600] Wehrey et al., The Iraq Effect: The Middle East After the Iraq War, p. -58.

producers in the region like Iran and Saudi Arabia.[601] As mentioned above, the aftermath of the U.S. war in Iraq and the desire of some states in the region to expand their security partners were exploited by China to enhance its position in the region.[602] China saw Saudi Arabia as an important state in terms of providing its energy needs.[603] Likewise, Saudi Arabia takes advantage of Chinese leverage in terms of security and not being totally dependent on the U.S. as a unique source of maintaining its interests and security.[604]

On the same note, Iran, due to its energy resources and strategic location for the exportation of oil to the Chinese market, is considered another regional state which is important for China,[605] and therefore the energy ties between both sides improved.[606] Similarly, Russia was another state which challenged U.S. policy and its primary position in the Middle East. Russia has taken advantage of the aftermath of the U.S. war in Iraq. It saw that the U.S.' main goals in the Iraq war were to marginalise Russia and impose its hegemony over the region.[607] However, the negative consequences of the Iraq war have given an opportunity to Russia to strengthen its position in the Gulf.[608] The conflict of interests between the U.S. and Russia in the region was considered to be one of the major U.S. challenges for U.S. regional domination in the MEA, in particular because Russia is supporting Iran's military in order to guarantee its influence in Central Asia and the Caucasus.[609]

Overall, from 2003 to 2011 a number of internal (as mentioned in the previous chapter) and external factors created serious challenges for U.S. policy and its ambition to make Iraq a strategic partner in the region. This pushed the Bush and later the Obama administration to pay more attention to the stability of Iraq rather than democratization. This transformation to some extent affected U.S. policy towards the KRI and pushed the U.S. to change its policy toward Kurdish demands. Moreover, after the withdrawal of the U.S. troops in Iraq in 2011, there has been a huge transformation in the region,

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601 ibid., pp. 50-56.
602 ibid., pp. 50-56.
603   S. A. Yetiv and C. Lu, 'China, global energy, and the Middle East' *The Middle East Journal* (2007), pp. 199-218.
604 Wehrey et al, *The Iraq Effect: The Middle East After the Iraq War*, pp. 56.
605   ibid., p. 58-60.
606 S. A. Yetiv, and Lu, C., 'China, global energy, and the Middle East' *The Middle East Journal* (2007), pp. 199-218.
607   Wehrey et al., *The Iraq Effect: The Middle East After the Iraq War*, pp. 62-64.
608   ibid., pp. -64-67.
609 ibid., pp. -64-73.

which has led new political equations to emerge, in which the Kurds became an important factor contributing to U.S. regional hegemony. (For detail see chapter 6).

5.1.2 U.S. Fears About Regional Instability

The U.S. has crucial interests in maintaining stability and security in the MDA.[610] Instability in the region would disrupt oil supplies to the global market and would damage U.S. and its allies' economic interests.[611] Within this context, Iraq as a part of the Middle East arena, its stability/instability would have a direct repercussion over the entire region. As a U.S. Defence report argued in 2006, "Stability and security in Iraq is a regional issue".[612] On the same note, Iraqi study groups in 2006 saw that "If the instability in Iraq spreads to the other Gulf States, a drop in oil production and exports could lead to a sharp increase in the price of oil and thus could harm the global economy".[613] The report continued by saying that "Iraq is vital to regional and even global stability, and is critical to U.S. interests. It runs along the sectarian fault lines of Shia and Sunni Islam, and of Kurdish and Arab populations. It has the world's second-largest known oil reserves".[614] Daniel Byman and Kenneth Pollack regarding the ramifications of Iraq's conflict and civil war in 2007 stressed that Iraqi instability would undermine the oil supply to the global market.[615] They argued that "At its worst, an Iraqi civil war could cause civil wars in neighbouring states or escalate to a regional war—which could result in large scale disruptions of Persian Gulf oil production".[616]

W. Andrew Terrill linked the expansion of terrorist groups in the region with instability and conflict in Iraq. In this regard he argued that "The actual and potential expansion of serious terrorist activity across the Middle East as a result of the Iraq conflict is another spillover effect that must be considered when assessing the future of the region".[617] The growth of terrorist groups would threaten the U.S. and its ally's national interests,

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[610] Burns, 'Toward a Positive Agenda for the Middle East, Remarks to Middle East' .
[611] Nagl and Burton, 'After the Fire: Shaping the Future U.S. Relationship with Iraq', pp. 1-26.
[612] Department of Defense (DOD), *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq,* (Washington: Department of Defense, November 2006) <http://archive.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/9010Quarterly-Report-20061216.pdf>, [accessed 22 November 2015].
[613] Hamilton and Baker, *Iraq Study Group Report: The Way Forward-a New Approach,*
[614] ibid.
[615] P. Kenneth M and B. Daniel l, *Things Fall Apart: Containing the Spillover from an Iraqi Civil War.* Brookings Institution Press, 2007, p. 42.
[616] ibid., p. 42.
[617] Terrill, *Regional spillover effects of the Iraq war*, p. 22.

as shown in declassified documents.[618] Hence, the U.S. saw that any partition of Iraq could lead to regional war and widespread instability.[619] As well as terrorism, any spillover of sectarian and ethnic conflict in Iraq to the region would threaten the stability of regional states and vital U.S. interests,[620] and this might lead to regional states intervening to maintain their interests.[621] (Indeed, this did happen later as a result of the Syrian civil war and the rise of IS).

It is remarkable that potential conflict in Iraq has two major dimensions. The first is related to the Shia and Sunni factions. The majority of the Arab Gulf states have Shia factions. These include Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and they were affected by the sectarian conflict in Iraq.[622] The U.S.' allies in particular considered the 'Shiite crescent' a threat to their national interests.[623] They argued that strengthening the position of Shia politics and incursions of Iran into Iraq constituted a threat to their states.[624] Especially, the GCC states considered Iran with its Shia identity and its ambition of being a regional power as a major political and ideological menace to their national interests.[625] Therefore they stressed maintaining the territorial integrity of Iraq.

The other dimensions of possible conflict in Iraq have been related to the Iraqi Kurds. It can be said that pushing Kurds towards independence could destabilize the whole region and undermine regional stability and U.S. hegemony. In this regard the regional states (2003-2011) warned the US regarding the possible consequences to the stability of the Middle East of the U.S.'s supporting the KRG. Iraqi Kurdistan is surrounded by regional powers such as Iran, Turkey, Syria and Arab Iraq,[626] and these states contain important Kurdish minorities.[627] The regional states were concerned that a breakup of Iraq and pushing Kurdish moves towards independence would threaten their territorial

[618] *Declassified Key Judgments of the National Intelligence Estimate. Trends in Global Terrorism: Implications for the United States. Dated April 2006,* (Washington: Federation of American Scientists (FAS), April 2006) <http://fas.org:8080/irp/dni/trends.pdf> accessed January 12, 2014].

[619] Hamilton and Baker,, *Iraq Study Group Report: The Way Forward-a New Approach.*

[620] Terrill, *Regional spillover effects of the Iraq war,* pp. 61-65.

[621] Hamilton and Baker, *Iraq Study Group Report: The Way Forward-a New Approach.*

[622] Pollack, and Daniel L, *Things Fall Apart: Containing the Spillover from an Iraqi Civil War*, p . 12.

[623] K. C. Ulrichsen, 'Internal and external security in the Arab Gulf States,' Middle *East Policy* vol.16, no.2 (2009), p.42.

[624] ibid., pp., 39-58.

[625] ibid., pp., 39-58.

[626] M. M. Gunter, 'The Permanent and New Realities Facing the Kurdistan Regional Government: Options and Prospects,' *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* vol.28, no.2 (2008), PP. 237-249, p. 237.

[627] Pollack, and Daniel L, *Things Fall Apart: Containing the Spillover from an Iraqi Civil War*, p .12.

integrity.[628] Daniel Byman and Kenneth Pollack, regarding the ramifications of a Kurdish independent state in the region in 2007, argued that:

> Because of the ease with which secessionism can spread, and the number of groups in the Persian Gulf that could easily fall prey to such thinking, it will probably be necessary for the United States to persuade the Iraqi Kurds not to declare their independence anytime soon. Iraq's Kurds (and all of the Kurds of the region) deserve independence; but this should only come as part of a legal process under conditions of peace and stability. In the run-up to, Or in the midst of, a massive civil war, it could create destabilizing problems well beyond Kurdistan.[629]

The Kurdish leadership itself recognised the dangers and therefore after Saddam's regime they decided to be part of Iraq and chose the federalist system.[630] However, it may also be argued alternatively, as David Romano notes, that instability in the region at times also positively affected U.S. policy towards Iraqi Kurdistan.[631] Indeed, with the withdrawal of U.S. troops in Iraq in 2011, the transformation in the Middle East caused by the Arab Spring and then the incursion of ISIL into Iraq in 2014 pushed the U.S. to further change its policy towards the KRI and even towards Iraq. The next chapter will deal with these transformations. The rest of this chapter examines the regional states in more detail to see how their policy affected the U.S.' position towards Kurdistan.

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[628] T. Bowditch, 'Policy Options and the US Withdrawal from Iraq: An Analysis of the Way Ahead' (Centre for Naval Analyses Alexandria Va, (2009) <http://oai.dtic.mil/oai/oai?verb=getRecord&metadataPrefix=html&identifier=ADA504125> [accessed June 2014], p. 51.

[629] Pollack, and Daniel L, *Things Fall Apart: Containing the Spillover from an Iraqi Civil War*, pp. 43.

[630] Gunter, 'The Kurds in Iraq: Why Kurdish Statehood Is Unlikely,' pp. 106-108.

[631] D. Romano, *Why Does West Support Kurds?* Interview, With Namo Abdulla , November 18, 2014) <http://rudaw.net/mobile/english/world/18112014?ctl00_phMainContainer_phMain_ControlComments1_gvCommentsChangePage=2_5> [accessed 22 January 2015].

5.2. The Pressure of Regional States Affecting U.S. Policy Towards the Kurdistan Region

This section would explain the pressures and impact of the regional states including Turkey, Arab Gulf states and Iran on the U.S. policy towards Kurdistan region of Iraq.

5.2.1 Turkey: A Challenge for U.S. Foreign Policy Towards KRI

5.2.1.1 U.S.-Turkey Relations and Security

One of the key regional challenges that have persistently affected the orientations of U.S. policy towards Iraqi Kurdistan has been associated with the Turkish perspective. The Turkey-U.S. alliance has had direct and indirect consequences on the Kurdish issue as a whole and Iraqi Kurdistan in particular. For a long time, in order to pursue its policy in the Middle East and maintain its hegemony, the U.S. relied on the Turkish state as one of the regional partners in the region. In return, the U.S. has constantly paid attention to Turkish national interests and its concerns in relation to the Kurdish issue. Since the establishment of the Turkish state, the Kurdish cause has been considered one of the major threats to its territorial integrity, and the Turkish authorities believed that any development in the Kurdish issue in any parts of Kurdistan (Iraq, Syria, and Iran) would provoke the Kurds in Turkey and push them towards separatism.

 For this reason, Turkey tried to avoid this threat by making an alliance with the U.S. administrations. Within this context, since 2003, despite Turkey-U.S. differences, there has been close cooperation between them regarding the political process in Iraq and the Kurdistan region. In addition, U.S. authorities have endeavored to reassure Turkey and lessen its concerns regarding important issues, such as the Kurdish aspiration to expand its influence, the likely partition of Iraq, and an eventual Kurdish independence. Moreover, the U.S. agreed with Turkey and its regional allies to prevent the creation of a Kurdish independent state, which could incite the separatist movement in Turkey and the region, fuelling instability in the Middle East.

Turkey is regarded as a vital U.S. ally and has been since 1945 and due to many factors there have been shared interests.[632] Firstly, Turkey and the U.S. have had common interests in protecting stability in the Black Sea Basin, the Balkans, the Middle East and the Mediterranean, and in confronting the proliferation of WMD and countering terrorism.[633] Secondly, since 1952, Turkey has been a main member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO),[634] during the Cold War it was at the frontline against Russia's expansionist policy,[635] and after the Cold War, it played a key role within the framework of NATO in the Second Gulf War in 1991,[636] in Yugoslavia, in Afghanistan, in the war on the terror in Afghanistan,[637] and also in the airstrike in Libya in 2011.[638]

Moreover, Turkey consider as part of NATO, to–maintain the security system of Western states and confront the influence of Russia in Europe.[639] In addition, both the U.S. and Turkey have had bilateral cooperation to maintain the sovereignty of the Caspian region states.[640] Fourthly, Turkey is considered a major military power in the Middle East.[641] Fifthly, Turkey has a strategic position in terms of transporting oil and energy from Asia to western states, and this feature pushed its more powerful allies to prevent any source of instability in the region in order to secure the provision of oil to the global market.[642] Finally, compared with the other Islamic states in the region, Turkey is a successful example of a secular democracy with a strong economy.[643] All the aforementioned factors contributed to the rise of a Turkish role in a U.S. foreign policy aimed at maintaining the regional security and stability of the Middle East and pursuing its hegemony in the region. In return, these factors have pushed U.S.

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[632] A. Gül, 'Turkey: Vital Ally in the Cause of Long-Term Stability,' *American Foreign Policy Interests* vol.29, no.3 (2007), pp. 175-181.

[633] ibid., pp. 175-181.

[634] U.S. Department of State, *U.S. Relations With Turkey* (Washington: U.S. Department of State, April 3, 2014) <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3432.htm > [accessed 4 November 2014].

[635] I. Lesser et al., *Future of Turkish-Western Relations: Toward a Strategic Plan* RAND Corporation, 2000), p. 2.

[636] F. Larrabee, *Turkey as a U.S. Security Partner* RAND, 2008), p. 20.

[637] J. Zanotti, *Turkey: Background and US Relations* Congressional Research Service, 2012), p. 11.

[638] I. H. Daalder and J. G. Stavridis,'NATO's victory in Libya: the right way to run an intervention,' *Foreign Aff.* vol.91 (2012).

[639] Lesser, *The Future of Turkish-Western Relations, 39.*

[640] ibid., p, 46-48.

[641] Zanotti, 'Turkey: Background and US Relations', p. 10.

[642] J. Zanotti, *Turkey-US Defense Cooperation: Prospects and Challenges,* CRS Report for Congress. (Order Code R41761). (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 8 April 2011) , pp. 4-5.

[643] Ö. Taşpinar, 'The Rise of Turkish Gaullism: Getting Turkish-American Relations Right,' *Insight Turkey* vol.13, no.1 (2011), p, 12.

administrations to take into consideration Turkish interests and its concerns regarding the Kurdish issue.

5.2.1.2 U.S.-Turkey Relations and Iraq/Kurdistan

During the 1990s there was a U.S.-Turkish shared conception regarding the political situation in Iraq and in the Kurdistan region which aimed at maintaining the stability and territorial integrity of Iraq, confronting Saddam's regime and supporting the Kurds with humanitarian aid. Within this context, the establishment of a 'no-fly-zone' in the north of Iraq in 1991was supported directly by the Turkish Government,[644] and both the U.S. and Turkey agreed that this step was based on humanitarian grounds.[645] Moreover, by taking this step, Turkey thought it was acting in its own interests. Turkey supported the creation of this 'safe haven' because it meant the return of the Kurdish refugees to the north of Iraq with positive consequences for its territorial integrity.[646] Furthermore, Turkey wanted to exploit this new situation in its fight against the PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan) in the north of Iraq.[647] Hence, both the U.S. and Turkey have had a common interest in the emergence of the Kurdish *de-facto* state since 1992, provided it was temporary, and both states were convinced that the regime change in Baghdad would automatically lead to the dissolution of the KRG with the return of Iraqi authority to the north of Iraq.

After 11 September 2001, with the shift in U.S. foreign policy towards the Middle East and the U.S. attempts to change the regime in Iraq, Turkey pressed the U.S. administration not to allow the Kurds to exploit regime change in Iraq. For this purpose, Turkey pursued two different approaches in dealing with the new political equation and the U.S. potential war in Iraq. In terms of politics and diplomacy Turkey intensified its efforts to stop the U.S. from waging a new war in Iraq by arguing that any military intervention could generate an unfavourable outcome for Turkey and the region. Within this context, in January 2003, Turkey, Iran, and other regional states gathered in a

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[644] Lesser, *the Future of Turkish-Western Relations,* pp. 186-187.
[645] B. Park, "Iraq's Kurds and Turkey: Challenges for US Policy," *Parameters* vol.34, no.3 (2004), pp. 21-22.
[646] Lesser, *The Future of Turkish-Western Relations,* pp, 186-187.
[647] Park, 'raq's Kurds and Turkey: Challenges for US Policy', pp. 21-22.

summit in Istanbul advocating a diplomatic solution.[648] However, Turkish authorities, when convinced that an Iraqi war was inevitable and the U.S. with its allies really wanted to topple Saddam, understood that they could not afford to be outside the new political equation, and tried to reach a deal with the U.S. in which both sides discussed the fate of Iraqi Kurdistan.[649] After difficult negotiations, both sides reached an understanding regarding the Turkish role in the war, the Kurdish issue and the political future of Iraq. According to the memorandum, the U.S. would allow Turkey to deploy its troops in the north of Iraq for 40 km inside the border. [650]

 Moreover, both sides agreed to prevent the Kurdish Peshmarga from entering Kirkuk and other disputed areas in Iraq. [651] In addition, the U.S. promised Turkey that it would not tolerate the partition of Iraq or the establishment of a Kurdish state.[652] It was clear that Turkey wanted, via this deal, to prevent the KRG from exploiting the political situation after regime change in its own interests. However, the rejection of the memorandum by the Turkish parliament on 1 March 2003 and the refusal to allow the U.S. to use Turkey's territory,[653] created a new political equation and enhanced a Kurdish-U.S. alliance in 2003.[654]

After the removal of Saddam's regime, Turkish policy towards Iraq was manifested in the prevention of the emergence of a Kurdish independent state, maintaining the territorial integrity of Iraq through the creation of a strong central government, the prevention of ethnic federalism, and the hindering of any Kurdish attempts to control Kirkuk and the disputed areas. In order to pursue this strategy, Turkey pressed the U.S. administration to control Kurdish influence in Iraq. During the transitional stage, the U.S. authorities aimed to enforce administrative federalism based on non-ethnic politics.[655] This was to reassure Turkey and its regional allies, who frequently asked the U.S. to guarantee the territorial integrity of Iraq. The Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz in 2004 argued that the U.S. and Turkey had shared interests in Iraq, which

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[648] Park, 'raq's Kurds and Turkey: Challenges for US Policy', pp. 22-23.
[649] Hetuti, *Duzi Kurd La Iraq Wa Mechanizmakani Charasarkerdni- Dwaye 2003*, pp . 89-93.
[650] ibid. pp . 89-93.
[651] ibid. pp . 89-93.
[652] A. K. Ame, ' Mewqf Al-Turkey Men Al-Fidraliat Fi Aqlim Kurdstan Al-Iraq,' *Majalat Acamimiyet Alilmiyat Al-Iraqiya, Wezaret Talim Ali we Behs Al Elmi.* vol.33, p. 1-44.; Hetuti, *Duzi Kurd La Iraq Wa Mechanizmakani Charasarkerdni- Dwaye 2003*, pp. 40-52.
[653] Park, 'Iraq's Kurds and Turkey: Challenges for US Policy', pp. 21-22.
[654] Crisis Group, *Turkey and Iraqi Kurds: Conflict Or Cooperation? Middle East Report* vol.81 (13 November 2008), p. 17.
[655] Crisis Group, *Iraq's Kurds: Toward an Historic Compromise*?, pp. 1-33.

manifested in supporting a single state in Iraq with the power to decide its foreign policy, control its own army and maintain Iraqi borders.[656] He stressed that to some extent the "federalism or federation is probably going to be inevitable but that should be based on administrative and geographic lines, not on ethnic lines".[657] Regarding the KRG's aspiration for an independent state in Iraq, he pointed out that "our message to the Kurds is, your future doesn't lie in separating yourselves from the Iraqis. Your future lies in helping us to ensure that the future Iraq is a free and democratic country".[658] For the same purpose, in January 2004 Recep Tayyip Erdoğan Prime Minister of Turkey visited Washington to be reassured about the territorial integrity of Iraq.[659] During his meeting with the U.S. President, Bush emphasized that "the United States' ambition was for a peaceful country, a democratic Iraq that is territorially intact".[660]

However, as has been discussed, the rising insurgency in Iraq led to a change in the U.S.' attitude towards the role of the Kurds in Iraq and to an increase of U.S.-KRG ties. These developments raised Turkish concerns and led to its strong criticism of the Iraqi permanent constitution. The Turkish administration argued that this constitution was an "extreme form of federalisation" which would pose a serious threat for Iraqi territorial integrity.[661]

Furthermore, Kirkuk and the disputed areas were a major issue which Turkey closely followed and over which it exerted pressure on successive U.S. administrations. During the war against Saddam's regime and the control of Kirkuk by the Peshmarga forces, Turkey threatened to use military forces against the Kurds. In this regard Abdullah Gul, the Turkish Foreign Minister, in a telephone conversation on 10 April 2003 asked the U.S. authorities not to allow Kurdish forces to enter either Kirkuk or Mosul.[662] Gul threatened to use military force if the Kurds controlled Kirkuk, and stressed that the

[656] P. Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of Defense Wolfowitz Interview with CNN Turk, *State Department*'s Bureau of International Information Programs (IIP*),* <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/texttrans/2004/01/200401301614251cjsamoht0.1410406.html#ixzz3DZbxq0hr> [28 September 28 2014].

[657] ibid.

[658] ibid.

[659] Park, 'Iraq's Kurds and Turkey: Challenges for US Policy' , pp. 23.

[660] The white house, *Bush Meets Erdogan, Assures Territorial Integrity of Iraq (*State Department's Bureau of International Information Programs, 28 January 2004) < http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/texttrans/2004/01/200401281500361acnosnhoj0.975506.html#axzz3wgarjW7q > [accessed 9 November 2014].

[661] Crisis Group, *Turkey And Iraqi Kurds: Conflict Or Cooperation*?, p. 19.

[662] Bruni, F., 'A Nation At War: Northern Iraq; Turkey Sending Military Observers To Watch Kurds; 'U.S. Warns Against Further Moves' *New York Times* 11 April 2003.

