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**THE AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS THE KURDS
IN IRAQ**



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**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
UNIVERSITI UTARA MALAYSIA
2020**

**THE AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS THE KURDS
IN IRAQ**



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**This thesis was submitted to the Ghazali Shafie Graduate School of
Government to qualify for the Doctor of Philosophy Award
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Kolej Undang-Undang, Kerajaan dan Pengajian Antarabangsa
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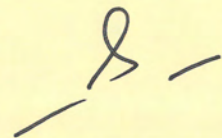
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ABSTRACT

The Middle East term is an English term, it is occupying a significant place in the U.S. strategy. The importance of the region lies in the first: the flow of oil from the region to the world Second: the preservation of Israel's security and finally the fight against terrorism. However, The Kurdish relationship with the U.S. as one of the original people that inhabited the Middle East historically labeled as an ambivalent relationship, because this relationship ranged between engagement and estrangement through its history, and based on U.S. interests. Therefore, we often see that America frequently abandoned the Kurds in critical moments, because U.S. interest requires so. Such behavior happened to the Kurds several times during their close history.

This study attempts to investigate the relationships between the U.S. and Iraqi-Kurds after the emergence of ISIS. It focuses on the transformations and fluctuations that occurred in U.S.-Kurdish relations spanning more than four decades (1975-2018) and reveals the factors and reasons that have had an impact on how the U.S. has approached its ties with Iraqi-Kurds. Neoclassical Realism used as a theoretical framework for this research in terms of national interests and balance of power. In addition, the methods for the analysis of this study are a blend of descriptive and historical analytical approaches.

The study finds out the importance of the Middle East to the U.S. strategy It does not lie just in oil. However, there are geopolitical considerations for the region in U.S. foreign policy and Israel's security and, Islamic terrorism, still threat to security in the region. In addition, only national interests drive the U.S. policymakers, and that U.S. interests with these Kurdish-populated countries far outweigh America's interests with Kurds.

Key words: The Middle East, Iraqi Kurds, the U.S. foreign policy, ISIS, Kurdistan, national interest.

ABSTRAK

Terma Timur Tengah merupakan terma Bahasa Inggeris yang merupakan tempat yang penting dalam strategi AS. Kepentingan rantau tersebut bergantung pada, pertama: aliran minyak daripada rantau tersebut kepada dunia, kedua: pemeliharaan keselamatan Israel dan akhir sekali penentangan terhadap keganasan. Walau bagaimanapun, hubungan Kurdistan dengan AS sebagai antara penduduk asli yang menghuni Timur Tengah menurut sejarah dilabelkan sebagai hubungan ambivalen, kerana hubungan tersebut berkisar antara penglibatan dan perpecahan melalui sejarahnya, dan berdasarkan kepentingan AS. Oleh demikian, kita sentiasa melihat Amerika sering mengabaikan Kurdistan di saat-saat kritikal, kerana kepentingannya. Tingkah laku sedemikian berlaku kepada Kurdistan beberapa kali sepanjang sejarah hubungan mereka.

Kajian ini cuba untuk menyiasat hubungan di antara AS dan Iraq-Kurdistan selepas kewujudan ISIS. Tumpuan diberikan kepada transformasi dan perubahan yang berlaku dalam hubungan AS-Kurdistan lebih daripada empat dekad (1975-2018) dan membongkar faktor dan sebab yang mempunyai kesan ke atas pendekatan hubungan AS dengan Iraq-Kurdistan. Realisme Neoklasikal digunakan sebagai kerangka teori untuk kajian ini dari segi kepentingan negara dan keseimbangan kuasa. Selain itu, pendekatan kajian ini menggunakan gabungan analisis deskriptif dan sejarah.

Kajian ini mendapati kepentingan Timur Tengah kepada strategi AS tidak tertakluk kepada minyak sahaja. Namun, terdapat pertimbangan geopolitik bagi rantau ini bagi dasar asing AS dan keselamatan Israel dan, keganasan Islam, masih mengancam keselamatan dalam rantau itu. Tambahan pula, hanya kepentingan negara menjadi pendorong kepada penggubal dasar AS, dan kepentingan AS dengan negara yang didiami penduduk Kurdistan lebih penting berbanding orang Kurdistan.

Kata kunci: Timur Tengah, Iraq Kurdistan, dasar asing AS, ISIS, Kurdistan, kepentingan negara

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

BP	British Petroleum
CCC	Commodity Credit Corporation
CENTCOM	Central Command of the U.S. armed forces
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CNTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority
DDR	De-mobilization, Disarming and Re-integration
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
HRW	Human Rights Watch
GOI	Government of Iraq
GMEI	Greater Middle East Initiative
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICC	International Criminal Court
IGC	Iraqi Governing Council
IIA	Iraqi Interim Authority
ILA	Iraq Liberation Act
IKF	Iraqi Kurdistan Front
IS	Islamic State
ISIL	Islamic State in Iraq and Levant
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party
KDP-I	Kurdistan Democratic Party in Iran
KDP-S	Kurdistan Democratic Party in Syria
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
KNC	the Kurdish National Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty
NSA	National Security Advisor
OIF	Operation Iraqi Freedom
ORHA	Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance
PKK	Kurdistan Worker's Party
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan

PNAC	Project for the New American Century
PYD	the Democratic Unionist Party
SO	Special Operations forces
SNC	the Syrian National Council
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
USA	United State of America
USIP	United States Institute for Peace
U.S.	United States
WINEP	Washington Institute for Near East Policy
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction
YPG	the People's Protection Units



CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The United States (U.S.) relations with the Middle Eastern region are closely related to each other this is due to the facts that U.S. has many interests in the region. The American relationship with the Middle East and their interests in the region go back to the sixties of the nineteenth century, when colonialism ended and they decided to depart the Mideast region. The U.S. involvement in the Middle East is comparatively new therewith, it is a vital role and the region has always been the object of the superpower from the past until now (Aziz, 2007).

However, when World War II ended in 1945, significant changes obtained in the international arena and the international community broke up into two blocks: Capitalist and Socialist. The U.S. is leading the Capitalist block until now; however, up until 1989, the Soviet Union headed the Socialist block. In the Middle East, U.S. foreign policy concentrated on three key targets: containment of the Soviet Union, the protection of its strategic ally Israel and safeguard the flow of oil and gas in the Middle Eastern region. The U.S. had brought into play various means to accomplish these objectives in the region, such as providing financial assistance to and fortification of dictatorships in the region through reining the revolutions that convened against corrupt regimes. Nonetheless, after the collapse of the Soviet

Union and the end of the Cold War, the U.S. faced a new enemy in the region, which was the emergence of an Islamist radicalism including terrorist groups.

The relationship of the Kurds, who are originally from the Middle East, with the U.S. has been historically described as ambiguous (Shareef, 2010) since all through their relationship's history, The relationship fluctuated between engagement and estrangement depending on the U.S. interests. Thus, a few times in their close history, the Americans have frequently abandoned the Kurds during critical times whenever it serves the U.S. interest. As a result, the Kurds have lost trust in the American policies (Noack, 2014). In the U.S. policy, the Kurds are of little importance since they reside in a region that is crucial to the U.S. foreign policy, and the U.S. view the region occupied by the Kurds as more important than the Kurds themselves. Consequently, the ties between the Kurds and the U.S. is a problem to the relations between the Americans and others in the Middle Eastern nations (Gunter, 2011). For that reason, the nations in Europe constantly felt that their interests in the Middle East are threatened by the Kurdish unity. Thus, even though after the Gulf War of 1991, the U.S. called the Iraqi Kurds 'good Kurds', the U.S. intentionally deserted the Kurds in the other states they occupy. U.S. interest was limited to humanitarian concern and they breached their agreement with the Kurds [them] (Meho& Nehme, 1991). However, after the breakdown of Saddam's administration, the scenario started to change in 2003 with the Kurds acting as the key force in the Middle East. The local district have frequently viewed the Kurds as the disruptive influence in the Middle East because they have been fighting for freedom and establish a separate state (Shifrinson, 2006). Even so, due to critical changes happening in the Middle East, the Americans changed tactics in 2014. A different force known as the Islamic State in

Iraq and Syria (ISIS) or the Islamic State in Iraq and Levant (ISIL) began to emerge in the Middle East. Their goal was to intimidate the U.S. in that area. ISIS or ISIL dominate a huge section of Syria and Iraq, proclaiming Islamic caliphate. It was the Kurds who drove out the ISIS from the Kurdistan territory, tarnished their reputations and at war with them while continue to intellectually attack this aggressive enemy. Advanced weapons that belong to the Iraqi army were confiscated by the Islamic state when it occupied the Mosul city, Iraq's second major city. Consequently, the Islamic state not only poses a threat to the American interests in the Middle East but also to the rest of the world. This research will try to explain on the latter incident and examine the rationale and circumstances that caused the U.S. to deal with the Kurds in this way. Is this because of the emergence of ISIS and the danger that threatens U.S. interests in the region or has the U.S. foreign policy regarding the Iraqi Kurds really shifted?