U.S. gave them an assurance in this regard.[663] According to WikiLeaks documents, Kirkuk and the disputed areas were the major issue under discussion between the U.S. and Turkey. [664] Turkey continually warned the U.S. administration not to allow the Kurds to incorporate Kirkuk into the KRI by arguing that Kirkuk has a strategic importance due also to the presence of oil and that its annexation to the Kurdistan region would pave the way for the creation of a Kurdish independent state attracting the Kurds in Turkey to become part of it.[665]The Wikileaks documents indicated that Turkey used the Turkmen issue as a justification to prevent the Kurds from controlling Kirkuk.[666] Moreover, in February 2005 Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan strongly criticised the U.S. administration policy in Iraq, and Kurdish influence in Kirkuk.[667] In response, the U.S. undersecretary of Defense for Policy Douglas J. Feith stressed that the territorial integrity of Iraq was considered vital and the problem of Kirkuk would be solved taking into account U.S. and Turkish interests.[668]

 Turkey pressured the KRG to abandon holding the referendum in Kirkuk scheduled for 31 December 2007. Recep Tayyip Erdogan in January 2007 accused the KRG of changing the demography of Kirkuk in favour of the Kurds arguing that "Turkey cannot stand idly by, watching the efforts to change the demographic structure of Kirkuk".[669] He argued that the outcome of a referendum about this situation would be predicable and requested the Iraqi government to confront this Kurdish attempt.[670] In effect, Turkey believed that holding a referendum in Kirkuk would threaten its territorial integrity and would encourage a Kurdish separatist movement inside the country to take the same stance.[671]

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[663] CNN News, *U.S. reinforcements arrive in Kirkuk , 11* April 2003) http://edition.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/04/10/sprj.irq.kirkuk/[accessed 9 November 2014].; Bruni, 'A Nation At War: Northern Iraq; Turkey Sending Military Observers To Watch Kurds; 'U.S. Warns Against Further Moves'.

[664] WikiLeaks*, Why Kirkuk Matters To Turkey,* 07ANKARA338_a, *WikiLeaks,* (WikiLeaks, February 16, 2007), <https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07ANKARA338_a.html >[accessed 9 November 2014].

[665] ibid.

[666] ibid.

[667] 'PM sharpens Iraq criticisms against US,' *Hurriyet daily news* 2 February 2005. http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=pm-sharpens-iraq-criticisms-against-us-2005-02-02, [accessed November 9, 2014].

[668] ibid.

[669] 'Erdogan urges Iraq and US over Kirkuk referendum,' *Todays Zaman* 10 January 2007.

[670] ibid.

[671] Ferris and Stoltz, *The Future of Kirkuk: The Referendum and its Potential Impact on Displacement*, p. 3.;D. Romano, 'The future of Kirkuk,' *Ethno politics* vol.6, no.2 (2007), pp. 265-283.

Between 2006 and 2007 and the sectarian war in Iraq, tension between the KRI and Turkey mounted. Turkey accused the KRG of supporting and harboring Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) members and threatened to intervene militarily in the north of Iraq.[672] Within this context, in October 2007, the Turkish parliament approved a resolution which allowed military operations in the north of Iraq, allowing an attack on PKK bases.[673] Moreover, on 7 August 2007, Iraqi and Turkish authorities signed a 'memorandum of understanding' and in September 2007 during his visit, Jawad al-Boulani, the Iraqi interior minister, signed a deal with his Turkish counterpart to confront terrorist organisations including the PKK. On that occasion, both sides agreed to have close bilateral cooperation to confront the PKK and prevent its attacks against Turkey inside Iraqi territory.[674] On the same note, on 5 November 2007 and 7 January 2008 Erdoğan visited Washington and discussed the Kurdish problem and the PKK issue with the Bush administration.[675] After receiving the green light from the U.S., in December 2007, Turkey conducted an airstrike against the PKK, and then in February 2008 started a ground assault in the north of Iraq against it. [676]

This pattern continued. During 2007 and 2008 Turkey's political and military escalation against the KRG was motivated by the U.S. Congress recognizing the Kurdish region as a legal entity.[677] Secondly, Turkish authorities simultaneously attempted to persuade the U.S. administration by providing intelligence in support of the war against the PKK and exerting pressure on the KRG to take a step in the same direction.[678] Thirdly, another factor which pushed Turkey to escalate its military and political rhetoric against the KRG was associated with the release of Joseph Biden's plan in September 2007 that provided for the establishment of three federal regions in Iraq - and was rejected by Turkish authorities.[679] Finally, the continuing concerns about the referendum in Kirkuk and the disputed areas were another reason which pushed Turkey to increase its pressure on the Kurdistan region.[680] This was because, as mentioned earlier, the

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[672] I. Rogg and H. Rimscha, 'The Kurds as parties to and victims of conflicts in Iraq,' *International Review of the Red Cross* vol.89, no.868 (2007), pp. 823-843.

[673] crisis Group, *Turkey And Iraqi Kurds: Conflict Or Cooperation?* , p .5.

[674] ibid., p . 5.

[675] K. Katzman, *Iraq: Post-Saddam Governance and Security,* CRS Report for Congress. (Order Code RL31339). (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 28 October 2009) , p. 29.

[676] Crisis Group, *Turkey and Iraqi Kurds: Conflict or Cooperation?,* p.1-28.

[677] M. Charountaki, 'Turkish foreign policy and the Kurdistan regional government,' *Perceptions* vol. XVII, no.4 (2012), p. 191.

[678] Katzman, *Iraq: Post-Saddam governance and security*), p. 29.

[679] J. Biden and L. Gelb, Federalism, not Partition.

[680] *Erdogan urges Iraq and US over Kirkuk referendum.*

annexation of Kirkuk into the Kurdistan region has been the 'red line' for Turkey's authorities, who thought that this step would lead to the expansion of the KRI's territory and finally pave the way for the creation of an independent Kurdistan.[681]

However, from 2008 onwards, there were improvements in the relations between Erbil and Ankara, and the Turkish authorities practically and officially recognized the KRI as a federal region in the framework of Iraq.[682] The first step in this recognition was made in May 2008, when Nechirvan Barzani and Turkish authorities held a bilateral meeting in Baghdad.[683] During this meeting, both sides agreed to improve their relations in terms of trade and politics and to find a peaceful solution to the problem of Kirkuk.[684] After the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq in 2011, the KRG's and Turkey's ties have further progressed ironically overriding the central Iraqi government.[685] Within this context, there were many internal and external driving factors which pushed Turkey to establish close ties with the KRG and deal with it as an ally in Iraq, including the sectarian policy pursed by Maliki's government towards Arab Sunnis and Kurds, the expansion of the influence of Iran in Iraq, Turkey strengthening trade and energy ties between itself and the KRG,[686] and this was followed by a new Turkish foreign policy called 'zero problems towards neighbors'.[687] All these factors affected and contributed to the shift of Turkey's policy towards the Kurdistan region and the rapprochement between both sides.

The enhancement of KRG-Turkish ties coincided with a rise in differences between the U.S. and Turkish administrations regarding the political process and the formulation of the Iraqi government in 2010.[688] While Turkey was against a second term of Maliki's rule, the Obama administration supported Maliki for a second term, as it prepared to withdraw its troops.[689] Moreover, after 2011 the difference between both sides

[681] B. Park, 'Turkey, the US and the KRG: Moving Parts and the Geopolitical Realities,' *Insight Turkey* vol.14, no.3 (2012) , p, 111.

[682] Charountaki, 'Turkish foreign policy and the Kurdistan regional government', p. 192.

[683] Crisis Group, *Turkey and Iraqi Kurds: Conflict or Cooperation*?, p. 12.

[684] Charountaki, 'Turkish foreign policy and the Kurdistan regional government', p. 192.

[685] ibid., p. 193.

[686] Heuvelen, B. V., 'Iraq's Kurdish region pursues ties with Turkey — for oil and independence,' *Washington Post,* 9 November 2013.

[687] Davutoglu, Ahmet, 'Turkey's Zero-Problems Foreign Policy , *Foreign Policy,* 20 May 2010.;

M. J. Bryza, 'Turkey's Dramatic Shift toward Iraqi Kurdistan: Politics Before Peace Pipelines,' *Turkish Policy Quarterly* vol. Volume 11, no.2, p. 58.

[688] M. Knights, 'Coordinating U.S. and Turkish Policy on Iraq,' *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy* (February 25, 2013, http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/coordinating-u.s.-and-turkish-policy-on-iraq [accessed 18 November 2014].

[689] ibid.

increased. Turkey criticized Obama's policy of supporting Maliki, his sectarian rule and monopoly of power.[690] Meanwhile, the Obama administration realised that Turkish policy towards Iraq would be counterproductive.[691] To sum up, from 2003-to 2011, Turkey had been one of the challenges for U.S. policy towards Iraqi Kurdistan. Turkey continually exerted pressure on the U.S. to limit the role and position of the KRG in Iraq. However, after the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq there has been significant change in U.S. policy towards the KRI and its relations with Turkey changed again.

5.2.2 The U.S. Arab Allies: Challenges for U.S. Policy Towards Iraqi Kurdistan

5.2.2.1 Gulf States and U.S. Relations and Security

The other challenges compromising U.S.-Kurdish policy were linked to the U.S. Arab allied states in the region. The majority of Arab states have interests in Iraq and therefore in its territorial integrity. They aimed to prevent or limit the influence of Iran and strengthen the Sunni position. This political orientation to some extent affected the U.S. policy towards Iraq as a whole and the Kurdistan region in particular. The Arab Gulf states (United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Oman) are considered key U.S. allies and partners contributing to stability and security in the region.[692] Furthermore, the GCC states have a strategic position in terms of geopolitics and economy in the region.[693] Most of them are located in the Persian Gulf region, which has over the 50% of the globe's oil reserves and 'a third of its natural gas'.[694] Possession of huge oil recourses and their strategic geopolitical location have constantly increased their importance for the U.S. and other rival powers in the MEA.[695] The

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[690] Knights, 'Coordinating U.S. and Turkish Policy on Iraq'.

[691] ibid.

[692] H. M. Jackson, 'Overview Of united States Of America' national Security Strategy 2009', *University of Washington,* 2009, pp. 20-22. <https://digital.lib.washington.edu/researchworks/bitstream/handle/1773/4635/TF_SIS495E_2009.pdf?sequence=1> [accessed 22 November 2014].

[693] M. El-Katiri, 'United States-Gulf Cooperation council Security Cooperation in a Multipolar World' , (The Strategic Studies Institute (SSI), October 2014,) pp. 15. http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=1225 [accessed November 22, 2014].

[694] ibid., 1.

[695] ibid., pp. 9-21

report of the Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS), published in 2002, stressed the role of oil as a key motivation for U.S. military presence in the Gulf region.[696] The report argued that "The U.S. presence in the Gulf is primarily intended to maintain the flow of oil by preventing a hostile power from establishing hegemony over the region".[697] On the same note, Mearsheimer argues that the GCC states are strategically vital for U.S. interests due to having oil resources and in this regard the U.S. has to guarantee the security of the flow of oil.[698] He continued by saying that:

> The Persian Gulf is strategically important because it produces roughly 30 percent of the world's oil, and it holds about 55 percent of the world's crude-oil reserves. If the flow of oil from that region were stopped or even severely curtailed for a substantial period of time, it would have a devastating effect on the world economy.[699]

Since 1930 there have been strong ties between Saudi Arabia and the U.S..[700] The U.S. administrations have considered Saudi Arabia as key factor in the stability of the price and secure flow of oil.[701] In return, for the Arab Gulf States, the U.S. has been a vital ally that has supported them politically and economically, as well as being one of their critical foreign allies in terms of security.[702] Moreover, the U.S. by deploying its military forces in the region has defended and armed them against external and regional menaces.[703] These shared interests between both sides have affected the U.S. policy in the region and its constant attempts to maintain the interests of these states in the Middle East and Iraq.

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[696] Quoted in Gendzier, 'Oil, Iraq and US Foreign Policy in the Middle East', pp. 18-19

[697] Quoted in ibid., pp. 18-19.

[698] J.J. Mearsheimer, 'America unhinged.' *The National Interest* 129 (2014): 9-30.

[699] ibid.

[700] Kaim, *Great powers and regional orders: the United States and the Persian Gulf,* pp. 66-67. It is notable that many Arab lobbies have been established in the U.S. to preserve the Arabian countries goals such as 'National Association of Arab Americans' (NAAA), 'American- Arab Anti-discrimination Committee' (ADC), and the 'Arab -American institute' (AAI). The impact and influence of these groups is considerably lower compared with the impact of the Israel lobbies. Diversity, differences and luck of unity of goals are major impediments and challenge which declined the influence of these lobbies. See, McCormick (ed.), *Ethnic Interests Groups in US Foreign Policy*, p. 73-74.; Hastedt, American *foreign policy: past, present, future*, p. 146.

[701] ibid., pp. 66-67.

[702] Katiri, 'United States-Gulf Cooperation Council Security Cooperation in a Multipolar World', pp. 15.

[703] ibid., pp. 1-5.

5.2.2.2 Arab Gulf States, the U.S. and The Kurdistan Region

In the 1990s, the Arab states strongly supported U.S. policy in Iraq and the Middle East and the U.S. depended on these states to maintain stability in the region[704] and expel Saddam's regime from Kuwait.[705] Moreover, the Clinton administration, which saw Iran and Iraq as a threat to its national interests in the region, by relying on its allies especially Arab states, pursued a 'dual containment' policy towards both states.[706] After the events of 11 September 2001 and the change of U.S. policy towards Iraq and the preparation for regime change through military intervention, the U.S. tried to gain the support of the Arab states. The U.S. administration argued that regime change would contribute to regional stability and to the spread of democracy in the Middle East.[707] As previously discussed, the U.S. administration thought that the removal of Saddam's regime would lead to more pressure on Iran, Syria and other rogue states in the MEA and enhance U.S. regional hegemony.

However, the majority of U.S. Arab allies had a different perspective regarding regime change in Iraq. They stressed that there was no threat from Iraq and they raised concerns regarding the political ramifications of this war against Iraq on the stability and security of the region,[708] Therefore, in contrast to U.S. policy, they demanded a political solution to the crisis.[709] Within this context, the Arab League summit held in Sharm el-sheik in Egypt on 1 March 2003, by rejecting any U.S. military intervention in Iraq, stressed that "threaten of territorial integrity of any Arab states consider threat to the national interest of Arab as a whole".[710] The Arab states during the summit highlighted that an Iraqi war would pose a serious threat to the stability and security of

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[704] Katiri, 'United States-Gulf Cooperation Council Security Cooperation in a Multipolar World' pp. 1-9.

[705] U.S. Senate, 'The Gulf Security Architecture: Partnership With The Gulf Cooperation Council' (a majority staff report prepared for the use of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, One Hundred Twelfth Congress, Second Session, Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 2012), PP. 7-8.

[706] ibid., pp. 7-8

[707] C. Rice., 'Transforming the Middle East'.

[708] R. Kahwaji, 'U. S.-Arab Cooperation in the Gulf: Are Both Sides Working From the Same Script?' *Middle East Policy* vol.11, no.3 (2004), p. 55.

[709] *Qerarat Mjles Jameat Al-Arabiya Ala Mstawa Al-Quwma- Al- Dwret Al-Adadiya (15) Sherm Al-Shikh.* 15, *Mjles Jameat Al-Arabiya,* (Egypt (Sherm Al-Shikh): 1 March 2003,), , <http://www.gn4me.com/las/arabic/details_ar.jsp?art_id=1857&level_id=236> [accessed 22 November 2014].

[710] ibid

the region and the entire world and wanted a peaceful settlement to the crisis.[711] Moreover, the summit appealed for the Security Council of the UN to take responsibility to maintain the territorial integrity of Iraq and its sovereignty.[712] On the same note, in February 2003, Saud al-Faisal the Saudi foreign minister warned the U.S. regarding the consequences of overthrowing Saddam's regime through military intervention, arguing that this would be "solving one problem and creating five more".[713]

As U.S. Arab allies expected, the fall of Saddam's regime in 2003 created significant internal and external political consequences. With respect to the Iraqi domestic fallout, after 2003 the Kurds and Shia become new key actors in Iraq and the role of Arab Sunnis declined.[714] In the same direction, this change caused regional consequences and shifted the political equation and balance of power. Before 2003, Iraq was one of the key actors in maintaining the regional balance of power against Iran,[715] and the toppling of Saddam's regime led to a change in the balance of power in the Gulf region in favor of Iran.[716]

The consequences of regime change in Iraq were unacceptable to the Sunni Arabs as well as to the Arab states in the region; therefore they refused to engage in the political process and started an insurgency campaign against U.S. forces.[717] Later this insurgency turned into a civil war between Shia and Sunnis between 2005 and 2007.[718] In this regard, there were some major reasons which pushed Arab Sunnis to refuse the new political process which can be summarized in the following points. Firstly, the Sunni Arabs following the removal of Saddam's regime lost the authority and privileges they had previously enjoyed.[719] Secondly, they were uncomfortable with the rise of the role of Shias and Kurds in the new Iraq and of their hegemony over the new government.[720] Thirdly, they believed that the new Iraqi states were under Iranian and U.S. control and

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[711] *Qerarat Mjles Jameat Al-Arabiya Ala Mstawa Al-Quwma- Al- Dwret Al-Adadiya (15) Sherm Al-Shikh.* 15, *Mjles Jameat Al-Arabiya.*

[712] ibid.

[713] N. Obaid, ,'Stepping Into Iraq,' *The Washington Post* 29 November 2006.

[714] F. Al-Smadi, "Al-Iraq Fi Alestratigiyet Aliraniyat: Tnami Hajs Al-Amn W Tarajeh Al-Fres ", *Merkez Derasat Al-Jezeera,* 10 July 2014, <http://studies.aljazeera.net/reports/2014/07/201471019162549695.htm> [accessed 22 November 2014].

[715] Blanchard et al., Iraq: Regional Perspectives and US Policy, pp. 1-3.

[716] F. Wehrey et al., *The Iraq effect: the Middle East after the Iraq War,* ,pp. 18-26 .

[717] Eisenstadt and White, *Assessing Iraq's Sunni Arab Insurgency,* pp. 1-37.

[718] See Katzman, *Iraq: Politics, governance, and human rights*, 1-45.

[719] Eisenstadt and White, *Assessing Iraq's Sunni Arab Insurgency,* pp. 1-37.

[720] ibid., pp. 1-37.

this posed a threat to the Arab Sunni world. Fourthly, they strongly refused the new Iraqi constitution drafted in 2005. [721]

On the same note, the Arab states' response to the toppling of the Saddam regime and new consequences in early 2003 was negative.[722] Despite the differences among the Arab states, there had been some common points of agreement regarding Iraq and its political system especially after 2003. Firstly, they welcomed the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq and the end of the occupation.[723] Secondly, they all supported the territorial integrity of Iraq and confronted any attempts that tried to divide Iraq[724] by arguing that Iraqi identity is Arabic.[725] Thirdly, in an attempt to reinforce the position of Arab Sunnis, the Arab states tried to prevent the hegemony of the Shias over Iraq by arguing that this would favor the Iranian influence in the area posing a serious threat to Arab states, as they indicated in the 'hilal Shiai'.[726]

Regarding the Kurdistan region and its demands, the U.S. Arab allies have had a negative stance towards Iraqi Kurdistan and have tried to prevent the improvement of the Kurdish position. The Arab states raised their concerns regarding the federal system in Iraq which was one of the major Kurdish demands. In this regard the Secretary of the Arab League Amro Moussa, described the fixed Federalism in the Iraqi constitution as a "danger and a recipe for chaos".[727] Moreover, the Arab states did not recognize the KRI and its people as part of Kurdistan and they stressed the Arab identity of Iraq, refusing an article in the Iraqi constitution which considers only the Arab part of Iraq as a part of the Arab nation. Within this context, during his speech in the parliament of Kurdistan, Amro Moussa stressed the Arab identity of Iraqi Kurdistan as a part of Iraq and the Arab world. Moussa also emphasized that Iraq is a member of the Arab League and therefore was committed to its principles and its decisions.[728] Also the Secretary of

[721] Eisenstadt and White, *Assessing Iraq's Sunni Arab Insurgency,* pp. 1-37.

[722] A. A. Shaban, 'Jamat Al-Arabiyat We Ezmat Al-Iraq', *aljazeera,* 18 June 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.net> [22 November 2014].

[723] *Qerarat Jameat Al-Dowel Al-Arabiya Ala Mostwal Al-Qema, Dewrat Adiya (17) Algeria .* (Egypt: Jameat Al-dowel Al-arabiya, March 23, 2005), p 110, http://www.lasportal.org/wps/portal/las_ar/home_page/ [accessed 17 January 2014

[724] Ibid.,p. 110.

[725] K R G, *Nas Klmat Al-Seid Amro Musa Fi Al-Perleman Al-Kurdistani*, (*KRG,* 24 October, 2005)<http://www.krg.org/a/d.aspx?a=6977&l=14&r=81&s=010000>[accessed 23 November 2014].

[726] Xalid, *Moshkelat Al-Manateq Al-Motanazeh Alaiha Fi Al-Iraq, Aqlim Kurdistan Nemozejan,* p. 200.

727, *Iraq a* 'recipe for chaos, (BBC News, 29 August 2005) <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/4194214.stm> [accessed 22 November 2014].

[728] K R G, *Nas Klmat Al-Seid Amro Musa Fi Al-Perleman Al-Kurdistani* , (*KRG,* 24 October 2005) <http://www.krg.org/a/d.aspx?a=6977&l=14&r=81&s=010000> [accessed 23 November 2014].

the Arab League criticized the fact that Sunni demands regarding the Arab identity of Iraq are not included in the constitution.[729] In response, however, Jalal Talabani, the president of Iraq and a Kurdish leader described this perspective as partial in reflecting Iraqi realities.[730] Talabani emphasized that:

> The other [Arab constitutions] do not have this text…Why do they not make such a demand from Sudan? Why this insistence on demanding it from Iraq? They know Iraq is a multinational country.[731]

He continued by saying that the Arab League supported mostly Arab Sunnis.[732] However regarding Kirkuk and holding a referendum in the disputed areas in accordance with the Iraqi constitution, Arab countries in the Middle East support Iraqi Sunni Arabs who are against the implementation of Article 140.[733]

Furthermore, U.S. Arab allies had constantly warned against any attempts aimed at the partition of Iraq into federal regions or independent states. During the height of the sectarian conflict in 2005-2007 between Shia and Sunnis, the regional states, especially, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the Sunni Arab world strongly rejected this senate resolution proposed by Joe Biden for a division of the country into three regions,[734] because they considered it a serious threat to their national interests. Moreover, most of the Arab states argued that this decision was the first stage in a U.S.-Israel project for the future partition of the Arab world.[735] On the same note, the Arab League and the GCC underlined that the partition of Iraq was unacceptable and asked to maintain its territorial integrity and its Arabic identity.[736] The GCC states, in a statement rejecting the Senate decision, argued that it would provoke separatism in the region and therefore they stressed maintaining the territorial integrity of Iraq and its people.[737] Moreover, many Arab security officers rejected this idea as one of the major threats to their national interests. In this regard, Sheikh Ahmed al-Fahd al-Sabah, Kuwait's National

729 L. Beehner, 'IRAQ: Iraqi Leaders Voicing Anger at Arab Neighbours', *The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR)* <http://www.cfr.org/iraq/iraq-iraqi-leaders-voicing-anger-arab-neighbors/p8842.

[730] M. Moran, 'The Arab League and Iraq', *The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR),* October 20, 2005, <http://www.cfr.org/iraq/arab-league-iraq/p9061> [accessed 12 November 2014].

[731] ibid.

[732] ibid.

[733] Nasri and Salimi, *The Politics of Kirkuk: Policy Implication for Iran*, p. 87.

[734] E. P. Joseph and M. E. O'Hanlon, 'The Case for Soft Partition in Iraq' *The Saban Centre at Brooking Institution* vol.12 (June 2007), pp.1-41.

[735] Hetuti, *Duzi Kurd La Iraq Wa Mechanizmakani Charasarkerdni- Dwaye 2003*, pp. 205-206.

[736] ibid., pp.205-206.

[737] ibid., pp.205-206.

Council chief underlined that Kuwait had a serious concern about the situation in Iraq. He argued that:

> We fear three things in Iraq. First, we fear the partitioning of Iraq, because Kuwait wants the unity of Iraq. Second, we fear that Iraq might slide into a civil war in any shape or form. Third, we fear a sectarian war.[738]

On the same note, Saud al-Faisal Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia, in January 2007 stressed that it was vital to prevent the division of Iraq and that the partition of this state would damage the Iraqi people who for a long time have faced tragedy due to the conflict.[739] He continued, "For Saudi Arabia, a partition of Iraq is inconceivable. It is essential to avoid it ... This breakup would first of all hurt Iraqis, who have suffered decades of the conflict".[740]

It is notable that there have been a variety of reasons which have pushed Arab states to reject the partition of Iraq and have considered it to be the key threat to their national interests and to the Arab world. The Arab states viewed Iraq, including Iraqi Kurdistan, as part of the Arab world and the Kurds as a minority in Iraq without recognizing Iraq's historical and geographical reality. As discussed previously, Iraq was an artificial state born from the political settlement after World War I, and in this context Kurdistan was never a part of Arab Iraq. Moreover, the Arab states supported the Arab Sunnis in an attempt to increase their power in Iraq.[741] Therefore, they believed that the partition or federalization of Iraq would economically damage the Arab Sunnis' position, because the most natural resources and oil fields are located in Iraqi Kurdistan and in Shia dominated areas, and any partition means a loss of their oil revenue.[742]

Additionally, the Arab Sunni states were concerned that a partition of Iraq based on sectarian and ethnic lines would finish Iraq as a political entity and create Shia Islamic states, and this might encourage the Shia minority in other Sunni Arab states to claim

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[738] Quoted in D. Pollock (ed.), 'With Neighbors Like These Iraq and the Arab States on Its Borders' (Washington: the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, June 2007), pp. 14-15.<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/with-neighbors-like-these-iraq-and-the-arab-states-on-its-borders> [accessed 23 November 2014] .

[739] D. Pollock (ed.), *With Neighbors like These Iraq and the Arab States on Its Borders* , pp. 3340.

[740] The Jerusalem Post, *Worried about Iraq, Saudi official heads for Iran talks*The Jerusalem Post, <http://www.jpost.com/Iranian-Threat/News/Worried-about-Iraq-Saudi-official-heads-for-Iran-talks> [accessed 23 November 2014].

[741] P. Edward . Joseph and M.E. O'Hanlon., 'The Case for Soft Partition in Iraq', (The Saban Centre at Brooking Institution, 12 (2007) .pp1-41.

[742] ibid., pp1-41.

political and economic recognition, or even independence.[743] In this regard King Abdullah of Jordan warned that an incursion of Iran and the creation of a Shia Islamic state in Iraq would pose a new threat to other Arab Sunni moderate states in the region. He argued that this situation would lead to the creation of a 'Shiite crescent' supported by Iran stretching from Iran to Lebanon.[744]

However the U.S. administration's attempts and pressures to engage its Arab allies in the Iraqi political process from 2004 onwards increased and were more successful in gaining Arab state cooperation, partly because Iraq was spiraling out of control at that time. The U.S.' main goals were to maintain stability, confront the Sunni insurgency, contain Iran's influence in Iraq and support the democratic system in the country. As a result of these pressures from 2005 onwards, the Arab states' position witnessed some flexibility towards the political process in Iraq. In February 2005 the Arab League welcomed the democratic process and the participation of people in Iraqi elections.[745] Moreover, in October 2005 the head of the Arab League, Amro Mosa visited Iraq and Kurdistan and indicated its willingness to recognize the KRG and the Kurdistan parliament.[746] In return, president Barzani stressed that the Kurds would commit to maintaining the territorial integrity of Iraq under the framework of a democratic state.[747] During his visit to Iraq and Kurdistan, the Arab League Secretary-General Amro Mosa also announced an initiative of reconciliation in Iraq and supported the new political process. This Arab initiative coincided with the rise of the sectarian conflict and mutual accusations between Iran and some Arab states of intervention in Iraqi internal affairs.[748] For its part, the U.S. administration supported the initiative and argued that this step would lessen Iraqi concerns regarding the Arab world's indifferent stance

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[743] N. Mohammed 'Dowel Al-Khlij Al-Arabi We Al-Esteqrar Alemni Fi Aliraq,' *Merkez Derasat Al-Dewli (Iraq Academic Scientific Journals)* vol.42 (, http://www.iasj.net/iasj?func=fulltext&aId=60805 [accessed 23 November 2014]. p. 48.

[744] D. Schenker (ed.), 'Jordan: Keeping All Quiet on the Western Front' (Washington: the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, June 2007), P. 24 <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/with-neighbors-like-these-iraq-and-the-arab-states-on-its-borders?> [accessed 23 November 2014].

[745] Xalid, *Moshkelat Al-Manateq Al-Motanazeh Alaiha Fi Al-Iraq, Aqlim Kurdistan Nemozejan,* p . 203.

[746] KRG, *Amro Mosa: Al- Jamea Al-Arabiya Mostaeda Lel-Taamel Mea Hkumet Aqlim Kurdstan We Perlemaneho* (Erbil: KRG, 23 October 2005) <http://www.krg.org/a/d.aspx?a=6944&l=14&r=81&s=010000> [accessed 20 November 2014].

[747] ibid.; K R G, *Aqlim Kurdistan We Al-Eteraf Al-Hekim Le-Emro Mosa* (Erbil: KRG, October 25, 2005) http://www.krg.org/a/d.aspx?a=7001&l=14&r=84&s=010000 [accessed 21 November 2014].

[748] M. B. Al-Shishani, 'Arab League Initiative for Peace in Iraq', *Arab News,* 17 October 2005, http://www.arabnews.com/node/274697?quicktabs_stat2=1 [accessed 22 November 2014].

towards the development of Iraq.[749] Department of State spokesman Sean McCormack argued that "we have urged Iraq's neighbors as well as other countries in the region lend their diplomatic support to the Iraqi people and the Iraqi government".[750]

Furthermore, between 2006 and 2008, U.S. pressure on the regional states and the U.S.' Arab allies have increasingly raised the need for support for stability in Iraq and in the fight against sectarian war. Within this framework, the U.S. administration aimed to find a regional solution to the Iraqi crisis by taking into account the interests and concerns of these states, even if it was at the expense of the Kurdistan region. The Baker-Hamilton report and some of its recommendations which later became part of the Bush and Obama policies towards Iraq clearly showed how U.S. policy regarding Iraq and Kurdistan was influenced by the perspective of its regional allies including Arab states. This report asked the U.S. to make changes to the Iraqi constitution and it invited the U.S. to establish a strong central government at the expense of the federal region, including the KRG.[751] In this regard, it proposed that the policies regarding natural resources, including oil, should be determined only by the central government.[752] Moreover, it recommended postponing the referendum in Kirkuk and the disputed areas. Also it proposed the rejection of the partition and federalization of Iraq by arguing that these steps led to endless sectarian and ethic war in the country.[753] Additionally, it paid more attention to the Arab Sunnis' community in Iraq, in an effort to integrate it into the political process.[754] Finally, the report demanded the setting out of an explicit timetable for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq in order to reassure the regional states that the U.S. would not establish permanent military bases in the country.[755] Examining these recommendations it can be concluded that the majority of them reflected the perspectives of the Arab Sunnis, U.S. Arab allies and regional states at the expense of the KRG and its demands in Iraq and in this regard the U.S. policy was influenced by the position of its allies in the region.

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[749] Al-Shishani, 'Arab League Initiative for Peace in Iraq'.

[750] IIP, *State Department Spokesman Sean McCormack Briefed The Pres October 3 ", State Department's Bureau of International Information Programs (IIP),* (3 October 2005, <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/texttrans/2005/10/20051003165657xrsmada0.5150415.html#axzz3IZjaMvek> [accessed 23 November 2014].

[751] For more information see; Iraq Study Group (US) et al., Iraq Study Group Report: The Way Forward-a New Approach.

[752] ibid.

[753] ibid.

[754] ibid.

[755] ibid.

The withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq coincided with the 'Arab Spring'[756], which seemed to bring a massive transformation in the Middle East and the Islamic world. From 2011 onwards, there have been sharp sectarian divisions in the region manifested in the Shia and Sunni conflict. The Sunni axis, led by the Arab states and Turkey confronted the Shia axis led by Iran its allies. This sectarian struggle took place mostly in Iraq and Syria.[757] It can be argued that these divisions and the sectarian war to some extent affected and changed the Arab states' and policy towards Kurdistan even regarding the federalization of Iraq. They understood that a strong central government had led to the hegemony of the Shia and Iranians over the whole of Iraq and this changed the Arab Gulf states' perspective with regard to the Kurdistan region, especially from 2012-2015. (The next chapter explains this new Arab position towards the KRI in more detail.)

5.2.3 U.S.-Iran Competition in Iraq

After the fall of Saddam's regime in 2003, one of the other key challenges to the U.S. policy to transform Iraq into a reliable democratic and strategic partner has been the role and influence of Iran in Iraq. In this regard the U.S. and Iran have had a conflict of interests and objectives in Iraq. While the U.S. wanted to make Iraq a strategic partner to control the Middle East and enhance its hegemony, Iran's major goal was to expand its influence in Iraq and prevent Iraq from being a U.S. ally threatening Iranian interests in the region. The conflict and competition between both sides has directly affected U.S. policy towards Kurdistan and Iraq as a whole. In other words, the prospect of a struggle between the U.S. and Iran had ramifications for the Kurdish position and its demands in Iraq. With the rise of the role of Iran in Iraq and an expansion of its influence among Shia religious groups, this pushed the U.S. to support the Kurdistan region as a secular and pro-democratic ally in Iraq and in this regard the U.S. showed a flexible posture towards Kurdish demands for limited federalism in Iraq.

It is remarkable that the key Iranian objectives in Iraq from 2003 to 2011 mostly concentrated on forcing the U.S. and the coalition forces to withdraw their troops from

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[756] See J. Davis, Professor, *The Arab Spring and Arab Thaw: Unfinished Revolutions and the Quest for Democracy*, Newition edn (GB: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2013).

[757] Arango et al , 'T. Arango et al., 'As Syrians Fight, Sectarian Strife Infects Mideast,' *New York Times* 1 June 2013.

Iraq. In this regard F. Gregory Gause, argued that "The Iranians want us to withdraw in embarrassment and shame...It's a threat to them [Iran] if we can consolidate our position [in the Middle East]".[758] Kenneth M. Pollack argued that Iran wanted to expel the U.S. from Iraq because it was concerned that the U.S. would use Iraq as base to confront and attack Iran. As he put it, the Iranians feared "the re-emergence of a strong, unified, anti-Iranian Iraq—in effect, a recreation of Saddam Husayn's regime".[759] However, in addition, Iran saw that a U.S. withdrawal from Iraq would strengthen its own position.[760] In this regard Iran tried to improve its ties with the Shia factions in Iraq and make them its key partners in Iraq and the Middle East.[761] Hence, Iran attempted to ensure that Shia-pro-Iranian factions were important in the Iraqi government.[762] (If Iran was successful, the U.S. might lose the capacity to confront Iran, especially considering that the major oilfields are located in Shia dominated areas.[763]) Furthermore, Iran during this period supported the federal system and distribution of power. Iran's purpose for this step was associated with the perspective which argued federalism would make Iraq weaker and prevent strong central authorities.[764] In this regard it wanted to guarantee that the new state in Iraq would not be a source of threat to its security.

Within this context, confrontation between the U.S. and Iran's allies from the Shia religion was visible, especially after the establishment of the interim government in Iraq.[765] The Shia did not recognize the TAL and intensified their efforts to draft a permanent constitution according to the democratic majority.[766] In this respect Ayatollah Sistani argued that "this law [TAL], which was written by a non-elected council under occupation, and under the direct influence of the occupation, would

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[758]Quoted in L. Beehner, 'Iran's Goals in Iraq', 23 February 2006, http://www.cfr.org/iran/irans-goals-iraq/p9930, [accessed June 2015].

[759] Quoted in ibid.

[760] K. M. Pollack, 'Prospects for Increased Iranian Influence in Iraq', (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 15 November 2011) <http://www.brookings.edu/research/testimony/2011/11/15-iran-iraq-pollack> [accessed June 2015].

[761] Beehner, 'Iran's Goals in Iraq'.

[762] ibid.

[763] P. Le Billon, 'Oil, Secession and the Future of Iraqi Federalism', *Middle East Policy Council,* Volume XXII, Number 1 (Spring 2015).; A. H. Cordesman, 'Dividing Iraq: Think Long and Hard First', (Washington, DC: CSIS (Centre for Strategic and International Studies),) <http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/060501_dividingiraq.pdf> [accessed 22 January 2015].

[764] ibid.

[765] D. Filkins and Weisman Steven R, 'he Reach Of War: Constitution; Kurds Threaten To Walk Away From Iraqi State, *'The New York Times*, 9 June 2004.

[766]D. Filkins and Weisman Steven R., 'The Reach Of War: Constitution; Kurds Threaten To Walk Away From Iraqi State,' *The New York Times* 9 June 2004.

constrain the national assembly". [767] He continued by saying that "It is rejected by the majority of the Iraqi people".[768] Hence, it can be noted that from 2003-2005, Iranian policy had concentrated on supporting its key Shia religious allies to participate in the democratic process, believing that the Shia were the majority and then Iran could maintain its interests in this way, rather than provoking the U.S. in Iraq. [769] As Pollack said, Iran saw that this approach would maintain its three key objectives which included "preventing an American attack from Iraq, preventing the re-emergence of a strong, anti-Iranian Iraq, and preventing chaos and civil war that would threaten Iran". [770]

It was remarkable that the Bush administration's attempts to establish a democratic system were in favour of Iran and its agenda in Iraq. This is because it leads to the emergence of a government in Baghdad that was dominated by the Shia pro-Iranian groups.[771] This following 2004 and after sovereignty was transferred to the Iraqi authorities.[772] In the first elections for the interim government which would then draft the permanent constitution in 2005, the Shia religious bloc (the United Iraqi Alliance) backed by Iran gained 140 seats.[773] The Kurdistan Alliance and the Iraqiya List, led by Iyad Allawi, got 75 and 40 seats respectively.[774] This election undermined the U.S.' ability to establish a stable and pro-western government in Baghdad.[775] In particular, the Shia bloc wanted to draft the Islamic constitution and create Islamic government in Iraq. This new development drove the U.S. to support the Kurds as the key U.S. secular ally against Iran and its influence in Iraq,[776] and confront all attempts which aimed at drafting Islamic constitution or attempts to restructure the political system in post-Saddam regime according to Islamic form. In this regards the U.S. and Kurds had shared interests to establish democratic and secular and pluralistic system in Baghdad. As consequences of these new political equations, the ties between the Kurds and the U.S. had advanced. Hence, Bush's administration's pressure on the Kurds had

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[767] Filkins and Weisman., 'The Reach Of War: Constitution; Kurds Threaten To Walk Away From Iraqi State'.

[768] ibid.

[769] Pollack, 'Prospects for Increased Iranian Influence in Iraq'.

[770] ibid.

[771] A.H. Cordesman and K. Sam, 'Iraq after US Withdrawal: US Policy and the Iraqi Search for Security and Stability'. (Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 2012), p. 35.

[772] ibid., p.35.

[773] ibid., p.35 .

[774] ibid. p.35.

[775] Ibid., pp.6-36.

[776] Rafaat, 'US-Kurdish relations in post-invasion Iraq'.

reduced,[777] and showed more flexibility regarding Kurdish demand for federalism by believing that backing Kurds would be in favour of the U.S. strategy to stabilize Iraq, contain influence of Iran and transform Iraq into strategic partners to control Middle East. However, dispute of this limited change, the U.S. stressed on maintaining territorial integrity of Iraq fearing that any partition would undermine its regional hegemony and would enhance the Iran position in Iraq.

From 2005-2008, Iranian military strategy changed and Iran started to supply and pay money to various groups especially Shia military factions, to attack U.S. troops in Iraq.[778] During the civil war (2006-2008) and the intensified sectarian conflict, Iran played the key role in supporting Shia military groups.[779] However, in 2008, the pro-Iranian military groups were defeated by the Maliki government and direct support for U.S. troops in Iraq.[780] This new development decreased the sectarian conflict and Iranian influence in Iraq.[781] These developments coincided with a change in U.S. policy towards Iraq, which mostly concentrated on maintaining and enhancing stability and the security of Iraq and boosting the capacity of its security forces and establishing a stable, strong and strategic partner in the government in Baghdad to confront the terrorist groups and tackle the Iranian influence.[782] In this regard, the U.S. believed that Maliki was under less influence from Iran, especially after defeating the Shia militants backed by Iran,[783] and therefore the U.S. in contrast to Iran backed the secular and nationalist factions.[784] During this period, despite the Maliki policy of violating the constitution, the U.S. supported him.[785] This U.S. policy was contrary to the Kurdish strategy, which stressed the need for a distribution of power throughout Iraq. Overall during this period one of the factors which pushed the U.S. administration to inclusively stress the territorial integrity of Iraq and keep the Kurds inside this state was also related to the role of Iran. The U.S. saw that breakup of Iraq would lead to domination of Iran over

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[777] see Galbraith, *The end of Iraq: How American incompetence created a war without end.*
[778] Pollack, *Prospects for Increased Iranian Influence in Iraq.;* Rafaat, 'US-Kurdish relations in post-invasion Iraq'.
[778] ibid.
[779] K. Kagan, 'The Second Iran-Iraq War', *Wall Street Journal,* 3 April 2008.
[780] Blanchard, Christopher. and others, *Iraq: Regional Perspectives and US Policy, p.* 18.
[781] ibid., 18.
[782] Cordesman and K. Sam, *Iraq after US Withdrawal: US Policy and the Iraqi Search for Security and Stability,* p.6.
[783] A. Khedery, ' Why we stuck with Maliki — and lost Iraq,' *Washington post,* 3 July 2014
[784] Cordesman and K. Sam, *Iraq After US Withdrawal: US Policy and the Iraqi Search for Security and Stability*, pp.36 -49.
[785] ibid., 36 -49.

Shia dominated areas and undermine the U.S. policy to create strategic partners in Baghdad and confront Iran policy in the region. (However, it was notable that with the election in Iraq in 2010 and then the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq, the Iranian influence again increased.[786]

Conclusion

During the period from 2003 to 2011, U.S. policy towards Iraq and the Kurdistan region was part of its wider strategy to maintain its strategic interests in the Middle East in particular its attempts to restructure the security system in the region. The U.S. took opportunities provided by its role as a sole hegemon and by the terrorist attacks of 2001 to topple one of the main anti-U.S. regimes in the region, Iraq. Within this framework, the U.S.-Kurdish policy was influenced by the success or otherwise of its aims in creating stability, securing of oil supplies and keeping Iran under control. They key to U.S. policy in taking Iraq under its control and making it a stable partner was that the territorial integrity of the country be preserved and as such, that the Kurds remain inside Iraq. An independent Kurdistan and a fragmented Iraq would lead to dramatic changes in the geopolitics of the region with the emergence of new states with new borders and a new regional security system. This is particularly the case since the majority of the states in the Middle East are considered multi-ethnic and multi-religious, including the U.S.' allies. Additionally, the U.S. administrations thought that the breakup of Iraq would spread instability throughout the region, including terrorist group activity. Moreover, during this period, to some extent, U.S. hegemonic power in Iraq and the region was in a strong position and it was able to influence Iraqi events and political processes and confront the Iranian influence. Therefore, in this regard, the Kurds had limited space to increase their power or challenge U.S. pressure.

Moreover, a U.S. policy in support of any secession movement such as backing Kurds in Iraq or the disintegration of the regional border would create a hostile alliance against its policy and hegemony in the Middle East from both its allies and regional states. In particular, during this period, the majority of the U.S.' allies in the region put pressure on the U.S. to limit the Kurdish position in Iraq. Arab states have strategic ties with the

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[786] Khedery, ' Why we stuck with Maliki — and lost Iraq'.

U.S. and therefore they affected the direction of U.S. policy towards Iraq and the KRG. The Arab states' major policy towards Iraq was to maintain the territorial integrity of the country, prevent the influence of Iran and strengthen the Sunni position. This political orientation to some extent affected U.S. policy towards Iraq as a whole and the Kurdistan region in particular. The Arab states strongly rejected the partition of Iraq and considered this partition as a key threat to their national interests. The Arab states believed that strengthening the position of the Kurds would push them to incorporate Kirkuk and the disputed areas into their region at the expense of Arab Sunnis in Iraq. At the same time, they feared that the partition of Iraq would provoke the Shia minority in Iraq and the Arab world to take the same steps towards self-determination and independence compromising their national interests.

Additionally, Turkey also had reasons to oppose any move to permanent Kurdish independence and Turkey remained crucial to U.S. strategy in the Middle East and therefore the shared interests between both sides influenced the direction of U.S. policy towards Kurdistan region. The U.S. has constantly paid attention to Turkish national interests, in particular, Turkish concerns in relation to the Kurdish issue. After the removal of Saddam's regime, Turkey continually exerted pressure on the U.S. to hinder any Kurdish attempt to expand its authority and incorporate Kirkuk and the disputed areas into the KRI, preventing the partition of Iraq by arguing that this step poses a major threat to its national interests and to the territorial integrity of the country.

However, despite the challenges which affected U.S.-Kurdish policy, and U.S.' position on maintaining Iraq as a unitary state, there was a relative change in U.S. policy towards the Kurdistan region. For example, the U.S. accepted the federalism formula as a solution to the Kurdish question within the framework of Iraq. This change was due to the emergence of the KRG as a key factor for U.S. strategy as, in particular since 2003 the competition between Iran and U.S. authorities increased. The Iran authorities during this stage backed Shia religious factions in Iraq. In this regards the U.S. saw that backing the Kurds (who are mostly secular) would prevent breakup of this country and stall the domination of Iran over the Shia dominated areas of Iraq.