1.2 Kurdistan Region: Historical Background

The term "Kurdistan" means the land of the Kurds; it was first inhabited by Kurds about 4000 years ago, their history goes back thousands of years; they have been wronged by history and the geography in which they live. As for their population, according to the last survey that conducted by an American news website in 2015 stated that the more accurate figure is around 41 million (Koohzad, 2015), "with over 22 million in Turkey, over 8 million in Iran, over 6 million in Iraq and nearly 2 million in Syria. The Kurdish language is part of Indo-European languages (Kirmanj, 2013, p.144)." Consequently, the Kurds are the biggest nation in the world without their own state.

In the wake of WWI, the Kurdish wills robbed and became the victims of imperialist ambitions; they missed an opportunity to establish their own state when other people gained their independence. Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Kurdistan divided among five countries, which are Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria and Armenia; Kurds became homeless.

In 2016 will mark a hundred years since the Sykes-Picot agreement signed. After the signing of this agreement, the division of Kurdistan and the Kurdish plight were sealed. Moreover, the Kurds' tragedy started with this agreement and it counteracted the Kurds from obtaining their independence like the rest of the nations of the region. They deprived of even the most basic rights advocated by human rights organizations. According to the Sykes-Picot agreement in 1916, Iraq became Britain's share. The Kurdish people, however, have not easily accepted this imperial and political settlement. The Kurdish leaders stood against this occupation; as *Sheikh Mahmoud al-Barazini* led an armed revolution against the British and Iraq from 1919 to 1934.

However, after the League of Nations decided to inflict South Kurdistan (*Mosul Vilayet*) to Iraq in 1926 it has guaranteed some rights for the Kurds. Nevertheless, the King of Iraq soon disclaimed it. The suffering of the Kurds continued until the July 14 1958 revolution that carried out by General *Abdul Kareem Qasi*, which toppled the monarchy in Iraq and declared the republic in 1958. General *Abdul Kareem Qasi* was called for the return of *Mullah Mustafa Barzani* from the Soviet Union and open a new chapter with the Kurds, but the general recoiled on promises as well, which led to the outbreak of a revolution in September, 1961 under the leadership of *Mullah Mustafa Barzani* (Stansfield, 2007; Ghareeb, 2004).

The fighting went on until both signed an agreement in 1970 called the March 11 Agreement, but the agreement at that time was between the Baath regime and *Mullah Mustafa Barzani*. Most of

the Kurdish rights was recognized but the Baathis regime did not implement the agreement, preferred to sign an agreement with the Shah of Iran *Muhammed Reza*, against the Kurds called the “Algiers Accord” on March 6, 1975. According to the Accord, Iraq had to waive part of the sovereignty over the *Shatt al-Arab* for Iran versus the withdrawal of its support for Kurdish revolutionaries. Thus, the Kurdish revolution failed and the Kurdish became refugees in Iran.

In the last decade of the twentieth century, the situation in the Middle East completely changed and substantial shifts have taken place. The Kurds were one of those who benefited from those changes and it has served to their cause (Rubin, 2008). In 1991, after Iraq invaded Kuwait, the Kurds saw an opportunity to rebel against the Iraqi government liberating all the Kurdish inhabited areas. Nevertheless, the troops loyal to Saddam Hussein were able to control the situation again using unsightly methods of repression and violence to control their cities (Meho& Nehme, 1991). This aggression caused a considerable tragedy and a large number of the Kurds to emigrate. Eventually, the international community responded by preventing Saddam's troops from crossing Kurdistan's borders by establishing that the 36th parallel through Northern Iraq as a flight restricted area. Consequently, Saddam's regime withdrew from the Kurdish areas in three provinces (*Erbil, Sulaimaniy and Dohuk*). The Kurds organized the first free elections in the region in 1992 through which parliament and government formed. Despite the internal fighting and its consequences, the process continued up until 2003 (Zubier, 2005).

In 2003, the U.S. Forces invaded Iraq and removed Saddam Hussein from power. Thereby, a new stage of relationships began between the U.S. and the Kurds. When the Iraq War began, the Kurds exploited the strained relations between Turkey and the U.S., when Turkish parliament rejected U.S. troops passing on its territory to open a front in northern Iraq. Thus, Turkey angered U.S., its strategic ally in the region.