From 2012 to 2015 there was a massive transformation in Iraq and the Middle East which have had profound impact over the U.S.-Kurdish policy. With the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq, the eruption of the Arab Spring and then the incursion of ISIL into Iraq in 2014, coupled with a rise in the role of Iran and Russia dramatically

affected U.S. policy in the region. During this sage the collapse of Iraqi security and the *de-facto* disintegration of this state, significantly altered the situation on the ground and the Kurds became a key element for the U.S. strategy to maintain its strategic interests in Iraq and the region.

Chapter 6: The U.S. Withdrawal from Iraq: Internal and External Factors Affecting U.S. Policy Towards the KRI (2012-2015)

Introduction

This chapter examines the Iraqi internal and external factors that affected U.S. policy towards the Kurdistan region from 2012-2015. It argues that during this stage, the U.S. perspective towards the Kurdish interests including creating an independent state changed, primarily because the situation on the ground significantly changed and the KRI came to be of strategic importance to the U.S.' strategy aimed at defending U.S. regional hegemony, confronting the expansion of ISIL, containing the influence of Iran and Shia militia in Iraq, maintaining stability and keeping access to oil.

In this regard it can be argued that since 2014 there has been a significant change in U.S. policy towards Kurdish aspirations in Iraq for more power, Kirkuk and the disputed areas, a Kurdish independent state and the prospect of creating a Kurdish independent state, has reached an unprecedented level. This is because of the accelerated transformations and developments in Iraq and the region, have transformed the KRG into the U.S. strategic and reliable partner and the Kurds have become key actors for the U.S. strategy in Iraq and region.

The deterioration of security in Iraq and the collapse of this state and its military forces in 2014 created a serious threat to U.S. national interests in Iraq and the region. The U.S. fears that Iraq would be a key area for terrorist groups to expand their activity throughout the region. Furthermore, the deterioration of security has lead to the expansion of Iran and its affiliated Shia militia in Iraq at the expense of the U.S., this new development has been jeopardized and has wasted the U.S. ambition to establish a strong unified Iraq and has created a serious threat to U.S. national interests. In particular, Iraq has *de-facto* disintegrated into three different entities which it is difficult to stabilise it.

These new developments have pushed the U.S. to back the KRI as a last area of its zone of influence in Iraq and the U.S. has showed more flexibility regarding the Kurdish

demands for self-determination. Moreover, with the deterioration of stability and Baghdad's loss of influence in northern Iraq, this has led the KRG to become a new energy supply in Iraq. In this regard the KRG controlled Kirkuk and the disputed areas which have considerable oil and gas and by this way has become a new energy supply affecting the global market.

Furthermore, with the expansion of ISIL in the region, the rise in the role of Russia, China and Iran has created a serious threat to U.S. regional hegemony and its core interests, which are manifested in securing the flow of oil, confronting terrorist groups and preventing hostile states from imposing hegemony in the region. Hence, the role and position of Kurdistan as a stable and reliable U.S. ally in the region has increased and it has become a factor which has contributed to U.S. strategy to defend its regional hegemony in the region and maintain stability. These accelerated transformations have coincided with the change of perspectives of Turkey and Arabs towards the KRI, which has positively affected U.S. policy. All these factors have pushed the U.S. to work closely with the Kurds, support the KRG publicly and discuss broadly the possible partition of Iraq and the emergence of the Kurdish state. This was because the U.S. needed Kurdish stability, support and troops to secure the supply oil to the global market and maintain its regional hegemony.

In order to extensively scrutinize the internal and external driving factors affecting U.S. policy towards the KRI, the structure of this chapter will be as follows. Firstly, the author will try to examine the ramifications of the Maliki's turn to authoritarian rule and deterioration of security in Iraq and its impact upon the direction of U.S. policy towards Kurdistan. In this regard, the author will try to demonstrate how and why the collapse of security and stability in Iraq affected U.S. policy in Iraq and Kurdistan. Secondly, the author will explain the emergence of the KRG as a new energy supply and the ramifications of U.S. policy towards the KRI. Additionally, the author will examine the strategy of the KRG in improving the energy sector, using it as a tool to influence the regional and international perspective towards the Kurdish. Thirdly, the chapter will concentrate on the declining U.S. regional hegemony in the region and the role of the KRI as a reliable ally contributing to U.S. hegemony. Fourthly, the author will look at Iranian domination over Iraq and its implications for U.S. policy towards Iraq and Kurdistan. Finally, the chapter will examine the new perspective of the U.S. allies in the

region including Turkey and the Arab Gulf States and their impact on U.S. policy towards the KRI.

6.1. Maliki's Turn to Authoritarian Rule

From 2012 to 2015, Iraq witnessed accelerated developments which have influenced the political equations in Iraq and the region. For example, in this period U.S. foreign policy went through an even more critical phase than during the civil war period (2006-08). The withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq, Maliki's turn to authoritarian rule, the rise of sectarian conflict and the collapse of Iraqi security, due to the incursion of ISIL into Iraq constitute the most important factors that have dominated and influenced the Iraqi political equations. Nouri al-Maliki, who was elected for the second term as Iraqi Prime Minister in December 2010, pursued two crucial policies in order to maintain his power. These policies involved marginalizing the Kurds and targeting Sunni Arabs.[787] Soon after the withdrawal of U.S. troops, at the end of 2011, he issued a warrant against Tariq al-Hashemi the vice president of Iraq and a main figure in Sunni politics, accusing him of supporting terrorist groups in Iraq.[788] On the same note, in December 2012 Nouri al-Maliki targeted a senior Sunni figure, Rafi al-Issawi, the finance minister accusing him of the same crime.[789] This provoked protests in Sunni dominant cities, increasing sectarian polarization,[790] and causing the deterioration of security in Iraq. Furthermore, Nouri al-Maliki had pursued the same policy towards Kurdistan and the confrontation reached the highest level in November 2012 in particular, after the central government tried to deploy military forces in the disputed areas.[791]

In a presentation at the Washington Institute on 10 April 2012, Masoud Barzani stressed that the major factor of political crisis and instability in Iraq was the monopolization of power by Prime Minister Maliki.[792] Masoud Barzani said that the Iraqi constitution had

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[787] Gunter, 'The Kurdish Spring', pp. 445-446.

[788] ibid., pp. 445-446.

[789] Al Jazeera, *Maliki's Dilemma: The Crisis of the System of Quotas and Exclusion* (‘29 January 2013) <http://studies.aljazeera.net/en/positionpapers/2013/01/201312885617985214.htm> [accessed 4 February 2014].

[790] ibid.

[791] Gunter, 'The Kurdish Spring', p. 446.

[792] M. Barzani, *Iraqi Kurdistan as U.S. Ally and Partner in the Middle East*, (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, April 10, 2012) < http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/iraqi-kurdistan-as-u.s.-ally-and-partner-in-the-middle-east> [accessed 6 February 2014].

been violated and a single person monopolized power in central government.[793] In order to discuss this situation, on 4 April 2012 Masoud Barzani was received officially by Barak Obama. During this meeting, the U.S. officially declared its commitment to the Kurdistan region and confirmed its "strategic partnership with a federal, democratic and unified Iraq".[794]President Obama and Vice President Biden asked Barzani to play a decisive role in the construction of the democratic process in light of the permanent constitution.[795] It is notable that there have been skeptical opinions inside the U.S. administration, especially in Congress with regard to Nouri al-Maliki's sectarian policy, because they argued that this policy would increase instability in the country.[796]

In effect, the Kurds have had concerns that the Maliki policy would turn Iraq into a dictatorial system,[797] and therefore the Kurdish authorities asked Iraqi politicians to tackle these challenges and threatened that they would turn to the Kurdish people for a referendum if there was not a real solution to the Maliki policy.[798]

In this regard, the fall of Mosul and other Sunni Arab areas into the hands of ISIL, on 9-10 June 2014,[799] can be considered a 'game changer' in providing greater opportunities for the Kurds to move towards independence, by limiting U.S. influence over Iraqi politics and the KRG. This event raised Kurdish aspirations for the creation of their own state, as demonstrated by the holding of a referendum for self-determination. The Kurdistan Region's authorities described these new events as a 'new reality' in Iraq and asked the U.S. to pursue a new strategy in the face of these new events.[800] On this basis, on 23 June 2014, Masoud Barzani in an interview with CNN

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[793] Barzani, *Iraqi Kurdistan as U.S. Ally and Partner in the Middle East*.

[794] The White House, *Readout of the President and Vice President's Meeting with Kurdistan Regional Government President Masoud Barzani*, (4 April 2012), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/04/05/readout-president-and-vice-presidents-meeting-kurdistan-regional-governm> [accessed 6 February 2014].

[795] ibid.

[796] New York Times, 'Senators' Letter to President Obama on Iraq*', New York Times* (29 October 2013).

[797] M. Barzani, *On Eve of the Kurdish New Year, President Barzani Delivers Key Address,* (ERBIL: KRP, 20 March 2012). <http://www.presidency.krd/english/articledisplay.aspx?id=4AMvH/2OmcM=> [accessed 5 July 2014.

[798] ibid.

[799] The House Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Terrorist March in Iraq: The U.S. Response,* 113–190 vols (Washington: The House Committee on Foreign Affairs, 23 July 2014) <http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/hearing/hearing-terrorist-march-iraq-us-response> [accessed June 2015].

[800] F. Hussein, and M. B. Falah, *Iraq's crisis and the KRG*, (The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 11 July 2014), <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/iraqs-crisis-and-the-krg> [accessed 30 July, 2014].

stressed that the Kurdish leadership would consult the Kurdish people about their future. He argued: "the time is here for the Kurdistan people to determine their future and the decision of the people is what we are going to uphold".[801] In another interview with BBC 1 in July 2014, he reiterated this point and argued that the KRG would hold a referendum in a few months.[802] Talking about the Kurdish right to independence, Barzani argued that the Kurds have the right to be independent and they cannot conceal this objective.[803] Barzani on 3 July 2014 formally asked the Kurdistan parliament to accelerate its efforts to set a date for holding the referendum.[804]

Moreover, on the external level, the Kurdistan region sent a delegation to Washington to discuss the new situation and developments in Iraq and Kurdistan with the U.S. authorities. Fouad Hussein, Chief of Staff to the Presidency of the Kurdistan Region, who was heading the delegation, argued that the KRG closely discussed Kurdish self-determination with the U.S. officers. He made it clear that the KRG would hold a referendum in Kurdistan and that its implementation would depend on the KRG's policy and on developments in the region.[805]

Many reasons pushed the KRG to intensify its efforts to move away from Iraq and to persuade the international community to support its intention to hold a referendum on self-determination. The first reason was related to the new reality which emerged after the capture of Mosul by ISIL. The Iraqi army was expelled from the Sunni areas by ISIL and other Sunni armed groups.[806] As a consequence, the Kurdistan region does not have a border with Iraq but with ISIL. Iraqi Kurdistan now has a 1,035 kilometre border with ISIL and only 15 with the Iraqi government since 80% of the Iraqi army has collapsed.[807]

The second reason is associated with the relationship between the Iraqi government and the Kurdistan region, especially during Maliki's presidency. The central

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[801] M. Barzani, *President of Iraqi Kurdistan Region Masoud Barzani Interview with CNN.* (23 June 2014) <http://amanpour.blogs.cnn.com/2014/06/23/exclusive-iraqi-kurdish-leader-says-the-time-is-here-for-self-determination/>[accessed 30 July, 2014].

[802] M. Barzani, *President of Iraqi Kurdistan Region Masoud Barzani Interview with BBC,* (July 1 2014), <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-28103124>[accessed 30 July, 2014].

[803] ibid.

[804] KRP, *Seroky Haremi Kurdistan, Seredani parlamani kurdistan dekat*(Erbil:KRP,July3,2014)http://www.krp.org/kurdish/articledisplay.aspx?id=gsSF/+/GbjU= [accessed 26 July, 2014].

[805] F. Hussein, *Chief of Staff to the Presidency of the Kurdistan Region Interview with Rudaw,* (July 3 2014), <http://rudaw.net/sorani/kurdistan/0307201424>[accessed 26 July, 2014].

[806] Hussein and Falah, I*raq's crisis and the KRG*.

[807] ibid.

government violated the KRG's constitutional rights,[808] as Maliki marginalized all partners, Kurds and Sunnis, concentrating power in his hands. Masoud Barzani in his speech to the Kurdish parliament on 3 July 2014 indicated these points and argued that since 2003 the Kurds have supported a democratic system in Iraq and tried to implement it, however, the birth of a new potential dictator in Baghdad destroyed Kurdish efforts. Given this situation, this was the moment for the Kurds to decide their own fate.[809]

Another factor that contributed to this Kurdish stance was disagreement over the disputed areas, in particular Kirkuk. After the collapse of the Iraqi army, Kirkuk and the other disputed areas were controlled by the Kurdish army.[810] The KRG stressed that the Peshmarga would not withdraw from these areas and called for a referendum to decide if these areas should become part of the Kurdistan region.[811] Fourthly, the new transformation in the region, especially the new polarisation between the Shia and Sunni [812] and change in the perspectives of U.S. allies in the region was considered to be a further factor which affected Kurdish policy. Finally, the new U.S. policy in Iraq and the region and its new perspectives towards Kurdistan has further raised Kurdish ambitions for independence. However, since the ISIL attack on the Kurdistan region in August 2014, ISIL[813] is considered in this chapter to be the major factor affecting the KRG, its relations with the U.S. and its intention to take steps towards a referendum.[814]

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[808] KRP, *Seroky Haremi Kurdistan, Seredani parlamani kurdistan dekat*.

[809] ibid.

[810] KRP, *Riasa Aqlim Kwrdstan yesteqbl Al-momasel Al-am Al-amem Al-metaheda* (KRP: (June 29, 2014) <http://krp.org/arabic/articledisplay.aspx?id=4MZaitgVeEU=>[accessed 26 August 2014].

[811] ibid.

[812] J. Jeffrey, 'Syria's Sectarian Fallout,' *The Washington Post*, 9 September 2012.; T. Arango et al., 'As Syrians Fight, Sectarian Strife Infects Mideast' *New York Times* (1 June 2013).;T. Martin, 'Syria's State of Emergency' *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* vol.32, no.6 (2013).

[813] B.Obama, *Statement by the President on Iraq,* (White House, 9 August 2014) <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/08/09/statement-president-iraq>[accessed September 2014] .; J. Parkinson and D. Nissenbaum, 'U.S., Allies Training Kurds on Using Sophisticated Weaponry Against Islamic State,' *Wall Street Journal,* (21 September 2014).

[814] Atlantic Council, *A Conversation with H.E. Masoud Barzani, President of the Kurdistan ,* (Washington: Atlantic Council, 6 May 2015) <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/news/transcripts/a-conversation-with-h-e-masoud-barzani-president-of-the-kurdistan-region-of-iraq> [accessed 6 July 2015].

6.2 Iraqi Domestic Factors Affecting U.S. Policy Towards the KRI

6. 2.1 Deterioration of Security

The incursion of ISIL into Iraq that gave them the control over the vast majority of its territories in June 2014 posed a serious threat to its territorial integrity and has had serious consequences for Iraq and U.S. interests in Iraq and the region.[815] The fall of Mosul and the collapse of most of the Iraqi army, led to the expansion of the Shia militia backed by Iran in Iraq under the name of the 'popular mobilization'.[816] Moreover, as Kenneth M. Pollack said, the instability and sectarian polarization between Shia and Sunnis has further increased and renewed the sectarian war which previously occurred in 2006-2008.[817]

Furthermore, the intrusion of ISIS into Iraq has raised concerns in the U.S. administration regarding the growth of terrorist groups and the creation of a terrorist 'safe haven' which would jeopardize U.S. interests in the region.[818] In reaction to these accelerated developments, on 19 June 2014 president Obama pointed out that ISIL posed a grave threat to the U.S., Iraq and whole the region and "the fate of Iraq hangs in the balance".[819] On the same note, John Kerry, after discussing the situation with Iraqi authorities in Baghdad on 23 June 2014, argued that "now, this is clearly a moment when the stakes for Iraq's future could not be clearer," and ISIL posed "a grave danger

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[815] The House Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Terrorist March in Iraq: The U.S. Response,* 113–190 vols (Washington: The House Committee on Foreign Affairs, 23 July 2014), p. 1-70<http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/hearing/hearing-terrorist-march-iraq-us-response> [accessed June 2015].

B. Obama, *Remarks by the President on the Situation in Iraq,* (Washington: the White House, June 19, 2014) <http://www.whitehouse.gov/photos-and-video/video/2014/06/19/president-obama-speaks-situation-iraq#transcript > [accessed 30 July 2014].

[816] With the fall of Mosel and collapse of Iraq army the Shia tried to stop the advance of ISIL towards Baghdad (the capital of Iraq). In this regard the "fatwa" released by the Ayatollah Sistani, the most influential Shia cleric leader in Iraq to fight ISIL. Sistani's fatwa encouraged Shia factions to establish many of the Shia militia in Iraq which were called the "al-hashad al-sha'abi". It is notable that the majority of these militias are backed by Iran to consolidate its power and control Iraq. For more information see; J. Spyer and J. A. Al-Tamimi, 'Iran and the Shia Militias Advance in Iraq' (The Middle East Forum, December 2014),<http://www.meforum.org/4927/how-iraq-became-a-proxy-of-the-islamic-republic> [accessed December , 2015].

[817] The Brookings Institution, 'This is Civil War'*: Brookings Experts Discuss Iraq Crisis Policy Options*, (The Brookings Institution, 20 June 2014) <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/brookings-now/posts/2014/06/this-is-civil-war-brookings-experts-discuss-iraq-crisis-policy-options> [20 May 2015].

[818] K. Katzman et al, *Iraq Crisis and U.S. Policy, Congressional Report,* (Order Code R43612). (Washington: Congressional Research Service 3 July 2014), pp. 1-16.

[819] Obama, *Remarks by the President on the Situation in Iraq.*

to Iraq's future" and "Iraq faces an existential threat".[820] He continued by saying that ISIL's incursion into Iraq is considered to be one of the major threats to U.S. interests in the long term.[821] With these new developments, the new course of action of the Obama administration towards Iraq concentrated on confronting ISIL,[822] and so in August 2014, the U.S. started conducting airstrikes against ISIL.[823] After the formulation of a new government in September 2014 in Iraq, the U.S. announced the strategy called 'degrade and ultimately destroy the ISIL',[824] which concentrated on conducting effective and consistent airstrikes against ISIL in Iraq and Syria, supporting military forces in Iraq, including Kurdish forces to fight ISIL,[825] supporting the creation of 'National Guard Units' for the Arab Sunnis to maintain security and stability in their region and, working with its partners in the region to dismantle ISIL.[826]

With the deterioration of the situation in Iraq, and accelerated developments, the importance of the Kurdistan region for the strategy of American as a stable, secular and pro-U.S. region in Iraq has increased even more than it had in 2006-08. In this regards there was an alliance of interests on both sides. The U.S. due to the decline in its influence in Iraq needed to work with the Kurds and therefore there has been more change and flexibility in the U.S.' position towards Kurdish ambitions in Iraq. These changes can be noted in many aspects. Although the U.S. encouraged the Kurds to work with other Iraqi partners,[827] there has clearly been a wider understanding by the U.S. regarding Kurdish demands for self-determination.[828] In this regard, Falah Mustafa the Head of the Department of Foreign Relations of the KRG during a meeting with the U.S. authorities in Washington in July 2014 responded to a Rudaw question about whether the U.S. statements about a 'united Iraq', meant that the U.S. perspective

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[820] J. Kerry, *Press Availability on Syria and Iraq* (Washington: the U.S. State Department, 23 June 2014) <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2014/06/228327.htm> [accessed18 May 2015].

[821] ibid.

[822] B. Obama, *Statement by the President on ISIL,* (Washington: The White House, 10 September 2014) <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/10/statement-president-isil-1> [accessed 19 May 2015].

[823] Obama, *Statement by the President on Iraq*.; Parkinson and Nissenbaum, 'U.S., Allies Training Kurds on Using Sophisticated Weaponry Against Islamic State,' *Wall Street Journal,* 21 September 2014.

[824] Obama, *Statement by the President on ISIL.*

[825] ibid.

[826] ibid.

[827] The White House, *Press Briefing by Press Secretary Josh Earnest,* (Washington:, Office of the Press Secretary, The White House, 3 July 2014) <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/07/03/press-briefing-press-secretary-josh-earnest-732014> [accessed 30 July 2014].

[828] F. Hussein, *Barzani Le Gel Berprsany America Basi Dawlety Kurdi Deket*; didar le gel hividar Ahmed, *Rudaw,* <http://rudaw.net/sorani/kurdistan/290420157> [29 April 2015].

towards Kurdish independence has not changed. [829] He stressed that, "We have always heard such statements but the [U.S.] position has gone under a significant change". [830] On the same note, according to Rudaw TV, Masoud Barzani in an April 2015 meeting with the all the political parties in Kurdistan stressed that the U.S. position towards Kurdish independence had changed and the U.S. did not reject or hamper the Kurdish independent state. [831] Further, after his meeting with Obama and its administration in May 2015, in a meeting with Kurdish refugees in Washington, Masoud Barzani argued that "After ISIL war there is new reality … now many states support Kurdistan for self-determination and there is no rejection form any state for independent". [832]

Furthermore, the advance and progress of U.S. policy towards Kurdistan can be seen in a statement released by the White House, after Masoud Barzani's meeting with the U.S. authorities. The statement stressed that "President Obama and Vice President Biden reaffirmed the United States' strong and continued support to the Iraqi Kurdistan Region and the Kurdish people". [833] Moreover, the statement emphasised that the U.S. "enduring commitment under the Strategic Framework Agreement to a united, federal, and democratic Iraq, as defined in the Iraqi constitution". [834] This statement is considered to be the first one released by the White House since 2003 that has emphasised support for the Kurdistan region without linking this support to the territorial integrity of Iraq. In this statement the U.S.'s commitment to Iraqi territorial integrity was linked to Baghdad's commitment to a strategic agreement between both sides and the Iraqi permanent constitution. [835] This new U.S. stance is not in contradiction with the Kurdish position, which continually stressed that the KRG commitment to Iraqi territorial integrity is linked to Iraq's commitment to a realization of its own permanent constitution.

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[829] N. Abdulla, 'Kurds Confident International Community Welcomes their State', (5 July 2014) <http://rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/040720142 >[accessed 12 June 2015].

[830] ibid.

[831] Quoted in Hussein, Barzani Le Gel Berprsany America Basi Dawlety Kurdi Deket; didar le gel hividar Ahmed.

[832] M. Barzani, *Serwk Barzani Le Gel Rewendy Kurdi Le Wilayety VKRGinia America Kwbwe* (Erbil: KRP, 9 May 2015) <http://www.presidency.krd/Kurdish/articledisplay.aspx?id=fp11kfXCSeo=> [accessed 21 May 2015].

[833] The White House, *Readout of the President and Vice President's Meeting with Iraqi Kurdistan Region President Masoud Barzani* (Washington: The White House, 5 May 2015) <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/05/05/readout-president-and-vice-presidents-meeting-iraqi-kurdistan-region-pre][accessed June 2015].

[834] ibid.

[835]ibid.

Furthermore, despite the fact that the U.S. administration encouraged the Iraqi government to take real steps towards reconciliation and power sharing among Kurds, Shia, and Sunni,[836] this is a possibility that the U.S. looks at with scepticism.[837] In this regard, Ashton Carter, Secretary of Defense, contends that in the case of Iraq "If that government can't do what it's supposed to do, then we will still try to enable local ground forces, if they're willing to partner with us, to keep stability in Iraq, but there will not be a single state of Iraq".[838]

Hence, it can be said after fall of Mosul and deterioration of stability, the U.S. perspective regarding maintaining a united Iraq has undergone important alteration and has seen also the U.S. distance itself from a solution to the problems, arguing that they should be Iraqi based. Obama in August 2014 stressed that "We can assist and our military obviously can play an extraordinarily important role in bolstering efforts of an Iraqi partner as they make the right steps to keep their country together, but we can't do it for them".[839] Hence, it can be said compared with the previous period in which the U.S. exclusively stressed the territorial integrity of Iraq, in this stage the U.S. administration has had an option to deal with the disintegration of Iraq. This opened – and opens in future – an important space for the KRG to become genuinely independent without U.S. opposition.

Moreover, after the fall of Mosul there has been change in U.S. policy towards Kirkuk and the disputed areas. After the deterioration of stability in western and northern Iraq, the U.S. administration allowed and supported the Kurdish Peshmarga to control most of the disputed territories including Kirkuk.[840] This was an important stance by the U.S., especially as the Kurds stressed that they would not withdraw from these areas.[841] In this regard, Masoud Barzani in an interview with Al-Hayat newspaper published on 13 June 2014 stressed that "border of the region is drawing with blood and Iraq should

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[836] B. Obama, *Statement by the President on ISIL, 10* September 2014.; The White House, *Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Al-Abadi of Iraq After Bilateral Meeting* (Washington: The white House, 14 April 2015), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/04/14/remarks-president-obama-and-prime-minister-al-abadi-iraq-after-bilateral> [accessed 26 June 2015].

[837] U.S. House Armed Services Committee, *U.S. Policy and Strategy in the Middle East* 2118 RHOB sess, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GD0JgpDXHJU> [accessed 25 June 2015].

[838] ibid.

[839] Obama, *Statement by the President on Iraq.*

[840] M. Barzani, ' Barzani Le-Al-Hayat; Kharaet Sykes-Picot Mostaneat We Al-Hedwd Al-Jadida Twrsem Beldam; ,' *Al-Hayat* (7 February 2015) <http://alhayat.com/Articles/7243606> [accessed June 2015] .; Rudaw *: Peshmerga Control 90 Percent of 140 Previously 'Arabicized' Zones,* (<http://rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/280420151 > [accessed June 2015].

[841] KRP, *Riasa Aqlim Kwrdstan yesteqbl Al-momasel Al-am Al-amem Al-metaheda .*

be formulated according to the new reality and former Iraq is ended".[842] This signified a new independence in Kurdish foreign policy making which the U.S. had to accept.

Additionally, the other change in-U.S. policy appears to be its abandoning of the idea of a strong central government for the first time since 2003, and its move towards accepting that power sharing is necessary to stabilize Iraq.[843] This was also reflected in policy and academic circles. Pollack argued that one of the effective options to stabilize Iraq is the distribution of power between Sunnis and Kurds perhaps in a confederalism formula.[844] On the same note, Jay Garner (former Occupation Chief in Iraq in 2003) argued that the way forward in Iraq "is a confederation, a federal system of Sunnis, Kurds, and Shia".[845]

In some respects U.S. policy 'on the ground' also seemed to be moving towards a de facto federal spread of power. For example, the U.S. supported the idea of the creation of 'National Guard Units' in order to protect the Sunni areas from ISIL so they could govern their territory.[846] This U.S.-backed policy would seem to lead in the direction of a further weakening of the central government.[847] With the Iraqi crisis: restructuring Iraq according to a confederal system formula or partition is inevitable. The U.S. prefers the former, however, it is prepared for the latter.

These developments are important in signaling the change of U.S. policy towards the KRG due to a variety of reasons. Since the deterioration of Iraqi security, the situation and political equation changed against the U.S. interests in Iraq and the region. With the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq, the collapse of security forces and the spread of Shia militias, U.S. hegemony and influence in Iraq and the region has changed in favor of Iran and its allies. The weakening of U.S. influence in Iraq has relatively caused the loss of ability to confront ISIL, Shia militia and Iranian expansion and it therefore cannot control events and stabilize Iraq. While, in the previous stage, (2006-

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[842] Barzani, *Barzani Le-Al-Hayat; Kharaet Sykes-Picot Mostaneat We Al-Hedwd Al-Jadida Twrsem Beldam* .

[843] *Obama on the World; President Obama Talks to Thomas L. Friedman about Iraq, Putin and Israel', the New York Time,* (8 August 2014).

[844] K.M. Pollack and Kenneth M, 'Options for U.S. Policy Toward Iraq', *,(* Brookings Institution, 24 July 2014)<http://www.brookings.edu/research/testimony/2014/07/24-options-us-policy-toward-iraq-pollack> [accessed 30 July 2014].

[845] S. Ackerman, *'Retired Army General Jay Garner: 'the Iraq that we Knew no Longer Exists', The Guardian,* (15 August 2014).

[846] B. Obama, *Statement by the President on ISIL* The White House, 10 September 2014)

[847] M. Bradley, 'Sunnis Question Plan for Iraqi National Guard,' *Wall Street Journal* , 18 September 2014.

2008) the U.S. military forces had played a crucial role in defeating Al Qaeda and other terrorists and militia groups in Iraq and restoring stability to this country.[848] Hence, with the decline in U.S. regional hegemony and the U.S.' relative loss of control, these events directly affected the U.S.' position towards the Kurdistan region and showed more flexibility towards Kurdish demands. This is because with the declining of the U.S. influence in Iraq, the role of the Kurdistan region for the U.S. strategy has further increased to confront ISIL, maintain Iraqi stability and counter the Shia militia backed by Iran. In this regards U.S. authorities needed to work with the Kurdistan region and pay attention to the Kurdish factor in Iraq and the region. In particular with the absence of the U.S.' trusted partners in Baghdad, who were able to undertake political reform and confront Iran and its affiliated Shia militia groups. Moreover, the diminishing U.S. influence has given more space and independence to the KRG to move away from Baghdad and pursue a more independent policy towards Kurdish independence.

Furthermore, with the collapse of Iraqi security, it is difficult if not impossible for the U.S. to stabilize Iraq and restore basic nation-wide security. Iraq on the ground has *de facto* been divided into three regions among the Kurds, Shias and Sunnis and the majority of the Iraqi army has collapsed.[849] In this regard the U.S. is realizing that Iraq is moving towards being a 'failed state on the verge of collapse'. Therefore the U.S. should concentrate on maintaining security and the stability of the KRI instead of paying attention to Baghdad.[850] In effect, this also signals the failure of the Obama administration to maintain the stability of Iraq after the withdrawal of its troops.[851] The U.S., by backing Maliki's authority for his second term attempted to maintain security, but this effort did not yield any result, especially with the developments in 2014 and the swift collapse of the Iraqi Army in the face of ISIL.[852] In this context, the collapse of the Iraqi army was considered a major setback for the U.S.' security policy in Iraq.[853]

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[848] G.W. Bush, *President's Address to the Nation,* (10 January 2007) http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2007/01/20070110-7.html [accessed May 2014].; Blanchard, Christopher and others, *Iraq: Regional Perspectives and US Policy.*

[849] Hussein, and Falah, I*raq's crisis and the KRG.*

[850] CNBC News, The *End of Iraq*, (United Stated: CNBC News, 19 Jun, 2014) <http://www.cnbc.com/2014/06/19/the-end-of-iraqmiddle-eastcommentary.html> [accessed June 2015].

[851] R. Brennan, 'Withdrawal symptoms: the bungling of the Iraq exit,' *Foreign Affairs* (December 2014).; M. R. Gordon, 'In U.S. Exit From Iraq, Failed Efforts and Challenges,' *New York Times* September 22, 2012.

[852] K. Katzman et al, *the Islamic State Crisis and US Policy*, CRS Report for Congress. *(Order Code R43612)*. (Washington: Congressional Research Service, 8 December 2015).

[853] J.F. Jeffrey, 'Behind the U.S. Withdrawal from Iraq,' *Wall Street Journal* (2 November, 2014).

Since 2003 the U.S. has attempted to establish a strong, stable, unified and pro-U.S. authority in Baghdad. However, the collapse of the ISF leads to the spread of Shia militants under the umbrella of 'popular mobilization' backed by Iran.[854] Additionally the U.S. administration came to realize that the Kurdistan region is the key U.S. reliable partner and compared with the rest of Iraq, it is more tolerant and democratic. Obama, regarding his decision to support the Kurdistan region in 2014 against ISIL, stressed that since 2003, the Kurdistan region is considered to be the most secure and stable region in Iraq where all sects and ethnic groups coexist. President Obama emphasized that the Kurdistan region is tolerant with other religions in Iraq and the Kurds have taken advantage of the opportunities created from the fall of Saddam's regime to improve their region in the way that the U.S. wanted to see.[855] Moreover, the U.S. saw that the Kurdish Peshmarga is the major effective and reliable U.S. security partner in confronting ISIL in Iraq.[856] Hence, the U.S. paid more attention to the Kurdish Peshmarga forces and has encouraged its ally to arm the Kurdish forces.[857]

6.2.2 Kurdistan as a New Energy Supplier

One of the major steps taken by the Kurdistan region to enhance its position internally and externally affecting the direction of U.S. policy has been related to the development of its energy sector. The presence in the Kurdish region of many important energy companies involved in the discovery and export of oil and gas has transformed the Kurdistan region into a new and active energy player in the region able to influence regional and international states' policy. As this thesis previously argued, one of the

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[854] J. Spyer and J. A. Al-Tamimi, 'Iran and the Shia Militias Advance in Iraq', The Middle East Forum, December 2014 < http://www.meforum.org/4927/how-iraq-became-a-proxy-of-the-islamic-republic> [accessed December, 2015].

[855] *Obama on the World; President Obama Talks to Thomas L. Friedman about Iraq, Putin and Israel*., Masoud Barzani, regarding the reasons behind the U.S.' backing of KRG, argued that the Kurdistan region is considered tolerant with other ethnic and religious groups, and it embraces the democratic values and support of minorities who suffer from reparation and denial. *Besaraha Mea Masoud Barzani, Estezafat Men Qebl Zinet Yazgi,* directed by skynewsarabia (The United Arab Emirates: skynewsarabia, 13 October 2014), [accessed 17 May 2015].

[856] Royce and Engel, *To Authorize The Direct Provision Of Defense Articles, Defense Services, And Related Training To The Kurdistan Regional Government, And For Other Purposes,* 113Th Congress, 2d Session sess., (Washington: The House Committee on Foreign Affairs, 20 November 2014), <http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/sites/republicans.foreignaffairs.house.gov/files/ROYCE_138_xml.pdf> [accessed 26 May 2015].

[857] J. Parkinson, and D. Nissenbaum, ' U.S., Allies Training Kurds on Using Sophisticated Weaponry Against Islamic State,' *Wall Street Journal* (21 September 2014).

driving factors for U.S. policy in the Middle East is oil and gas. The U.S. continually wants to access and secure stable supplies of energy in order to maintain its interests and its regional and global hegemony. Hence, the emergence of the Kurdistan region as a new energy supply actor which was also pro-U.S., positively affected U.S. policy towards the KRG.

From 2003, the KRG intensified its attempts to invest and develop its energy sector.[858] After the signing of a 'shared production agreement', dozens of international oil companies, including the major companies, came to Kurdistan and started the process of the exploration and production of oil and gas.[859] The KRG's sources argue that now the Kurdistan region has approximately "45 Billion Barrels of oil and 3-6 trillion cubic of gas" reserve, and it would export 1 million barrels of oil at the end of 2015 and 3 million barrels by 2019 daily. [860] As Dr Ribawar Khansa (adviser to the KRG in terms of oil and mineral economic security) points out, the Kurdistan region now owns 5% of world oil reserves.[861]

The KRG's strategy for the control and supervision of its oil and natural resources has strewed conflict between Baghdad and Erbil.[862] With the absence of a prospect of reaching an agreement with Baghdad, the KRG introduced its own hydrocarbon law in 2007,[863] to control over its oil and natural gas.[864] At the end of 2011, there was a turning point in terms of hydrocarbon sector law in Kurdistan, when, despite pressure from Baghdad, the KRG signed 'production sharing agreements (PSAs)' with the most

[858] S. Zulal, 'Survival strategies and diplomatic tools: the Kurdistan region's foreign policy outlook,' *Insight Turkey* vol.14, no.3 (2012), pp. 141-158.

[859] Stansfield, 'The unravelling of the post-First World War state system? The Kurdistan Region of Iraq and the transformation of the Middle East', p. 273.

[860] A. Hawrami, *Speech by Minister Hawrami at the Economic European Energy summit in Istanbul* (Erbil: Ministry of Natural resources, 13 October 2013) <http://mnr.krg.org/index.php/en/press-releases/294-remarks-by-ashti-hawrami-at-the-economist-european-energy-summit > [accessed 21 May 2015].; KRG, *Speech by Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani about energy and foreign policy in Reichstag Building Germany*, (*KRG,* 21 March 2013) <http://mnr.krg.org/index.php/en/press-releases/151-prime-minister-barzani-s-speech-in-the-reichstag-building> [accessed 19 May 2015].

[861] Niqash, 'Mostashar Fi Aqlim Kurdistan Al-Iraq, Neft Kurdistan Qed Ywnafez', (Niqash, June 13, 2013) < http://www.niqash.org/ar/articles/economy.htm)[accessed 19 May 2015].

[862] B. Lionel and B. Greg, 'Why Iraqis Cannot Agree on an Oil Law', (*Council on foreign Relations,* 22 February 2008) <http://www.cfr.org/iraq/why-iraqis-cannot-agree-oil-law/p13298> [accessed 21 May 2015].

[863] KRG, *Oil and Gas Law of the Kurdistan Region-Iraq,* 28, 8th sess., (Kurdistan Region Government, 8   June 2007<http://cabinet.gov.krd/uploads/documents/Kurdistan%20Oil%20and%20Gas%20Law%20English__2007_09_06_h14m0s42.pdf > [accessed 21 May 2015].

[864] R. Pirog, *Kurdish Oil Exports and U.S. Policy,* CRS Report for Congress (Washington: Congressional Research Service, 10 September 2014). pp. 1-7.

famous international companies such as Exxon Mobil, Chevron, Russian energy giant Gazprom, Nef and Total.[865] The Exxon Mobil contract has been described as 'game-changing'.[866] This is because it would be interpreted as if the KRG had the constitutional legitimacy to sign the agreement with foreign companies,[867] and this would encourage other companies to invest in Kurdistan.[868] Moreover, after escalating conflict between Baghdad and Erbil - and the withholding of the KRG budget by the Maliki government - the KRG, for the first time, formally started to export its oil in May 2014 via Turkey.[869] While Baghdad stresses that constitutionally it has sole and inclusive rights to export and sell oil and gas,[870] the KRG rejects this claim and argues that it has the right to operate the new oilfield discovered in Kurdistan.[871]

It is obvious that the conflict between both is mostly motivated by political and economic calculations, rather than the Iraqi constitution *per se*. Baghdad, fears losing its influence over the whole of Iraq[872] and fears that the KRG's close relations with foreign actors and states would push the other provinces in Iraq, like Ninawa and Basra, to take the same steps to control their oil and natural gas and establish their own federal regions.[873] Indeed, the end result in Kurdistan might be an independent state which secedes from Iraq.[874]

However, the KRG's strategy to oversee its oil and natural gas is associated with the some strategic interests which determine the KRG's position and its future in the region. The KRG wants to enhance and legitimatize its existence which is still under threat. In this regard, the KRG thinks that control over its natural resources constitutes a major factor in the exercise of its sovereignty over the territory.[875] Moreover, Kurdish

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[865] Stansfield, 'The unravelling of the post-First World War state system? The Kurdistan Region of Iraq and the transformation of the Middle East', p. 273.

[866] ibid., p. 273.

[867] ibid., p. 273.

[868] Zulal, 'Survival strategies and diplomatic tools: the Kurdistan region's foreign policy outlook', pp. 142-146.

[869] Pirog, *Kurdish Oil Exports and U.S. Policy,* pp. 1-7.

[870] K. Johnson, *Iraq's Oil War;* 'By lashing out at Turkey and Kurdistan, Baghdad could make a tense situation worse' foreign *policy*, (17 January 2014).

[871] KRG, *KRG statement on Oil export* (KEG: Ministry Ff Natural Resources, 20 June 2014) <http://mnr.krg.org/index.php/en/press-releases/379-krg-statement-on-oil-exports> [accessed 21 May 2015].

[872] Ottaway, M. and Ottaway, D., 'How the Kurds Got Their Way,' *Foreign Affairs,* June 2014.

[873] ibid.

[874] A. Ahmed, and C. Krauss, ' Oil Gives Kurds a Path to Independence, and Conflict with Baghdad,' *New York Times*, 25 October 2014.

[875] Y. Voller, 'Kurdish Oil Politics in Iraq: Contested Sovereignty and Unilateralism,' *Middle East Policy* vol.20, no.1 (2013), p, 68-78.

authorities believe that the KRG's sovereignty over its oil and gas would improve the position of the Kurdistan region which cannot be ignored by the U.S. and other regional states, and it would allow the Kurds to make allies and lobby.[876] As Falah Mustafa, Head, of the Department of Foreign Relations of the KRG argued, "Our natural resources have strengthened our hand, our position, and our political weight". [877] In addition, the KRG's long term strategy for creating its state has been another reason for emphasising its sovereignty over natural resources and the Kurdish authorities saw the energy sector as a major tool to achieve this goal.[878] The Kurdish authorities believe that that with the decrease in oil in the world, foreign customers would want Kurdish oil and would back the Kurdish aspiration for independence.[879] In this regard, former senior adviser to the Kurdish Ministry of Natural Resources, Khalid Salih argues that "the ships going out to the international seas are testing the waters ... Suddenly; you will see and hear breakthroughs".[880]

The U.S. position towards the Erbil-Bagdad conflict over oil and natural gas and the emergence of the KRG as a new energy supplier in the region has repeatedly changed according to the developments in Iraq and the region. From 2003 to 2013, the U.S. did not support any Kurdish attempts to sell its oil without Baghdad's approval. When the KRG in 2014 started to export oil to the global market for the first time, [881] the U.S. administration stressed that it would not support the KRG's step to export oil without cooperation from Baghdad.[882] Marie Harf, a U.S. State Department spokeswoman emphasized that "we don't support oil exports from any part of Iraq without the appropriate approval of the federal Iraq government".[883] However, this U.S. position swiftly changed especially as 2014 progressed. In this regard, Jen Pasaki, spokesman for the U.S. State Department, on 26 August 2014 stressed that "we [U.S.] continue to urge the Iraqi federal government and the Kurdistan Regional Government to reach

[876] Zulal, 'Survival strategies and diplomatic tools: the Kurdistan region's foreign policy outlook', pp.142-146.

[877] B. V. Heuvelen, 'Iraq's Kurdish region pursues ties with Turkey — for oil and independence,' *Washington Post,* 9 November 2013.

[878] Ahmed, and C. Krauss, ' Oil Gives Kurds a Path to Independence, and Conflict with Baghdad'.

[879] Ibid.

[880] ibid.

[881] Pirog, *Kurdish Oil Exports and U.S. Policy, Report to the Congress*, pp. 1-7.

[882] U.S. Department of State, *Press Briefing By Jen Psaki, Spokesperson, (22* May2014). <http://translations.state.gov/st/english/texttrans/2014/05/20140522299604.html#ixzz3AwaF076l> [accessed May, 2015].

[883] U.S. Department of State, *Daily Press Briefing By Marie Harf Deputy Spokesperson* May 2, 2014) <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2014/05/225545.htm> [accessed 12 August 2014].

agreement on how to best manage energy resources moving forward".[884] With regard to this new U.S. position, Carlos Pascual, the former State Department special envoy and coordinator for international energy affairs, pointed out that "The calculus for the United States is to find a solution that allows the Iraqi government as well as the Kurdistan region to gain".[885] Furthermore, the U.S. position further softened when Marie Harf, Deputy spokesperson of the U.S. State Department in August 2014 said that "the United States doesn't have a ban on oil sales from any part of Iraq and that Iraqis have to come to an agreement on energy issues to avoid any legal ramifications".[886] Furthermore, she stressed that exporting oil from Kurdistan "is not an illegal issue, it is a policy issue".[887]

As this thesis previously mentioned, one of the major U.S. objectives of the removal of Saddam's regime was to expand and diversify its energy sources in the Middle East. Hence, the emergence of the KRG as a new energy supply has influenced the direction of U.S. policy towards Kurdistan. Kurds now control the key oilfield in Kirkuk and the disputed areas and play a key role in maintaining the security of oil from northern Iraq, especially after the Iraq-Turkey pipeline in the north of Iraq fell under ISIL control.[888] Michael Makovsky, a former Pentagon official who served during the George Bush authorities in charge of Iraqi energy policy argued:

> I think Iraqi Kurdish independence is inevitable, at least eventually…they have natural allies in the United States because of the oil companies involved in drilling there. And the Turks and Europeans need their gas.[889]

It is notable that, with the attack of ISIL on the Kurdistan region in August 2014, U.S. oil interests were among the factors which pushed Obama to protect the KRI. In this regard Steve Coll, argued that - despite the other factors which Obama mentioned during his interviews with Tomas Freedman, U.S. oil interests played a role in the

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[884] The U.S. Department of State, *Daily Press Briefing By Jen Psaki Spokesperson* (Washington: The U.S. Department of State, 26 August 2014) <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2014/08/230911.htm#SYRIA2> [accessed 21 May2015].

[885] Ahmed, and Krauss, ' Oil Gives Kurds a Path to Independence, and Conflict with Baghdad.

[886] Rudaw , *State Department: US Has no Ban on Oil Sales from Any Part of Iraq*, (Rudaw tv, 1 August 2014) (http://rudaw.net/mobile/english/kurdistan/310720142) [accessed 19 May 2015].

[887] ibid.

[888] KRG, *KRG Statement on Recent Events at Oil Facilities and Infrastructure in Makhmour,* (Erbil: KRG, 11 July 2014) <http://mnr.krg.org/index.php/en/press-releases/394-krg-statement-on-recent-events-at-oil-facilities-and-infrastructure-in-makhmour-district> [accessed July 2015] .; KRG*: Oilfields Takeover was to Secure them from Iraqi Sabotage,* (Erbil: Rudaw news, 11 July 2014) <http://rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/110720141>, [accessed June 2015].