In 2011, however the climate and environment in the Middle East changed to worse, when the Arab Spring began and the peoples in the region rose up against dictatorial regimes; dictatorships began to collapse one after the other like dominoes. It started with *Zine El-Abidine* in Tunisia, *Hosni Mubarak* in Egypt, *Muammaral-Gaddafi* in Libya and then *Ali Abdullah Saleh* in Yemen. The Syrian people also started to demonstrate asking for freedom, democracy and dignity and almost overthrew *Bashar al-Assad's* government, had it not been for the intervention of Russia, Iran, Iraq and Lebanon's Hezbollah. In the midst of these relentless events, Radical Islam was able to benefit from these conditions. the Islamic State within Syria and Iraq emerged, an establishment that split from the al-Qaeda extremist jihadists, since its formation, ISIS has managed to occupy a large part of Syria and entered Iraq taking over *Mosul* city - the second largest city in Iraq - on June 10, 2014 and announced the Islamic caliphate later.

Then, ISIS began to expand its influence in the region, as it attacked the Kurdistan region of Iraq. It took over a large area of land in the Kurdistan Region closing in on Erbil, the capital city of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). However, the Kurds pleaded for support from the U.S. and for them to stop ISIS creeping toward Erbil, but the U.S. response this time was quite distinct from previous times; its response took only 72 hours. The U.S. Air Force began to bomb ISIS positions and it

since formed an international coalition against ISIS, involving more than sixty countries. Washington's rapid response to the Kurds has shocked many specialists in the Kurdish-U.S. relations, because it is a unique precedent in the history of their relationships. In addition, this made many Kurds believe that this is a new stage in the relationships beginning between them and the U.S.

1.3 Problem Statement

The problem lies in tragedy, murder and displacement that the Kurds faced and suffered during its contemporary history by successive Iraqi governments – even chemical weapons have been used against them. But by looking at the Kurdish's history, one will notice that they live in security and safety only when the United States supports them and enjoys good relations with them, this proximity and upholding prevents Iraqi governments from maleficence them. On the contrary, whenever the bilateral relationship between them and America is deteriorated and relinquished them, then they have been subjected to tragedy, becoming vulnerable to the Iraqi army forces attacks.

Therefore, this study endeavors to study the American factors, causes, and interests in the Middle East region in general and in Iraqi Kurdistan in particular, to create appropriate atmosphere in order to build a sustainable relationship with U.S. Which one can argue that the U.S. presence prevents Iraqi army to attack or ham the Kurds as they have done before. Plenty of examples in their contemporary history show and emphasize that fact. For instance, in 1961 it was a good relationship linking the Kurds to the U.S., where U.S. supported the Kurds' revolution against the Iraqi government at that time until the Iraqi government was forced to sign the agreement with the Kurdish leader Mullah Mustafa Barzani on March 11, 1970 called the (11th March

Agreement). In this agreement, the Kurds recognized as the second component in Iraq. Such support would serve U.S. interests and its allies in the Middle East. Nevertheless, in 1975 the United States and its ally Iran abandoned the Kurdish revolution. Iran signed the Algiers Accord with Iraq on 6 March 1975, which obliged Iran to withdraw its support for the Kurdish revolt versus an Iraqi concession of part of the sovereignty of the Shatt al-Arab to Iran; the Kurds became refugees at the borders of Iran and Turkey. This is because the U.S. interests and its allies in the region were with the abandonment of the Kurds and their revolution.

In the eighties during the Iran-Iraq war, Saddam Hussein's regime killed more than 100,000 people in the operations called the Anfal; destroyed more than 4,500 Kurdish villages; and killed more than 5,000 people in the city of Halabja with chemical weapons. With all these tragedies, the U.S. and the international community were silent and did nothing, because at the time, Saddam Hussein was serving U.S. interests in the region (Human Rights, 1993). In 1991, the United States abandoned the Kurds again after encouraging them to rebel against Saddam Hussein's regime. When they rose up and took control of all Kurdish cities, America allowed the Iraqi Republican Guard forces to attack and expel them from the cities that they had taken; more than two million people was displaced again in the mountains on the Turkish and Iranian borders. After that, America, France and Britain imposed no-fly zones to protect the Kurds from Saddam Hussein's army and thus the Kurds lived safely until the occupation of Iraq in 2003 (Meho& Nehme, 1991; Gunter, 2011) In addition, in 2014, the U.S. supported Iraqi Kurdistan against ISIS.