[889] Ahmed, and Krauss, ' Oil Gives Kurds a Path to Independence, and Conflict with Baghdad'.

decision to defend the KRG against the incursion of ISIL.[890] On the same note, Oliver Jakob, an oil analyst informed Reuters that "In essence we find U.S. air strikes more bearish than bullish for oil as the act finally draws a line for ISIL and reinforces both the stability in south Iraq and in Kurdistan".[891] Hence U.S. energy calculations have had an impact on Obama's decision to protect the Kurdistan region.[892]

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[890] Steve Coll, 'Oil and Erbil', *The New Yorker,* 10 August 2014.
<http://www.newyorker.com/about/us/?src=tny-footer> [accessed 19 May 2015].
[891] Judies John B, 'The U.S. Airstrikes in Northern Iraq Are All About Oil',*New Republic,* August 8, 2014,<http://www.newrepublic.com/article/119035/us-attack-islamic-militants-all-about-iraqs-oil>. [accessed 18 May 2015].
[892] Ibid.

6.3 External Factors Affecting U.S. Policy Towards Kurdistan Region

6.3.1 – KRI's Contribution to The U.S. Regional Hegemony

The struggle among regional and international powers together with the sectarian conflict among Shia and Sunnis and expansion of ISIL has raised a serious debate regarding the political future and the security system in the Middle East,[893] to the point that the borders established by the Sykes Picot agreement could disappear.[894] Within this context, Stephen M. Walt argues that the Middle East has incurred into a deep conflict whose solution is not foreseeable at the moment.[895] He continues by saying that:

> Conflict is now occurring across many fault lines — Sunni vs. Shiite, Arab vs. Persian, secular vs. Islamist, democratic vs. authoritarian, etc. — and in ways that are beginning to shake the foundations of the political order that first took shape at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference.[896]

Robin Wright argues that "the map of the modern Middle East, a political and economic pivot in the international order, is in tatters".[897] Likewise, the former Special Assistant to Obama and the White House for the Middle East and North Africa, Philip Gordon stresses that "For nearly 100 years, the modern Middle East has been organized around a state system put in place by the Western powers after the Ottoman Empire collapsed".[898] He continues by saying "that post-Ottoman order is now falling apart—largely due to the consequences of the Arab Spring, when Arab publics finally rose up in protest against this artificial division".[899]

These new and accelerated transformations have challenged the U.S.' long lasting strategy to maintain the security system in the Middle East and resist any change to this

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[893] I. Rabinovich, 'The end of Sykes-Picot? Reflections on the prospects of the Arab state system,' *Brookings Saban Center–Middle East Memo* vol.32 (2014), pp. 1-9.

[894] O. Marina and O. David, 'How the Kurds got their way: economic cooperation and the Middle East's new borders', *foreign affairs*, June 2014.

[895] S. M. Walt, 'U.S. Middle East Strategy: back to Balancing,' *Foreign Policy*, 21 November 2013.

[896] ibid.

[897] R . Wright. 'Imagining a Remapped Middle East,' *the New York Times* September 28, 2013.

[898] Philip Gordon, 'The Middle East Is Falling Apart: America isn't to blame. There's no easy fix', *Politico,* 4 June 2015.

[899] ibid.

system.[900] With continuing proxy wars and the deterioration of security in Iraq, Syria and Yemen, the Obama administration has had to accept a new political pattern in the Region.[901] In this regard Tamara, C Wittes, the director of the Centre for Middle East Policy at Brookings, argues that currently the Middle East order faced a multifaceted and 'great game', which the U.S. due to the absence of genuine partners and conflict interests with many actors in the region is not able to maintain and repair the political system in the region.[902] Hence, it can be said with the weakening of U.S. hegemony, a rise in the role of its rivals and the moving of Iraq and Syria towards *de facto* partition across the ethnic and sectarian line pushed U.S. administrations to show more willingness to deal with new realities and even the disintegration of Sykes Picot borders in particular that relate to the Iraqi and Syrian borders.

Primarily, the relative decline in the U.S., influence and its regional hegemony in the Middle East are associated with many political equations and transformations in the region. The U.S. as a unipolar actor after the regime's change in Iraq in 2003 and its consequences has ended, and the international system is heading towards a multipolar system.[903] As has been mentioned in chapter 5, the consequences of regime change in Iraq not only undermined U.S. influence, but also challenged its deterrence policy in the region.[904] Moreover, the rise of strong regional and international powers such as Russia and China and Iran and their ambition to play a key and powerful role in the political equation has further challenged the U.S.'s MEA policy.[905] Fawaz A. Gerges Professor at the London School of Economics and Political Science regarding declining the U.S. hegemony argues that:

> The beginning of the end of American hegemony in the region stems
> from internal and external causes, including an awakened public

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[900] Rabinovich, 'The end of Sykes-Picot? Reflections on the prospects of the Arab state system', pp.1-9.

[901] a. C. Wittes, 'With friends like these: America's allies in the Middle East create as many problems as they solve' (The Brookings Institution, 2 March 2015) <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/order-from chaos/posts/2015/03/02-friends-americas-allies-middle-east-create-problems-solve-wittes> [accessed June 2015].

[902] ibid.

[903] F. A. Gerges, 'Obama and the Middle East: Continuity and Change in US Foreign Policy?' *Pomeas Policy Brief* vol.4, no.2 (November 2014), pp. 1-7.

[904] M. S. Indyk and T. C. Wittes, 'Back to Balancing in the Middle East: A New Strategy for Constructive Engagement', (The Brookings Institution, 2007) <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2007/02/28middleeast-indyk-opp08> [accessed June 2015].; Gerges, 'Obama and the Middle East: Continuity and Change in US Foreign Policy?' pp. 1-7.

[905] Gerges, 'Obama and the Middle East: Continuity and Change in US Foreign Policy? pp. 1-7.

opinion in the Middle East, the emergence of geostrategic and geo-economic regional powers with assertive foreign policies, America's relative economic decline via other rising powers, a deadlocked legislative branch in Washington stifled by increasingly partisan politics, the high costs of war, and the shift in U.S. foreign policy priorities to the Asia–Pacific region .[906]

It is notable that, Obama's policy, which aimed at withdrawing from the Middle East,[907] and moving towards the 'Asia-Pacific region', has further declined U.S. power and position in the region.[908] Robert D. Kaplan contends that the disengagement policy which is pursued by the Obama administration towards developments and transformations in the Middle East is considered to be the signal of the termination of the role of the U.S. as a 'great power' to maintain stability and security in the region.[909] This policy has been clearly visible in Iraq, where the U.S. pursued a policy of disengagement and did not work to maintain its fragile stability.[910]

Given these transformations in the region, the U.S. needs a more realistic approach to maintain its strategic interests. Hence, the emergence of strong international and regional actors and the redistribution of power as mentioned above is considered the beginning of a departure of the international system from a 'unipolar' to 'multipolar' system and this has pushed many scholars to ask the U.S. to pursue a new strategy to protect its national interests and they stresses that it is time for the U.S. to pursue an 'offshore balancing' strategy in the Middle East.[911] This strategy stresses that the U.S. should withdraw and minimize its military involvement in the region and focus should be given to East Asia.[912] Moreover, this strategy is concentrated on giving responsibility to the local allies and they should play a crucial role in maintaining their security. Likewise, the U.S. should abandon regime change and for securing the flow of oil, the U.S. administration can depend on air and naval power.[913] However, this strategy

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[906] Gerges, 'Obama and the Middle East: Continuity and Change in US Foreign Policy? pp. 1-7.

[907] Walt, 'U.S. Middle East Strategy: back to Balancing'.

[908] U.S. department of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century* (Washington: U.S. department of Defense, January 2012) <http://www.defense.gov/news/defense_strategic_guidance.pdf> [accessed June 2015].; Gerges, 'Obama and the Middle East: Continuity and Change in US Foreign Policy?', p.p. 1-7.

[909] R.D. Kaplan, 'The Ruins of Empire in the Middle East', *Foreign Policy,* 25 May 2015.

[910] K. M. Pollack, 'U.S. policy toward a turbulent Middle East' (Washington: Brookings Institution, 24 March 2015) <http://www.brookings.edu/research/testimony/2015/03/24-us-policy-middle-east-pollack > [accessed June 2015].

[911] C. Layne, 'The (almost) Triumph of Offshore Balancing', *The National Interest,* 27 January 2012.

[912] ibid.

[913] ibid.

argues that the U.S. should only intervene directly in the case of a collapsing 'balance of power'. [914]

John J. Mearsheimer supports the U.S. backing of 'offshore balancing' and even before the Arab spring and accelerated transformations in the region, contended that pursuing 'offshore balancing' would be in favour of U.S. interests. He emphasised that previously the U.S. has pursued this strategy and contained Iraq and Iran and prevented the USSR from intervening directly and imposing its hegemony over the Gulf region.[915] Mearsheimer stressed that the U.S. relied on the local state' responsibly maintaining the equilibrium of power in the region and the U.S. having to depend on its naval and air power to protect its vital interests.[916] He goes on by saying that using military forces should be a last option when the U.S.' vital interests encounter a serious threat or the 'balance of power' collapses.[917] According to Mearsheimer, this strategy would minimize U.S. military engagement in other costs of war, like the invasion of Iraq and would prevent any power from imposing its hegemony over the region.[918]

Furthermore, Tamara, C. Wittes argues that a proper U.S. policy in the Middle East would be to pursue a 'hedging strategy', and that the U.S. administration should not be involved in this conflict unless its security faces a real threat.[919] Moreover, she contends that the U.S. should support and strengthen the local states and the actors with whom it shares objectives and who are willing to establish a democratic and tolerant system.[920] Likewise, Stephen M. Walt argues that the discussion about U.S. policy in the Middle East after the Arab Spring should be interpreted within the framework of U.S. national interests, in particular: the continuation of an oil supply into the global market, strengthening the fight against the threat of terrorist groups hostile to the U.S. and avoiding the spread of WMD.[921] Moreover, it is important for the U.S. to prevent rivals states from imposing their hegemony over the region.[922]

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[914] R. Douthat , 'The Method to Obama's Middle East Mess', *New York Times,* 28 March 2015
[915] J.J. Mearsheimer, 'A Return to Offshore Balancing', *Newsweek,* 31 December 2008.
[916] ibid.
[917] ibid.
[918] ibid.
[919] Wittes, 'With friends like these: America's allies in the Middle East create as many problems as they solve'.
[920] ibid.
[921] Walt, 'U.S. Middle East Strategy: back to Balancing,'
[922] ibid.

Within this context, it can be said that the U.S., in order to defend its regional hegemony and its strategic interests some extent pursued a different policy and showed more willingness to depend on local and reliable allies including the Kurds and in this regard the U.S.' national interests have moved to be more in common with the Kurds in the Middle East. With the weakening of its influence, the Kurds have turned more into U.S. crucial regional allies to pursue its grand strategy in the region and Kurdistan region in many ways has contributed to U.S. attempts to defend regional hegemony and maintain its vital interests.

Within this framework, of the major threats to U.S. interests has related to the expansion of ISIL in the Middle East, its incursion into Iraq and captures the vast majority of areas. James Franklin Jeffrey and Philip Solondz in their testimonies before the Senate Foreign Relations in July 2014 regarding the ISIL threats stressed that

> The rise of the IS, with control over up to five million people and massive military equipment and funding, in close proximity to some of the largest oilfields in the world, and bordering our NATO ally Turkey and security partners Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait, threatens three of the four vital interests President Obama laid out in his UN General Assembly speech last September: threats to our allies and partners, rise of terrorist organizations, and threats to international flow of oil. The situation if it deteriorates further will likely threaten the fourth, development of weapons of mass destruction.[923]

Anthony H. Cordesman argues that ISIL are considered to be the major threat to U.S. security interests in the region. This is due to the expansion of ISIL and terrorist factions in the strategic part of the Middle East and the possibility of creating a 'safe haven' in the region, which poses a major threat to the security of the flow of oil and the world economy.[924] Within this context, the role and position of the Kurds and Kurdish forces to confront the ISIL threat for the U.S. has increased. Thomas L. Friedman argues that the U.S. should back the states and actors which can and have the will to contain and confront ISIL, such as the Kurds in Iraq, Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates and Jordan.[925] Likewise, Fare Zakariya contends that the U.S. should pursue

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[923] J. F. Jeffrey, and P. Solondz, *Iraq at a Crossroads: Options for U.S. Policy,* (Washington: U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 24 July 2014) <http://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Jeffrey_Testimony1.pdf> [accessed July 2015].
[924] Cordesman, 'Iraqi Stability and the ISIS War'.
[925] T. L. Friedman, 'Contain and Amplify,' *The New York Times*, 27 May 2015.

'an enclave strategy', which means that Iraq now is divided into three regions. [926] The Kurdistan region and the Shia areas are stable and the U.S. should support the stability of these regions.[927] Regarding the Sunni areas, the U.S., in coordination with Saudi Arabia and Jordan, should confront ISIL and try to strengthen the moderate factions in these areas.[928] Hence with the decline of U.S. hegemony and the sectarian war in Iraq and the region, the U.S. has paid more attention to the Kurds as a key ally in the fight against ISIL. In this regard The Peshmarga and Kurdish forces are considered to be one of the key U.S. allies, which has confronted the ISIL terrorist group, especially in Iraq and Syria,[929] and they have been "a reliable and stable partner of the United States".[930] These shared interests between both sides have improved U.S. policy towards Kurdistan and changed its previous policy towards its demands for independence and more power in Iraq. In particular, with the decline in U.S. hegemony and its loss of control over events in Iraq and the region, it needs to work with the Kurdistan region as a reliable regional partner.

Further, This has given the Kurds more freedom and independence to move towards their aspiration of creating an independent state. In particular, the Kurds generally in Iraq, Syria and Turkey, are taking advantage of accelerating transformations and are playing a powerful role in the political equation.[931] In this regard, Ryan Crocker, the former the U.S. ambassador to Iraq (2007-2009), stressed that "The events in Iraq, in Syria and in Turkey have profoundly altered the place of the Kurds in the Middle East—they provide fresh impetus and momentum toward Kurdish independence in some form".[932] Within this context, the Kurds have been able to obtain U.S. and western support because the majority of the Kurdish party are pro-western.[933]

Moreover, the other factor which the U.S. concentrated on to maintain its regional hegemony in the Middle East has been related to securing the flow of oil to the global

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[926] F. Zakaria, 'An enclave strategy for Iraq,' *Washington Post,* 19 June 2014.

[927] ibid.

[928] ibid.

[929] N. Malas, Ayla Albayrak and E.J. Barnes , 'U.S. Allies in Syria Cut Islamic State Supply Line', *The Wall Street Journal,* 16 June 2015.; Royce and Engel, *To Authorize The Direct Provision Of Defense Articles, Defense Services, And Related Training To The Kurdistan Regional Government, And For Other Purposes.*

[930] Royce and Engel, *To Authorize the Direct Provision of Defense Articles, Defense Services, and Related Training to the Kurdistan Regional Government, and for Other Purposes.*

[931] Y. Trofimov, The State of the Kurds,' *Wall Street Journal,* 19 June 2015.

[932] ibid.

[933] Trofimov ,'The State of the Kurds'.

market. In this regard, the KRG would play a role in stabilizing the global oil price.[934] The Kurdistan region, by exporting approximately 1 million barrels daily at the end of 2015 and increasing this rate to 3 barrels daily in 2019 as Kurdish sources have mentioned,[935] and with the discovery of extensive gas, would contribute to the stabilization of the global energy price.[936] In this regard, David Philips argued that in the case of the partition of Iraq, the U.S. can maintain its primary interests by concentrating on the KRG as a reliable ally in the region.[937] This is because as well as the Kurdistan region being pro-U.S. and stable, "Iraqi Kurdistan is rich in minerals and energy supplies. There are 45 billion barrels of proven oil reserves and vast natural gas fields. Exxon and other U.S. energy companies have a stake".[938]

Likewise, as has been mentioned in chapter 5, since 2003 the U.S. has tried to make Iraq a stable, democratic, strong and strategic partner in order to control the Middle East and enhance its regional hegemony. However, after the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq and then the incursion of ISIL into Iraq in 2014, it has been proved that Iraq is not stable, not democratic and not the U.S.' strategic partner in controlling the region. In effect Iraq is a major source of instability in the region, and the consequences of the Iraq war undermined U.S. regional hegemony. Moreover, with the deterioration of security in 2014, Iraq with its new crisis, constitutes the key "challenges and threats for regional order and stability but also potentially more directly for the United States".[939] Iraq is considering Iranian partners rather than U.S., which tries to impose its hegemony on the region.[940] This is in contrast to the Kurds, who are considered by the U.S. as a reliable partner,[941] and major pro-stability actor in the Middle East. In this regard, Ofra Bengio, argues that there has been a perspective which claims that the Kurdistan region would be a source of regional instability, but the reality and transformations on the ground

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[934] R. Kandiyoti, 'Engaging Turkey Avenues Of Strategic Engagement Between The United States, Europe &Turkey –Energy Supplies & Energy', (Institute for Strategic Dialogue, April, 2013),< http://www.strategicdialogue.org/Energy_-_Trilateral_Strategy_Paper.pdf >[accessed 19 May 2015].

[935] KRG, *Speech by Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani about energy and foreign policy in Reichstag Building Germany*.

[936] Kandiyoti, 'Engaging Turkey Avenues Of Strategic Engagement Between The United States, Europe &Turkey –Energy Supplies & Energy'.

[937] CNBC, *the End of Iraq.*

[938] ibid.

[939] Brookings Institution, This is Civil War*: Brookings Experts Discuss Iraq Crisis Policy Options, (*The Brookings Institution, 20 June 2014) <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/brookings-now/posts/2014/06/this-is-civil-war-brookings-experts-discuss-iraq-crisis-policy-options> [accessed June 2015].

[940] A. Khedery, *'Iran's Shiite Militias are Running Amok in Iraq', Foreign Policy,* 19 February 2015.

[941] Royce and Engel, *To Authorize the Direct Provision of Defense Articles, Defense Services, and Related Training to the Kurdistan Regional Government, and for Other Purposes.*

does not prove such a viewpoint. For a decade, the Kurdistan region has been a source of stability in the region. She continues saying that the conflict between Shia and Sunnis has to be considered to be the key threat for regional stability in the whole Middle East.[942] Hence with the deterioration of security in the region and the breakdown of Iraq and Syria, the U.S.'s concerns about an independent KRG being a source of instability in the country does not make sense.[943] This is because there has been widespread instability in the region and Iraq and Syria have become central areas of sectarian conflict and have seen an expansion of terrorism. Iraq is already 'unfixable'[944] and it has disintegrated and is now divided into Kurds, Shia and ISIL,[945] with the Kurdistan region virtually separated from Baghdad.[946]

In this regard, the U.S. democrat representative Adam Smith, in a discussion with the U.S. Defence officers of the House Armed Services Committee, in June 2015 stressed that "Iraq is fractured. You can make a pretty powerful argument, in fact, that Iraq is no more".[947] Hence it can be said, with relative decline of the U.S. regional hegemony and widespread instability in the Middle East, the Obama administration has showed more flexibility to deal with the new realities in the region, which have manifested in the possibility of the disintegration of the Sykes–Picot borders in Iraq and Syria, the emergence of a new security system which includes the Kurdistan region as a new state and ally with the U.S. administration. In particular the Kurds and Kurdistan region is considered pro-regional stability actor and an influential factor in advancing U.S. strategy in Iraq and the region.

Finally, other factors which would contribute to U.S. regional hegemony are associated with the geopolitical location of Kurdistan and the KRG's willingness to offer a military base to the U.S. troops.[948] Creating a Kurdish state would pave the way for the U.S. to establish military bases, bolstering its position in the region.[949] It is notable that

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[942] O. Benqio, ' Meet the Kurds, a Historically Oppressed People Who Will Get Their Own State', *Tablet Magazine,* http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/182042/kurdish-independence (accessed May 2015).

[943] T. W. Waters, 'The Kurdish option: An independent state for the Kurds, an ally for the U.S. in Iraq' Los *Angeles Times*, 7 July 2014.

[944] J. Foreman, 'Can an Independent Kurdistan Reshape the Middle East?', *Newsweek,* 29 July 2014.

[945] Waters, 'The Kurdish option: An independent state for the Kurds, an ally for the U.S. in Iraq'.

[946] Hussein and Falah, *raq's crisis and the KRG*.

[947] D. Lamothe, 'Pentagon chief defends growing training program in Iraq — but acknowledges problems,' Washington *Post*, 17 June 2015.

[948] Foreman, 'Building the U.S.-Kurdistan Special Relationship,' *Wall Street Journal* 10 July 2014.

[949] ibid.

after 2003, one of the U.S. goals was to establish a military base in Iraq, [950] but this has been refused by the Iraqi government.[951] Therefore, it is important for the U.S. to have a military base in Kurdistan. This would allow it to monitor the situation in Iran and Syria and to implement a deterrence strategy towards Iran.[952] In order to confront ISIL, the U.S. has already used a military base in Kurdistan.[953] It is remarkable that the U.S. military base in the region is part of the U.S.'s strategy to maintain its core national interests in the Middle East. The U.S. aims to prevent hostile actors from imposing their hegemony in the region, at conducting military operations against terrorist groups and securing the flow of oil and gas to the global market.[954] Therefore a U.S. military presence in Kurdistan would contribute to enhancing its political and military presence in the region and would enhance U.S. regional hegemony.

6.3.2 Iranian Domination In Iraq

The withdrawal of U.S. troops in 2011 and the incursion of ISIL into Iraq in 2014 escalated the U.S.-Iranian struggle there. This competition between both sides has directly affected U.S. policy towards Iraq and Kurdistan. It is remarkable that the U.S. and Iran have a conflict of interests in Iraq and the Middle East. The U.S. has tried to reduce the influence of Iran over Iraq, and make it a strategic partner to maintain its regional hegemony in the region. However, Iran's key goals in Iraq and the Middle East concentrate on a variety of points. Iran's foreign policy ambition is to become a key regional power in the Middle East and the Gulf region. A goal also pursued during the Shah's regime.[955] Moreover, it aims at developing its nuclear program to enhance its security position internally and externally,[956] this step has triggered concern among the

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[950] Stokes, 'The War Gamble: Understanding US Interests in Iraq', pp.10 8.

[951] U.S. Department of State, *Strategic Framework Agreement for a Relationship of Friendship and Cooperation between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq.;* U.S. Department of State, *Security Agreement between Iraq and the United States of America.*

[952] ibid.

[953] Rudaw, *US opening air base near Erbil, Kurdish official* says *Rudaw, (*11 February 2015) <http://rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/110220152> [accessed June 2015].