However, U.S. foreign policy toward the Kurds, as noted previously was incoherent and ambivalent, due to its dependence on U.S. interests in the region (Marantzidis,

2013; Fawcett & Fawcett, 2001). Nevertheless, after the emergence of ISIS and its attack on the Kurdistan region, America dealt with the Kurds in a completely different way than what it was in the past. America rapidly response to the Kurds and became main allies of America in the region; contrary to what it was before this event. Basing on this new development, this research aims to investigate the great mutation that has taken place in the U.S. attitude towards foreign land like the Middle East with regard to objectives and policies pursued after the events of September 11. Moreover, the Arab Spring and finally the emergence of ISIS in the heart of the Middle Eastern region, ISIS had openly shown its hostility towards America interests in the region. However, the coming of ISIS paved the way for a positive effect on the U.S. relationship with the Kurds, in particular, when the Islamic State tried to occupy the city of Erbil, which is the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) capital city of Iraq. Thus, U.S. reaction was swift when ISIS began to attack the Kurdistan region of Iraq. This reaction has surprised many specialists in the U.S.-Kurdish relations, because the history of the relationship between them were described as volatile as America has abandoned the Kurds before. In fact, the United States' foreign policy towards the Kurds was careful and fraught with danger before that, Due to America's trepidation that this relationship will outrage the countries in the region such as Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria, in as much as the existence of the Kurds in these countries as well. These countries believe that America has plans to establish a Kurdish state in Iraq. Thus, this step will encourage the Kurds in these countries as well, to emulate the Kurds of Iraq and demand the creation of a Kurdish state in these states. Consequently, national security and the territorial integrity of these countries will be at risk. As a result, the United States policy-makers were reluctant to upset their key strategic allies such as Turkey and the Arab states for the sake of Kurds. In other words, why put at

risk its interests to satisfy the Kurds at the expense of other key geopolitical allies? Which it meant that American dealings with the Kurds were all but in best circumstances more than the humanitarian assistance.

This study attempts to investigate the relationships between the U.S. and the Kurds of Iraqi upon ISIS arrival. It focuses on the transformations and fluctuations that occurred in U.S.-Kurdish relations spanning more than four decades (1975-2018) and reveals the factors and reasons that have had an impact on how the U.S. has approached its ties with Iraqi-Kurds.

substantially, as the study mentioned earlier, the research problem is the killing and displacement that the Kurds are subjected to by successive Iraqi governments. The study aims to disband this problem by finding ways to make the U.S. a good friend and supporter of the Kurds in the region, benefiting from past experiences from the history of the relationship between U.S. and the Kurds. Uncovering the reasons and factors that made the U.S. approach towards the Kurds such as supporting them. For instance, in the 1960's when the U.S. supported Kurds at the same time study the grounds on which the U.S. abandoned them as it happened several times. One could ask, why draw close to the U.S.? Why not with China or Russia? A valid question, the answer is – first: the Kurds live in a region considered important and fraternal in the strategy of U.S. foreign policy and the Kurds cannot succeed or enter into any anti-coalition that works against American interests in the region as if it did happen it will be considered a political suicide. The history supports the researcher's argument. For example, in 1945 the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad was announced in Iran with the support of the Soviet Union, but this republic lasted less than a year, and its president Qadi Muhammad was executed in the square of the city of Mahabad, the capital of the

republic, the Soviet Union did nothing. As for China, in fact, it is moving away from the political scene, and it has never supported the Kurds, even with a statement, and the researcher believes that it is not ready for that.

In conclusion, it became clear during this illustration that the Kurds live safety and comfortably when the U.S. support them and they faced all kind of tragedy and suffering when U.S. abandoning them. It became clear also that America approached the Kurds when the approach served the political interests of the U.S. and its political partners in the Mideast and abandoned them when this support hurt U.S. interests and U.S. allies in the region. Therefore, the study attempts to examine U.S. foreign policy towards Iraqi Kurds in the Middle East, and U.S. national interests in the region in general and Kurdistan in particular. As Iraqi Kurdistan is part of the Middle Eastern region, it has many ingredients if it exploited properly will attract the attention of U.S. foreign policy makers to make Iraqi Kurdistan on the agenda of U.S. foreign policy to serve U.S. interests in the region. Such an important geographic location and ownership of natural resources like oil and gas, where Kurdistan has recently become the world's energy map. Not long ago, DOR Organization for Kurdistan Oil and Gas Information reported that in the oil and gas sector of the Kurdistan Iraq, the Kurdistan Region is ranked 8th with regard to the world's supplies of fossil fuel while it ranked last as the place where fuel production will dry out (Peak Oil News, 2015). Furthermore, Kurdistan has proven these years, that it is a factor of strength in the Middle Eastern region in addition to being a place of peaceful coexistence among all components of nationalities and denominations. The study is trying to investigate U.S. interests in Iraqi Kurdistan and the exploitation of all these ingredients to bring U.S. investments to Kurdistan, to help the Kurdish build a sustainable relationship with the

U.S.; and thus, be a reason to provide security, safety, and prosperity for Iraqi Kurdistan.

To resolve this problem, the research aims to apply a qualitative methodology and the realist theory (interests, power and balance of power) to analyze the data and determine the rationale and circumstances that caused the United States to engagement with the Iraqi Kurds in 2014. In addition, the study investigates the last event; it was a just one-off occurrence or a shift in the American policy regarding them. Finally, what are the U.S. interests in the Middle East in general and Iraqi Kurdistan in particular?

1.4 Research Questions

In providing specific answers to the problem discussed above, the questions below will be addressed via a survey:

1. What are the United States' policy and national interests in the Middle Eastern region? Is the region still important to the U.S.? What are the policies formulated by the U.S. to achieve its goals in the Middle East? Have these processes changed or not?
2. What are the United States national interests with the countries that have the Kurdish people in countries like Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran?
3. Why did the relationship between the U.S. and Iraqi Kurdistan fluctuated between engagement and estrangement throughout its history?
4. what led the U.S. to support the Kurds in Iraq in 2014? Does this refer to a change in the U.S. foreign policy towards the Iraqi Kurds, or just an accident imposed by the circumstances the Middle East is going through? What is the U.S. stand regarding the Iraqi Kurdistan's liberation from Iraq following the arrival of ISIS? what is the U.S. perspective on the Kurdish independence and Referendum?

1.5 Objectives of the Study

Pertaining to the concerns voiced earlier, presented below are the goals of the study:

1. To shed light on the U.S. foreign policy and interest toward the Middle East after September 11 and the Arab Spring. In addition, to investigate to what extent the U.S. policy has changed towards the Middle East in terms of objectives and strategies.
2. The study aims to shed light on the United States national interests in countries that populated by the Kurds including Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. Moreover, it discusses those interests after the emergence of ISIS and the policies that the United States may pursue to reach those interests
3. The study is aimed at understanding the changes and analyzing the fluctuation in the U.S. foreign policy concerning the Iraqi Kurdistan in the past as well as to investigate the causes that led the U.S. administration to abandon the Kurds in 1975 and 1991. Furthermore, this study is the current account of the U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East as a whole and in the Iraqi Kurdistan specifically as well as an analysis/ investigation into the history of the U.S. government's strategy in handling its relationship with the Iraqi Kurds. Therefore, the analysis of the historical account of the relationship is to discover the factors that cause wavering U.S. policy in the Middle Eastern region during that period.
4. To examine the U.S. foreign policy regarding the Iraqi Kurdistan during the second term of the Obama Administration, particularly in the 2014 incident when the U.S. prevented the Iraqi Kurds from entering Erbil after an ISIS attack on the Kurdistan territory. The aim of the study is to determine whether it was merely an incident or there was a shift in the U.S. policy regarding the Kurds? Lastly, the research studies the U.S. position concerning the Iraqi Kurds following the ISIS arrival, specifically

after Mr. *Massoud Barzani*, who was Kurdistan Region's Premier, is adamant to conduct a referendum dated September 25, 2017. Moreover, the U.S. adverse response towards the referendum raised against it.

1.6 Significance of the Research

The significance of this study is that it provides a new perspective understanding of the coherence of America's interests in the Middle East region in general and with Kurds in particular. The study is priceless for Kurdish leadership because it clarifies the complexities of U.S. objectives and interests in the Middle East and states inhabited by Kurds. It further helps the Kurdish leaders to understand the nature and objectives of U.S. policy in the region and how to deal with these goals and how to attract U.S. interests to Iraqi Kurds and to interact with U.S. interests to support them in the future so as not to abandon them as in the future. This study is momentous because it provides decision-makers in U.S., specialists in this area and researchers to establish a framework for understanding, through which they can form a platform to assess U.S. policy towards Iraq. This study has also especially important for researchers and students of international relations specialized in the Middle East, because it sets substantial academic settlements to the relationship of Kurds with America.