[954] R. McDaniel, 'No "Plan B"U.S. Strategic Access in the Middle East and the Question of Bahrain' (Brookings Institution June 2013) <http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/papers/2013/06/24-us-strategic-access-middle-east-bahrain-mcdaniel/24-us-strategic-access-middle-east-bahrain-mcdaniel.pdf>[accessed June 2015].

[955] Katzman, *Iran's Foreign Policy*, pp. 1-12.

[956] A. Nader, *Iran After the Bomb: How Would a Nuclear-Armed Tehran Behave?* Rand Corporation, 2013).

U.S. and its allies about the nature of the program.[957] Likewise, Iran tries to disrupt the Israeli and Arab peace process,[958] believing that any development in this regard would damage its interests. Additionally, in Iraq the major Iranian goals since the withdrawal of the U.S. has been to control this state [959] and make Iraq a strategic partner in order to confront the U.S. and its rivals in the region. It can be said that since the Syrian internal war and incursion of ISIL into Iraq, there has been a sharp division and conflict between the Shia and Sunni supported by the Iranian and Saudi Arabian block. The departure of U.S. troops from Iraq, and finally, the attack of ISIL on Iraq in June 2014, resulted in the increasing domination of Iran over Iraq.[960] The influence of Iran has reached a level where Iraq's policy has mirrored Iran's agenda in the Middle East. With Iraq's support of Assad's regime in Syria, with the provision of weapons to Shia militia groups,[961] the marginalization of the Arab Sunni and the Kurds in Iraq,[962] together with the deterioration of its ties with Turkey [963] and other Arab Gulf states,[964] all these have been evidence of the deep Iranian influence in Iraq.

According to Iraqi politicians, the Iranian approach is different to the U.S. policy. The main Iranian policy in Iraq is to control the Iraqi state via its Shia groups.[965] In this regard the senior adviser to the former Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki in 2014 stressed that "The American approach is to leave Iraq to the Iraqis", However, the Iranians have

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[957] A. Carter, *Statement on U.S. Policy and Strategy in the Middle East before the House Armed Services Committee* (Washington: U.S. Department of Defense, 17 June 2015), <http://www.defense.gov/Speeches/Speech.aspx?SpeechID=1949> [accessed 19 June 2015].

[958] C. L. Addis et al., *Iran: Regional Perspectives and US Policy,* CRS Report for Congress. *(Order Code* R40849). (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 13 January 2010), pp.1-50.

[959] M. Eisenstaedt et al., *Iran's Influence in Iraq: Countering Tehran's Whole-of-government Approach, pp.* pp. 1-26. (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2011)< http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PolicyFocus111.pdf > [accessed 19 June 2015].

[960] Z. Khalilzad, 'Checkmate: Breaking Iran's Stranglehold over Iraq ', *The National Interest,* March 16, 2015.; Associated Press, 'Iran Eclipses US as Iraq's Ally in Fight Against Militants,' *The New York Times* 12 January 2015.; G. Gause, 'Beyond Sectarianism: The New Middle East Cold War,' pp. 1-23 (The Brookings Doha Centr*e* , 2014) http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/Research/Files/Papers/2014/07/22-beyond-sectarianism-cold-war-gause/English-PDF.pdf?la=en> [accessed May 2015].

[961] M. R. Gordonsept, 'Iran Supplying Syrian Military via Iraqi Airspace,' *The New York Times*.

[962] New York Times , Senators' Letter to President Obama on Iraq.

[963] S. Cagaptay and T. Evans, 'Turkey's Changing Relations With Iraq; Kurdistan Up, Baghdad Down', (The Washington Institute for Near East Policy October, 2012) <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PolicyFocus122.pdf > [accessed 19 June 2015]

[964] K. Katzman, *Iraq: Politics, Security, and U.S. Policy,* CRS Report for Congress. *(Order Code* RS21968) (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 26 May 2015).

[965] M. Eisenstaedt et al., *Iran's Influence in Iraq: Countering Tehran's Whole-of-government Approach*, pp. 1-26.

a completely different policy, he continued by saying that "The Iranians don't say leave Iraq to the Iraqis. They say leave Iraq to us".[966] After the fall of Mosul in 2014 and the collapse of the Iraqi army, Qassem Soleimani Quds Force commander became the key leader who supervises the Shia militia against ISIL,[967] and the influence of Iran has deeply increased as it has a 'veto power' over the decisions made by the Iraqi government.[968]

 With regard to the ramifications of this Iranian domination over U.S. interests in the region, it has been described as a game changer. In this regard, Zalmay Khalilzad the former U.S. Ambassador in Iraq (2005-2007) argues that "If Iran consolidates its control over Iraq − the country with the second largest population in the Persian Gulf and rich oil and gas resources—Tehran will be in a strong position to dominate the entire region".[969] He continues by saying that the consolidation of Iran's regional position would push it to remove the foreign power including the U.S. presence in order to pave the way for its domination.[970] On the same note, Former CIA Director David Petraeus, the U.S. commander of troops in Iraq during (2007-2008) argued that "the foremost threat to Iraq's long-term stability and the broader regional equilibrium is not the Islamic State; rather, it is Shiite militias, many backed by — and some guided by — Iran".[971] He continued by saying that "Longer term, Iranian-backed Shia militia could emerge as the pre-eminent power in the country, one that is outside the control of the government and instead answerable to Tehran".[972]

The struggle between Iran and the U.S. has directly affected their policy towards the Kurdistan region. The Iranian authorities saw the Kurdistan region's policy in Iraq and region as being against its interests. The KRI policy to improve its ties with the U.S., Turkey and the Arab states and to support the Syrian revolution pushed Iran to confront the KRG ambitions for more power and independent and put pressure on the Kurds.[973]

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[966] B. Dehghanpisheh, Babak, *Special Report: The Fighters of Iraq Who Answer to Iran* (Reuters, November 12, 2014) <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/12/us-mideast-crisis-militias-specialreport-idUSKCN0IW0ZA20141112> [accessed May 2015].
[967] Ibid.
[968] M. Pregent, 'I Saw the U.S. Hand Iraq Over to the Iranians. is the Whole Region Next?' , The (Tower, February 2015) <http://www.thetower.org/article/i-saw-the-u-s-hand-iraq-over-to-the-iranians-is-the-whole-region-next/> [accessed May 2015].
[969] Khalilzad, 'Checkmate: Breaking Iran's Stranglehold over Iraq'.
[970] ibid.
[971] S, Liz, 'Petraeus: The Islamic State isn't our Biggest Problem in Iraq', *Washington post,* 20 March 2015.
[972] ibid.
[973] N. Hetuti, ' Roly Iran Le Nakoky Niywan Hawler O Baghdad ', *Rudaw,* 15 December 2014.

In this regard, Iran has pressed the Baghdad authorities to put pressure on the KRG.[974] As a consequence of this pressure, in 2014 the KRG budget was cut by the central government who used it as a card against the Kurds.[975] This pressure by Iran and its Shia allies in Baghdad was to keep the Kurds away from the U.S. and their rivals in the region.

Moreover, the Barzani declaration to move towards self-determination has further escalated pressure from Iran and Baghdad towards Kurdistan. In this regard, Iran strongly refused and threatened this Kurdish attempt at independence. In this context, Marzieh Afkham, Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman argued that "undoubtedly the vigilant Iraqi people will not allow the Zionist regime and enemies of a unified Iraq to carry out their plots and realize their immature fantasies in the region".[976] In effect, the key Iran concerns about these Kurdish steps belong to variety of factors. Firstly, Iran wants to keep Iraq under Shia dominant authority, which would allow Iran to excise its influence across Iraq. However the partition of this state would undermine the Iranian impact over Iraq as a whole[977] and its power would be limited in the Shia dominant areas in the south of Iraq and this would not be in favour of Iran interests and desires in the region. Secondly, Iran saw that the Israel and Turkey which they are Iran's major rivals in the region would benefit from this new state.[978] Moreover, Iran believes that Kurdish independence would offer a military base for the U.S. and Israel would jeopardize its interests in the region.[979] Thirdly, Iran believes that such a Kurdish movement could provoke the minority in Iran, including the Kurds.[980] Finally, the disintegration of Iraq would push the Iraqi Sunni to make an alliance with Saudi Arabia.[981]

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[974] Hetuti, ' Roly Iran Le Nakoky Niywan Hawler O Baghdad '.

[975] Rudaw, *Kurdistan Government Blasts Baghdad Over Budget Freeze,* [Rudaw, 3 March 2014] <http://rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/030320141>[accessed June 2015].

[976] Press TV, 'Iraq Division in Line with Israel Agenda:", (Press TV, 5 Jul 2014*)* <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2014/07/05/370003/iraq-division-in-line-with-israel-plot/> [accessed May 2015].

[977] M. Abedin, 'Iran Balks at Prospect, of Kurdish Statehood' (Middle East Eye, 17 July 2014) <http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/why-kurdish-state-massive-threat-iran-1165054662> [accessed May 2015].

[978] Alex Vatanka, 'Why Iran Fears an Independent Kurdistan', *The National Interest,* 25 July 2014.

[979] M. Abedin, 'Iran Balks at Prospect of Kurdish Statehood'.

[980] ibid.

[981] D. Esfandiary and Ariane Tabatabai, 'Iran's ISIS Policy', *International Affairs,* 91 (2015), pp. 1-15.

However, with the decline of U.S. influence in Baghdad in favour of Iran[982] and its hegemony in the region, the U.S. has taken a step forward in supporting the Kurdistan region as a major ally in confronting the Iranian and Shia militia hegemony in Iraq. This is particularly the case with the U.S.'s intention and willingness to move forwards in terms of relying on local allies to maintain stability and security in the region rather than U.S. forces. This new policy has further changed the U.S.' perspectives towards Kurdistan and Iraq. While, since the collapse of the Iraqi army in 2014, Iran has been hoping for domination over Iraq via the formulation of Shia militia groups and a pursuit of sectarian policy,[983] the U.S. has shifted its previous policy of backing a strong central government and has started to stress real power sharing.[984] In this regard, the Obama administration, supporting the Iraqi government against ISIL, has been linked to the distribution of power among the Kurds, Shia and Sunni.[985] The U.S. purpose of this step has been to reduce Iranian hegemony over Iraq. This is because if Iraq has remained a strong central government would be in favour of Iran rather than the U.S. policy in the region.

Moreover, with the defeat of the U.S. policy aimed at establishing a stable, democratic and pro-U.S. state in Baghdad and replacing it with a sectarian and Shia dominated state backed by Iran, U.S. support for the Kurdistan region as a last area of its zone of influence in Iraq and has showed more flexibility towards Kurdish self-determination and a move towards independence. Especially, with the collapse of the Iraqi army and spread of Shia militants backed by Iran, the U.S. has paid more attention to the Peshmarga forces as a key and reliable ally in confronting ISIL,[986] and the influence of Iranian Shia militia in Iraq.

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[982] Khalilzad, 'Checkmate: Breaking Iran's Stranglehold Over Iran.; K. M. Pollack, 'Options for U.S. Policy Toward Iraq '.

[983] O. Spyer and J. Aymenn Al-Tamimi, 'Iran and the Shia Militias Advance in Iraq,' (The Middle East Forum, December, 2014) <http://www.meforum.org/4927/how-iraq-became-a-proxy-of-the-islamic-republic> [accessed July. 2015] .

[984] B. Obama, *Remarks by the President on the Situation in Iraq,* The White House, 19 June 2014).

[985] Ibid.

[986] J. Parkinson, and D. Nissenbaum, ' U.S., Allies Training Kurds on Using Sophisticated Weaponry Against Islamic State,' *Wall Street Journal* 21 September 2014.

6.3.3 The Change in The Perspective of The U.S.'S Allies

One of the other factors that influenced the U.S.'s policy is related to the new position of the U.S.'s allies towards the KRI including Turkey, the Arab Gulf states and Israel. As mentioned in Chapter 5, Turkey and the Arab states allied with the U.S. were concerned about the KRG's aspirations in Iraq. However, the Shia and Sunni sectarian war in the region, the Shia domination of the Iraqi government and overt pursuit of a pro-Iranian policy in the region, has affected the Arab states' perspective towards Iraq and has led them to favour developing Kurdish-Arab ties.[987] The Kurdistan region has supported the Sunni axis, which includes Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and other the Gulf States in the face of Iran and its allies' threat, including in the Syrian revolution.[988]

Further, the Arab states saw Iran as the major source of instability in the region, since its support triggered a sectarian conflict in Bahrain, Yemen, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq with the purpose of expanding its authority in the Arab world.[989] Within this context, some sources reported that there had been confidential communication between Saudi Arabia and Israel concerning their possible support for the Kurdish state as a barrier to Iran's expansion in the region.[990] Moreover, the Arab states and their Sunni allies in Iraq have changed their previous policy of supporting a strong central government in Baghdad and they now favour a distribution of power and creation of their `own federal region in Iraq. In this regard, Atheel Al-Nujayfi, the governor of Mosel in a discussion at the Brooking Institution in 2015 stressed that the Iraqi political system should be

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[987] Stansfield, 'Kurdistan Rising: to Acknowledge or Ignore the Unravelling of Iraq', pp. 1-16.

[988] ibid, pp. 1-16.; Stansfield, 'The unravelling of the post-First World War state system? The Kurdistan Region of Iraq and the transformation of the Middle East', pp. 279.

[989] G. Joffé, 'The Future of the Middle East and North Africa' (Norway: (The Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre NOREF August 2013) <http://www.peacebuilding.no/var/ezflow_site/storage/original/application/095d84161250381a35a11eda58169147.pdf >[accessed June 2015.; J. M. Sharp, *Yemen: Civil War and Regional Intervention,* CRS Report for Congress. *(Order Code* R43960). (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 26 March 2015).; J. Spyer,'Do Syria, Iraq and, Lebanon Still Exist?' (Middle East Forum Promotes American Interests (February 2014) <http://www.meforum.org/3751/syria-iraq-lebanon-nation-states. [accessed June 2015].

[990] T. Lifson, 'Israel and Saudi Arabia publicly acknowledge secret bilateral talks' (American Thinker, 5 June 2015) <http://www.americanthinker.com/blog/2015/06/israel_and_saudi_arabia_publicly_acknowledge_secret_bilateral_talks.html> [accessed 20 June 2015].

resurrected and that power should be distributed. He argues that the best formula for Iraqi Sunni areas is the KRG autonomous region model.[991]

On the same note, the KRG-Turkey relationship has improved and there has been a change in Turkey's policy towards Iraqi Kurdistan, especially in terms of economic independence and energy ties.[992] The real change in the Turkish perspective towards the KRI has been more visible from 2012 onwards. In 2013, Turkey and the KRG signed the 'multi-billion-dollar energy package,'[993] which would further see the KRG become a new energy actor in the region.[994] Reuters confirmed that this deal was the "most comprehensive energy deal in Turkey's history".[995] According to the deal, the KRG would establish an independent pipeline, which would allow it to export "1 million barrels per day by 2015 and the gas flow is likely to start by early 2017".[996] After this deal and the building of the independent pipeline in 2014, the KRG began to export its oil independently to Turkey and the global market.[997]

 Within this context, it can be noted that the KRG's national interests met with Turkey's security energy interests.[998] Turkey wants energy firstly to fulfil its demands and also to become the corridor to supply Europe. In return, the KRG needs a route to export its oil and gas bypassing Baghdad. [999] Moreover, the Kurdistan region's gas and oil would constitute a cheaper option for Turkey, compared with Iranian and Russian energy.[1000] On the same note, the KRG attempted to improve its ties with European states by benefitting from its energy sources constituting another of the KRG's tools to enhance

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[991] The Brookings Institution, *The Future of Iraq: A Conversation with Sunni Leaders,* (2015) <http://www.brookings.edu/events/2015/05/11-future-of-ira> [accessed 20 May 2015]

[992] Ottaway, M. and Ottaway, D., 'How the Kurds Got Their Way,' *Foreign Policy* June 2014 .; Heuvelen, 'Iraq's Kurdish region pursues ties with Turkey — for oil and independence'.

[993] Pamuk, Humeyra and Coskun, Orhan, 'Exclusive: Turkey, Iraqi Kurdistan Ink Landmark Energy Contracts*',* (Reuters, 29 November 2013) <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/11/29/us-turkey-iraq-oil-idUSBRE9AS0BO20131129> [accessed May 2015].

[994] ibid.

[995] ibid.

[996] ibid.

[997] KRG, *KRG Statement on First Oil Sales through Pipeline Export,* (Erbil: KRG, 23 May 2014) <http://cabinet.gov.krd/a/d.aspx?s=010000&l=12&a=51589> [accessed 21 May 2015].; KRG, *KRG Statement on Oil Export* (KEG: Ministry of Natural Resources, 20 June 2014) <http://mnr.krg.org/index.php/en/press-releases/379-krg-statement-on-oil-exports> [accessed 21 May 2015].

[998] Stansfield, 'The unravelling of the post-First World War state system? The Kurdistan Region of Iraq and the transformation of the Middle East', p. 273.

[999] ibid., pp. 273-274.

[1000] Ahmed, and Krauss, ' Oil Gives Kurds a Path to Independence, and Conflict with Baghdad'.

its international position. [1001] The European states can depend on the Kurdistan region as a partner to supply them with energy,[1002] with the effect of minimizing their dependency on Russian gas.[1003] Within this context, Nechirvan Barzani Prime Minister of Iraqi Kurdistan, on 21 March 2013 in Germany stressed that "The KRG can help to contribute to the long-term gas supply needs of Turkey and Europe, as a reliable partner for both".[1004] Hence, it can be argued that with the improvement of the KRG's ties with Turkey, Israel, European states and Arab states, this has pushed the U.S. to be more flexible towards the Kurdistan region's demands, because this change has removed one of the key obstacles for the U.S. in supporting the KRI.

Within this context, many states showed their willingness to support the Kurdish aspiration for self-determination. In this regard, Jafar Eminki, deputy of the Kurdish parliament, declared that 28 states in the world support the Kurdish state.[1005] According to Rudaw TV news, France, Britain, the United States, Kuwait, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Italy and Turkey are among the states that showed their willingness to accept the Kurdish authority's attempts to move towards self-determination.[1006]

Hence it can be said with the weakening of U.S. hegemony in the region and the emergence of Iran as a strong regional power, Turkey and the Arab states have shown more willingness to make an alignment with the KRG to contain the Iranian influence in Iraq and the region. In this regard, alignments amongst states are usually made to bolster their security which are under threat by the other and it usually emerges among states that have some common interests.[1007] However, in the alignment process, because there are not shared interests in all aspects there should be a compromise among them.[1008] Hence it can be said that due to the weakening of U.S. hegemony and a rise in the role of Iran as a great threat to the national interests of the Arab states, Israel and

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[1001] V. Tcherneva et al., 'Europe's alternatives to Russian gas', (European Council on Foreign Relations, 9 April 2015), <http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_europes_alternatives_to_russian_gas311666> [accessed 21 May 2015].
[1002] Ibid.
[1003] Ahmed, and Krauss, ' Oil Gives Kurds a Path to Independence, and Conflict with Baghdad.
[1004] KRG, 'Speech by Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani about energy and foreign policy in Reichstag Building Germany'.
[1005] Rudaw, 'Deputy speaker: 28 countries support free Kurdistan', (Rudaw, 6 March 2015) <http://rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/06032015> [accessed 20 June 2015].
[1006] rûdaw, *World Shows Growing Acceptance of Kurdish Independence Bid*, (Rudaw, 7 July 2014) <http://rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/070720142> [accessed 19 June 2015].
[1007] Kenneth N, Waltz,'The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History,* 18.4 (1988): pp. 615-628.
[1008] ibid., pp. 19-23.

Turkey, this has pushed them to be more flexible towards the Kurdistan region's demands for independence. They have seen that enabling Kurdish independence would create a barrier in the face of the expansion of Iran in Iraq and the region.[1009] In this regard, in an interview with Rudaw a spokesman for Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) Huseyin Celik, regarding Kurdish independence stressed that the Kurdistan region, like all nations, has the right to decide on its future and determine the form of entity that it wanted. He continued by saying that Iraq is heading towards disintegration and due to a sectarian policy in Iraq we would continue to back the Kurdistan region.[1010]

On the same note, Israel openly supports the KRG's aspirations and demands the U.S. to back a Kurdish independent state.[1011] Israel's support for the Kurds is in one sense because they are security partners in the Middle East since their existence has been under threat for a long time.[1012] Since the 1960s, there have been relations between both sides due to the support provided by Israel to the Iraqi Kurds. [1013] However, since the rise of ISIS and the power of Iran, for Israel, a Kurdish independent state would be an ally against enemy states and terrorist groups.[1014]

Conclusion

It can be argued that during this stage, U.S. policy towards Kurds underwent significant change and it has been more flexible towards the Kurdistan region's demands including even for an independent state. As Barzani in April 2015 in a meeting with all the political parties in Kurdistan stressed, the U.S. position towards Kurdish independence has changed and it did not reject the Kurdish independent state.[1015] This change in U.S. policy can also be seen in a statement released by the White House in May 2015, which emphasised its support for the Kurdistan region without linking this support to the

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[1009] Lifson, 'Israel and Saudi Arabia publicly acknowledge secret bilateral talks'
[1010] Rudaw TV, *Turkey's AKP Spokesman: Iraq's Kurds have Right to decide their Future,* (13 June 2014) <http://rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/130620142 >, [accessed May 2015]
[1011] T. Lazaroff , 'Netanyahu: I support Kurdish independence' , *Jerusalem Post*, 30 June 2014.
[1012] Benqio, ' Meet the Kurds, a Historically Oppressed People Who Will Get Their Own State.
[1013] ibid.
[1014] ibid.
[1015] F. Hussein, *Barzani Le Gel Berprsany America Basi Dawlety Kurdi Deket; didar le gel hividar Ahmed*, 29 April 2015.

territorial integrity of Iraq.[1016] In early 2003, the U.S. wanted to create single state without a federal system. This policy changed in 2004 and the U.S. supported the federal system, but with a strong central government. It was only after 2014 that the U.S. started to revise its policy and support a real distribution of power in Iraq between the central government and the Kurds. In addition, the U.S. supported Kurds to control Kirkuk and disputed areas and it also stopped its opposition to the KRG independently exporting its oil to the global market. Politically and economically, the KRG was moving towards de facto independence without U.S. opposition.

What were the major reasons behind this dramatic change? The U.S. had more need to rely on external balancing and its reliable allies to pursue its national interests. Defending its hegemony was manifested in confronting terrorist groups, preventing the rise of rivals and maintaining stability in Iraq and throughout the region. In this regards the KRG become one of the key political and military actors in the Middle East. The Kurdish forces became a key U.S. partner in confronting ISIL in Iraq and Syria and maintaining stability. Moreover, the KRG exporting oil independently in 2014 contributed to stabilize the global oil price. Further, the KRG considered the key U.S. partner to pursue its strategy in Iraq - confronting Iran and Shia militia hegemony over this state.