In addition, the importance of this study theoretically lies in that the study applies realism in terms of interests and the balance of power, which According to the researcher knowledge no one had applied this way in the literature that the study mentioned above, some researchers used realism, but they used defensive and offensive realism. In addition, despite the fact that the researcher, as mentioned, uses realism as a theoretical framework for the study, he criticizes at the same time both realism and liberalism, and invites researchers to reconsider the statement about a non-

state and its role in international relations. Therefore, the realists say that the state is the main actor in the international arena. While, the reality shows that today there are non-state actors in international politics that play important roles such as the KRG and ISIS. At the same time criticizing the liberalist theory, which mentioned the role of the non-state, as it focuses only on economic organizations and neglects other non-state actors like political bodies, for instance the Kurds, the Lebanese Hezbollah and the terrorist organizations such as ISIS which play an important role in influencing the international arena.

In addition, the significance of this study found in the very essence of the subject that the thesis attempts to highlight and the research questions that this thesis attempts to explore. However, the United States is one of the superpowers; it is involved in a major and critical way in the global arena in general and in the Middle East in particular. Furthermore, it has considerable interests in the region. Therefore, a good relationship with America gives the Kurds the power and influence in the region. Especially, when you go back to the contemporary history of Kurds, you will observe that their tragedy began when America abandoned them. Thus, the study is trying to examine the American external policy regarding the Kurds in Iraq between 1975-2018 focuses on causes and factors that affected the recent rapprochement linking the U.S. with the KRG, which is the Kurdistan Regional Government. In addition, the research aims to study U.S. interests in Kurdistan. Therefore, the knowledge of these reasons and American interests in the region and an analysis academically will have a positive effect for the KRG to capitalize from them and for the sustainability of this relationship in the future. In other words, the knowledge of U.S. interests in the Middle East and Iraqi Kurdistan would avoid the Kurds woes and misfortunes. Furthermore, the

researcher at the end of this research will provide some recommendations to the KRG to use it to develop its relationship with America and maintain this new shift in the relationship to make it a real shift in the American behaviour regarding the Kurds, not merely an incident that will go as soon as ISIS is gone.

1.7 Scope of Study

This paper examines the U.S. diplomatic policy concerning the Kurds of Iraq in the Middle Eastern region from 2014 to 2018. The researcher has focused on the United States relations with the Iraqi Kurds as one of the most interactive relationships compared with the Kurds in other countries such as Turkey, Iran and Syria. This relationship throughout its history has been one of engagement as well as estrangement as this study will reveal.

The research also focuses on two significant events that happened in 1975; when the U.S. abandoned the Kurds and withdrew its support for Kurdish revolution with its ally Iran. While in 2014, the U.S. supported the Kurds at the time the ISIS launched an offensive against Erbil, the KRG's state capital and did not allow ISIS to threaten it again. Therefore, this research aims to examine the rationale and circumstances that affected the U.S. to deal with the Kurds in this manner, especially post-September 11, the Arab Spring and the emergence of ISIS. Moreover, the study attempts to shed light on the United States perspective, on Kurdish aspiration for Independence from Iraq after the coming of ISIS in the Middle East. In addition, the Kurdistan region of Iraq's referendum on 25 September 2017 and what was exposed to the region after the referendum, as well as the role of the U.S. and Iran in the events post-referendum.

1.8 Organization of the Study

This study is divided into two sub-topics, organized as follows: chapter one is introductory, it provides an outline of the nature of the study; including background, the problem statement, research questions, objectives of the study, the significance of the research and the scope of the research. Chapter two try to review some significant studies related to this study. That is the main sources analyzing data and answers the questions of the study. Chapter three explain the theoretical framework of the study; the discussion begins with the realist theory which evolves into several sub-theories, such as interests, the balance of power, power, defensive and offensive power. Using the Realist Theory, the paper further examines the "interests" regarding the balance of power to analyze data.