From 2003 to 2011, two factors (the prospect of security in Iraq and U.S.-Iran competition) were the key factors which, to some extent, challenged the U.S.'s policy of seeking or preserving Iraq as a single state with a central government. Any move by the Kurds towards independence or the U.S. supporting the KRG's demands for Kirkuk and the disputed areas would threaten U.S. national interests and its regional hegemony. However, from 2012 to 2015, in particular, after the collapse of the Iraqi security forces in 2014, the political equation on the ground changed in favour of the Kurdistan region. Increase in the role and influence of Russia, China and Iran in the region and the rise of ISIL was a signal of declining U.S. hegemony in the Middle East. In the new environment of ISIL, civil war in Syria, the collapse Iraqi security and the rise of Iran as a major regional power, the U.S. needed to work with the KRG. In this regard the role and position of the KRI was important to the U.S. to such an extent that this encouraged the Obama administration to accept Kurdish moves towards *de facto* independence. In

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[1016] See The White House, *Readout of the President and Vice President's Meeting with Iraqi Kurdistan Region President Masoud Barzani*, 5 May 2015).

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particular since 2014 Iraq has been *de facto* disintegrated between sectarian and ethnic lines and with the weakening of U.S. influence, Iran and its affiliated Shia militia imposed their hegemony over the Iraqi government.

The weakening of U.S. hegemony and wider sectarian conflict in the region has also allowed space for an enhancement in the ties between U.S. allies including Turkey and the Arab states towards the Kurdistan region. These states know that with the U.S. being weaker, they have to pursue their own alliances with the KRG, as the only stable area in Iraq, as a partner in combatting the rise of the influence of Iran in Iraq and region. In particular they have come to realize that Iraq has been controlled by Iran and Shia militias that are posing grave threat to their national interests. Therefore, they started revising their policy regarding supporting strong government in Baghdad and rejecting Kurdish demands. In this regards they have backed distribution of powers and even Kurdish aspiration for independent. Additionally, the change in perspectives of the U.S. allies has removed the obstacles for U.S. policy towards the KRG and has given more freedom to the U.S. to support the Kurdistan region's aspirations.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This thesis examined the U.S. policy towards the KRI between 2003 and 2015, showing that this period witnessed a departure from the U.S.' traditional reluctance to recognise Kurds politically. This can be seen in the U.S. policy regarding Kurdish independence, the federal region, and Kirkuk and other disputed areas, as well as with regard to the distribution of power in Iraq (whether to support a unitary state or take a more federal approach). The reasons behind this change in U.S.-Kurdish policy can be linked to the KRI's important role in U.S. strategy after 2003. In particular, with the change in the situation on the ground, The KRG became an important partner in assisting the U.S. in maintaining its hegemony in the Middle East, ensuring stability, protecting oil supplies, confronting terrorist groups, and tackling the influence of Iran in Iraq.

7.2 U.S. Foreign Policy, and the Kurds in Iraq

7.2.1 U.S. Policy, Middle East and Iraq

Since the Cold War, the U.S. has attempted to gain or maintain its hegemony in the region, perceiving its domination over this region as being an important step for its global hegemony. This is because of the Middle East's important economic, military, and political position, which has encouraged the U.S. to intensify its attempts to dominate the area and tackle any hostile state's policy aimed at imposing their authority over the region. In particular, the Middle East has considerable oilfields and natural resources, and so the U.S.' rivals' control of this region would pose a serious threat to the former's security and its vital interests.

Within this context, since 2003 the U.S. key purpose in Iraq was to transform this country into a strategic partner in order to bring regional transformation and gain control of the Middle East. Due to its oil supplies and geopolitical position, Iraq was

perceived as crucial in this sense, which is why the United States sought an alliance. As such, Iraq would join Israel and Saudi Arabia as a U.S. partner, albeit in a subordinate role. In this regards, the U.S. policy towards the Kurdistan region and its demands can be explained based on the assumption as to what extent the KRI would be useful for the U.S. grand strategy which pursued towards Iraq and region to maintain its strategic interests.

This U.S.-Kurdish policy has been more obvious after regime change in Iraq. As the occupation of Iraq turned into a security disaster, it was in danger of creating systemic change in the region and this pushed U.S. to continually revise its policy towards Iraq and Kurdistan. The U.S., therefore, shifted between accepting *de facto* Kurdish independence and then rejecting this when it seemed that Iraq had stabilised. However, the systemic crisis involving the rise of ISIL saw the U.S. increasingly treating the KRI as a *de facto* state in Iraq.

7.2.2 The U.S. Policy and Iraqi Kurdistan Prior to 2003

During the Cold War, the key U.S. strategy in the Middle East relied on confronting and containing the expansion of the USSR and its rivals, and the security of the flow of oil to the global market. In particular, the U.S. had serious concerns about the USSR's expansion policy and its attempts to control oilfield sources, and therefore the former's strategy was to tackle this threat and to attempt to redistribute power and change the international system towards the 'unipolar' one, in favour of its own hegemony. During this stage, the U.S. did not have any intention of supporting the Kurds in their political battle for their rights inside Iraq or certainly for any kind of Kurdish independent state.

On the contrary, U.S. administrations considered the Kurds as a source of instability that threatened the U.S. and its allies' positions and interests. During this period and due to the 'bipolar system', the U.S.' key policy was to prevent its rivals from imposing their hegemony over the region. From the 1950s, as the nation began to take over the role of regional hegemon from the British Empire, it sought to ensure that the USSR would not be able to gain allies in the Middle Eastern region. For this reason, it is clear that in the period between 1969 and 1975 the U.S. exploited the Kurdish issue as a tool to change the Iraqi state's aggressive stance towards America and its allies and to

contain the influence of the USSR in Iraq. This is further evidenced by the fact that when the U.S. achieved these objectives, it abandoned the Iraqi Kurds.

From 1990 to 2002, U.S. policy towards the Middle East and Iraq was mostly driven by a new alteration in the international system and a redistribution of power in favour of U.S. global hegemony. With this change in the international system towards a 'unipolar system', the major U.S. strategy was to preserve and install its regional hegemony in the Middle East. For this purpose, U.S. policy towards the Kurds was part of a general effort to contain Iraq and Iran's influence in the area, thwarting the rise of regional hegemony in the region, and preventing the Saddam's regime from posing a threat to regional stability as a platform for practicing its regional hegemony in the region. During this period, as a result of the change in the nature of the international system from a bipolar to a unipolar system, this gave the U.S. more freedom of action in the region, including in their dealing with the Kurds. Furthermore, the U.S. assisted the Kurds with humanitarian aid and created a 'no fly zone' to tackle the crisis of refugees in northern Iraq. However, despite this, the U.S. did not have any specific plan to support the KRI politically, believing that such a policy would threaten its national interests and pave the way for its rivals to impose their dominance over the region.

7.3 Driving Factors of U.S. Foreign Policy Towards Kurdistan Region of Iraq (2003-2015)

7.3.1 Internal Factors: 2003-2011

During this stage, the U.S. pursued a new and more flexible policy towards the KRI, but it was always limited by the U.S.' position on maintaining Iraq as a unitary state. In this regards, the U.S. sought to make Iraq a strategic partner, maintain the territorial integrity of Iraq, secure the flow of Iraqi oil, and confront terrorist groups. These factors influenced U.S. policy towards the KRI's demands as discussed in the study. Within this context, the U.S. attempted to transform Iraq into a (junior) strategic partner to

strengthen the U.S.'s hegemony in the region. In particular, during this stage, the U.S. exclusively stressed the importance of maintaining the territorial integrity of Iraq. A strong and stable Iraq would block Shia religious parties' attempts at hegemony and secure the flow of Iraqi oil without disruption. Therefore, U.S. policy was to keep the Kurds inside Iraq and put pressure on the KRI to achieve this aim. In addition, the U.S. was worried that the partition of Iraq would lead to instability and the expansion of terrorist groups inside Iraq, and would thus pose a threat to U.S. interests. In this regard, the U.S. was concerned that any partition of the country could lead to a further partition and to an endless war among different groups, leaving Iraq and the region in deep crisis and threatening its regional policy. Therefore, the U.S. administrations rejected partition of Iraq and even all suggestions for the disintegration of Iraq into three distinct federal regions.

Thus, Kirkuk and the disputed territories became the great challenges confronting U.S. policy in Iraq. During this period, the U.S. perceived the implementation of Article 140 to be a major threat to the security of Iraq, its territorial integrity, and to the U.S. hegemonic ambition in Iraq and the region. The U.S. believed that the best way to keep the Kurds inside Iraq was to prevent the incorporation of these areas into the Kurdistan region, particularly those rich in oil and gas. Therefore, the U.S. took a different approach in an attempt to prevent the realisation of Article 140 related to Kirkuk and the disputed areas, and in this regard it played the key role of postponing a referendum in these areas in 2007. Further, the U.S. never put pressure or took action to solve fundamentally the problem of Kirkuk and the disputed areas, and this was even clearer when they withdrew from the country without tackling it.

On the same note, in the struggle between Baghdad and Erbil, the U.S. policy was in favour of Baghdad, since the U.S. administrations were concerned that the expansion of the Kurdish autonomous region would encourage the KRI to move towards independence. Therefore, during this stage the U.S. was in support of creating a strong central government in Baghdad with the vast authorities, putting pressure mostly on the KRG to remain part of Iraq and ignored the Kurdish perspective, which demanded weak central authorities within a strong federal region. In this context, the U.S. authorities mostly backed the Iraqi Government's perspective, especially in terms of oil resources, distribution of power, and military forces. Similarly, despite the overtly dictatorial

nature of Maliki's government, the U.S. did not put enough pressure on Baghdad to prevent this trend and strongly supported the Maliki government.

However, despite the U.S. policy to create a strong, stable, and strategic partner in a post-invasion Iraq, the U.S. administration showed some flexibility towards Kurdish demands for autonomy and a federal region with limited authorities and in this regards there has been a change in the U.S. perspective towards the KRI. The key reason behind this relative and limited change was linked to the rise of the important role of KRI for the U.S. strategy to tackle the eruption of insurgency and the deterioration of security in Iraq, particularly from 2004 onwards, which created a serious threat to U.S. policy in Iraq and the region. The U.S. feared losing control of Iraq, perceiving that the state would become a 'save haven' for terrorist groups. Hence, the U.S. observed security and stability in the KRI and perceived the Kurds as reliable partners who would be influential for backing the U.S. policy of confronting terrorist groups and keeping Iraq stable and secure. Further the U.S. saw Kurds as a key U.S. democratic and secular partners to confront the influence of Shia religious groups backed by Iran. In this regard the KRG interests became aligned with the U.S. interests and strategy in Iraq and region. Therefore, in 2004 the U.S. started revising its policy towards the Kurds and began supporting their struggle to establish Kurdistan as a federal region in Iraq, albeit with a limited authority. This was the first political change in U.S. policy towards the KRI. Subsequently, the U.S. stressed in 2009 that it would not abandon the Kurds in Iraq and in both the SFA and SA agreements signed with the Iraqi authorities, the U.S. emphasised backing a federal and democratic system in Iraq. During this stage, the key KRG goal was also to enhance its position and entity within the framework of a united Iraq.

7.3.2 External Factors: 2003-2011

During this period, a variety of external factors affected U.S.-Kurdish policy. These were linked to the internal factors mentioned, which centred on the U.S.' wish to expand its hegemony, maintain stability, keep Iran under control, support its security allies and guarantee to access oil supplies in the Middle East. After taking power in 2001, the Bush administration believed that developments in the Middle East led to a rise in radical Islamic groups, an unsuccessful and problematic issue of Iraqi and

Iranian containment policy, and an absence of democracy that challenged and threatened the U.S.' ambition to enhance its hegemony and control of the region. Therefore, it saw that the removal of the Saddam regime and the subsequent transformation of Iraq would play a key role in the new structure of U.S. dominance.

However, the U.S. was also acutely aware that an independent KRI would shift the political equations in favour of the former's rivals, particularly Iran, China, and Russia, and would lead to the disintegration of the Middle East's borders. This would cause dramatic geopolitical change in the region with the emergence of new states with new borders and a new regional security system that would not be in favour of U.S. supremacy. This is particularly the case since the majority of the states in the Middle East are considered multi-ethnic and multi-religious, including those that are major America's allies. Additionally, such steps could spread instability throughout the Middle East and affect the security of oil. Further, during this period, to some extent the U.S. position in Iraq and the region was strong due to its military presence, which meant that it was able to have an impact on Iraqi events and confront the Iranian influence. Therefore, in this regard the Kurds had limited space to increase their power or challenge U.S. pressure.

Further, the U.S. was aware that pursuing a policy in support of any border change or of any separatist movement would create a hostile alliance and coalitions against its policy in the Middle East from both its allies and regional states, which could undermine its hegemony in the region and increase anti-U.S. sentiments in the area. In particular, the U.S. has relied on ensuring secure allies including Turkey and the Arab Gulf States (United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and Oman) in order to enhance and maintain its hegemony. These states are considered central to containing Iranian and Russian expansion policies in the region, supplying oil to the global market, and providing the U.S. with military bases. All these states opposed the partition and federalisation of Iraq, arguing that an independent Kurdish state would threaten their territorial integrity. Therefore, they played a role in postponing the realisation of clause 140 related to Kirkuk and other disputed areas and publicly supported a strong Iraqi central government in Bagdad.

The Arab states strongly rejected the partition of Iraq by arguing that such a policy threatened their national interests, as they believed that strengthening the position of the Kurds would be at the expense of Arab Sunnis in Iraq. At the same time, they feared

that Iraqi partition would provoke the nation's Shia minority and the Arab world to take the same step towards self-determination and independence, compromising their national interests, since states such as Saudi Arabia and Bahrain have substantial Shia minorities. Likewise, since 2003 Turkey has exerted pressure on the U.S. to hinder any Kurdish attempt to expand its authority and incorporate Kirkuk and the disputed areas into Kurdistan, and argued that any partition of Iraq would present a major threat to its national interests and to the territorial integrity of the country due to the presence of a large Kurdish minority inside Turkey. This Turkish policy affected the U.S. policy towards the Kurdish position in Iraq and increased U.S. pressure over the Kurds to reduce their demands.

However, despite these factors that challenged U.S. policy, there again was relative change in the U.S. perspective towards the KRI due to the increase of the role of Iran in Iraq and, as mentioned, the internal deterioration of stability in the latter. This transformation raised in the important role of the KRG to the U.S. strategy in Iraq and region. In particular, since 2003 Iran intensified its efforts to challenge and defeat U.S. policy in Iraq by using its Shia religious partners and to transform Iraq into a strategic partner to counter the U.S. hegemony in the region. This resulted in the U.S. shifting its focus back to the Kurds as a democratic, secular and reliable ally in Iraq. Hence the U.S.' interest of maintaining its regional hegemony was aligned with Kurdish demands for an autonomous region in Iraq. The U.S. believed that limited Kurdish regional power, along with a continuing Kurdish role in the federal government would help to stabilise Baghdad and make Iraq a strategic partner to control the region and, contain or remove anti-U.S. systems in the Middle East including Iran. As such, in a period of crisis the U.S. was to a certain extent forced to marginalise its long-term supporters such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey in order to implement an emergency policy to stabilise Iraq, a policy that necessitated the support of Kurdish interests.

7.3.3 Internal and External Factors: 2012-2015

From 2012 to 2015, the U.S.' policy towards the KRI was significantly influenced by the dangers of the deterioration of Iraqi stability (most evident in the expansion of ISIL), and the rise in influence of Iran, Russia, and China in the Middle East in general,

which seemed to signal the relative decline of U.S. hegemony in the region. These new developments changed the situation on the ground against the U.S. interests, which led U.S. administration to turn to the Kurdistan Region as a key partner in order to pursue its strategy. This has pushed the U.S. to change its perspective further towards Kurdish interests. For the first time in Kurdish-U.S. history, the latter expressed a broader understanding of Kurdish demands for independence.

In April 2015, Masoud Barzani, President of the Kurdistan Region, stressed that since the fall of Mosul in 2014, the U.S.' position on the possibility of a Kurdish independent state had changed.[1017] A statement released by the White House in May 2015 further indicated this change, since for the first time U.S. support for the Kurds was not linked to the territorial integrity of Iraq. On the contrary, in this statement the U.S.' commitment to a united Iraq was linked to the latter's commitment to the strategic agreement between both sides and to respect the terms included in the 2005 permanent constitution.[1018] Moreover, there was a new U.S. position regarding Kirkuk and the disputed areas. From 2003 to 2011, the U.S. authorities considered the incorporation of the disputed areas into Kurdistan to be a threat, but from 2014 onwards it supported the Kurdish Peshmerga, who gained control of most of the disputed territories including Kirkuk. Likewise, the U.S. abandoned its policy of trying to prevent the KRI from exporting its oil independently from Baghdad. Finally, the U.S. administration abandoned its commitment to a strong central government in Baghdad and started to support the redistribution of power in the region. This constitutes a crucial change in U.S. policy compared with the previous period, in which the United States wanted to create a single Iraqi state without a federal system in 2003, and in 2004 supported the federal system but with a strong central government. It was only after 2014 that the U.S. started to revise its policy and support a fundamental distribution of power in Iraq among the Kurds, Shias, and Arab Sunnis. During this stage, the KRG moved politically, economically, and militarily towards a *de facto* independence without opposition from the U.S. administration.

So why did this important and dramatic change occur in U.S.-Kurdish policy? With the new environment caused by the expansion of ISIL, the regional sectarian war, the

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[1017] F. Hussein, "Barzani Le Gel Berprsany America Basi Dawlety Kurdi Deket; didar le gel hividar Ahmed", *Rudaw,* http://rudaw.net/sorani/kurdistan/290420157 29 April 2015.

[1018] See, The White House, *Readout of the President and Vice President's Meeting with Iraqi Kurdistan Region President Masoud Barzani* (Washington: The White House, 5 May 2015).

continuing influence of external powers in the region (e.g., Iran, China, and Russia), the weakening of U.S. influence, and the *de facto* partition of Iraq and Syria, the U.S. increasingly needs to rely on external balancing and local allies, particularly the Kurds, as reliable partner to confront ISIL and maintain U.S. strategic interests in the region. This has pushed the U.S. administration to demonstrate more willingness to deal with the new realities and even consider the disintegration of the Sykes Picot borders, which affected both Iraq and Syria. Hence, the KRG's interests have become increasingly aligned with the U.S.' strategy and this new trend has encouraged the Obama administration to accept Kurdish moves towards *de facto* independence.

In particular, the U.S. administration saw that supporting the KRI and the Kurdish independent state would be a supportive factor to enhancing its own position and hegemony in any new security system in the region that might emerge as a result of disintegrations in Iraq and Syria. This is especially the case as the U.S. considers the KRI to be a secure ally in the heart of the Middle East, which is in favour of pro-regional stability, and as such the Kurdish forces have become a key strategic partner in confronting ISIL in Iraq and Syria. This is in contrast to the rest of Iraq, which constitutes the key and major source of instability for the whole region.

Further, after the collapse of Iraqi security forces in 2014, the political situation significantly shifted away from U.S. interests and hegemony in Iraq, largely since Iran and its affiliate Shia militia have become dominant and now hold hegemonic power in Iraq. In return, the decline of U.S. influence has caused the relative loss of ability to stabilise Iraq, counter Shia militia, and curb Iranian expansion, and therefore cannot control events on the ground. In particular, in light of these massive transformations, Iraq has increasingly been moving towards a *de facto* partition. Hence, the United States has come to see the KRI as a vital partner in maintaining stability and containing Iran and its Shia affiliated militias in Iraq, and in this regard the U.S. has begun to support the KRI as a last area of its zone of influence in Iraq. Additionally, the KRG also emerged as a new energy actor in the region in 2012, and its exporting of oil independently in 2014 played a role in stabilising the global oil price.

Furthermore, rise of ISIL, regional sectarian conflict and declining hegemony has also provided a space for the improvement of relations between U.S. allies including Turkey and the Arab states towards the KRI. These states know that a weakened U.S. and sectarian conflict means that they will have to seek their own alliances with the KRG,

as the only stable area in Iraq and as a partner in combatting the rise of the Iranian influence. According to Waltz, alliances among states are to maintain shared interests, even though this might involve compromise.[1019]

Hence, Turkey and the Arab Gulf states saw the rise of the Shia crescent supported by Iran as a serious threat to their national interests and territorial integrity, and thus they have started to support the KRG as an ally. For example, Turkey has taken advantage of the Kurdish exportation of oil due to the belief that the KRG will remove the threat of using energy cards, which can be used by its rivals such as Iran and Russia in their struggle against Ankara. In return, the KRG, by exporting its oil via Turkey without Baghdad's approval, has gained more space to pursue its own foreign policy. Further, the Arab states have had a more flexible position towards the KRG and its demands in Iraq. The majority of Arab states support federalism and the distribution of power in Iraq, and many have even showed a willingness to support the Kurdish aspirations for independence. This is because the Arab states and even Turkey have come to realise that strong central authorities in Iraq, which are controlled by Iran and its affiliate Shia Militia, would pose a key threat to their national interests. This change and shift in American allies' perspectives has further affected U.S. policy towards the KRG and has encouraged the Obama administration to advance its ties with Kurds and accept the KRG's attempts to create its own state.

7. 4 Contributions and Originality of The Study

This study contributes to the field of international relations by investigating U.S. policy towards the KRI. It developed a conceptual framework to explain why and how U.S. policy changed with regard to Iraqi Kurdistan. The thesis has explored that after 2003, the U.S. perspective towards KRI changed, primarily because the situation on the ground changed, and Kurdistan became more important in advancing U.S. strategy in Iraq and the region. A further main contribution is that it analysed and identified in detail the key internal and external factors that have affected U.S.-Kurdish policy. As such, this thesis offers an original contribution by concluding that the U.S. policy towards a Kurdish independent state and disputed areas has changed, as the United

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[1019] Waltz, 'The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory', p. 619.

States now accepts the KRI's *de facto* move towards independence. Moreover, this thesis can be considered a contemporary case study, covering important factors such as the rise of ISIL. The final contribution of the thesis is that it provides a detailed and updated case study of U.S.-KRG policy, in English, from 2001-2015.

7.5 Suggestions for Further Research

Regarding further researches which can be conducted in this field, there is a need for more studies about the role of Iran in Iraq and how it has affected U.S. policy towards Iraq. Moreover, it is essential to conduct further research into the Obama administration's foreign policy and offshore balancing strategy in the Middle East and U.S., and the new security system in the MEA. Further, there is a necessity for more studies regarding the rise of ISIL and its implications for the U.S.' Middle East policy. A specific study on what factors drove the KRG's foreign policy in the Middle East is also lacking. In addition, there is a need for more research about how the KRG's transformation into a new energy actor can be a crucial factor for its aims for self-determination. There is also a need for further study about the relationship between the KRG and the Arab Gulf states and Turkey.

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