Chapter four provides details of The U.S. foreign policy toward the Kurds in the Middle East and its interests. The first part of this chapter discusses the United States' interest in the Middle East in general. The second analyzes The U.S. foreign policy toward the Turkey's Kurds and its interests. The third concentrates on the U.S. external policy toward the Iranian's Kurds and its interests. Finally, sheds light on The U.S. foreign policy toward the Syria's Kurds and its interests. Chapter five discusses the diplomatic policy of the U.S. in regards to Iraqi Kurdistan between 1975 and 2003. First, review of a brief history of the relations between the United States and Iraqi Kurds. Second, The U.S. policy towards the Kurds in Iraq: 1975-2003; third, the Iraqi Kurds post-Gulf War 1991-2003. Finally, the study attempts to discuss The U.S. engagement policy with Kurds 2003-2014. Chapter six is about the U.S. and the Kurdish relations after the emergence of ISIS in the Middle East. First, the research explains the fall of Mosul and emergence of ISIS in Iraq. Secondly, it examines the diplomatic policy of the U.S. concerning the Kurds of Iraq upon the ISIS arrival to

referendum (2014-2018). Third, this part discusses the diplomatic policy of the U.S. regarding the Kurds of Iraq after the referendum on 25 September 2017 onward. Finally, the study will discuss the Kurds' future and the United States perspective about their autonomy from Iraq upon the ISIS arrival in the Middle East and referendum that hold on 25 September 2017.

Finally, chapter seven presents conclusion and recommendations, this chapter drawing conclusion, summarizing and implications of the research study followed by some recommendations. In addition, a review of the research objectives and highlights the contributions that this thesis has attempted to make to the knowledge in this field of study.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 U.S. Foreign Policy Toward the Middle East

U.S. foreign policy occupies great importance in the international arena; this importance lies in the American foreign policy influence on events not only in the Middle East, but in the whole world as well. Therefore, there are many studies interested in studying U.S. foreign policy and its objectives. In this part, the study discusses some of the studies that have focused on U.S. foreign policy toward the Middle East in general.

To start with, in regard to *the new U.S. policy in the Middle East*, Burhan Ghalyun (2005), argued that America was based on the traditional strategy to preserve its interests in the Middle East, despite the modifications that have occurred because of the setbacks. Ghalyun demonstrated that American strategy in the Middle East before September 11, 2001 was working to achieve these goals. First, the preservation of the existing Arab regimes was one of the most important strategies adopted by America; this was through the provision of full and unconditional support of the rulers of these regimes. Second, keep the Strategic regional equations and prevent any political change in the region, through the elimination of all nationalist movements that were calling for Arab unity during the fifties-sixties of the last century. Finally, maintain Israel's security in the region by maintaining the superiority of Israel over the Arabs in all areas (Ghalyun, 2005). Then the author mentioned that in order to achieve these

goals, America went linking itself with the countries of the region through militaryalliances such as the Baghdad Pact in 1956. The Author argued that until 11 September 2001, the United States had not thought about democracy in the Arab world; while being one of the most hostile countries to this idea under false pretexts, weak theories and considerations; such as democracy is not consistent with the Islamic civilization nor accepted by it. Then the author argued that after September 11, 2001, the U.S. strategy had changed, because America believed that the Arab regimes were no longer able to serve U.S. interests in the region. Therefore, America embraced new strategies in the Middle East, first, the promotion of democracy and abandoning dictatorships in the Arab world. Second, adoption of the concept of the war against terrorism with Islamic extremist groups, which were linked with America through a strategic alliance in Afghanistan's war against the Russians in the last century, in order to eliminate them. Finally, reaching a final solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict instead of maintaining Israel's superiority over the Arabs, as mentioned earlier.

Another source is *U.S. Strategy after the Arab Uprisings: toward Progressive Engagement*, Colin H. Kahl and Marc Lynch Each (2013), the authors argue that Barack Obama was successful in maintaining U.S. national interests in the Middle East despite the rapid change that swept the region. They demonstrated that time had come to define American interests in the Arab world (Each, 2013). However, the authors do not favor military intervention in the region. They do not encourage the protection of dictatorships in the region for the sake of stability. In addition, the authors acknowledged that a meaningful political reform was the only way to ensure political stability in the region in the long term. Therefore, the United States should work to promote political reform in the region. However, the authors argue there are five

strategic dilemmas that should be observed by the Obama administration in the Middle East. "First, containing Iran's ambitions and maintaining the free flow of oil... Second, a forward U.S. operational presence throughout the region and close ties with partner governments' security services may be essential for combating terrorism...Third, tilting toward Israel's position in its conflict with the Palestinians may be essential to reassure the Israeli leaders of Washington's commitment to their security... Fourth, a more forceful U.S. intervention in Syria, including the use of military forces... and strikes Iran a significant blow... Finally, in light of the Arab uprisings, it is more important than ever to prioritize political and economic reform. "Then they mentioned that "Given changing regional dynamics and constraints on American resources, a strategy of progressive engagement offers the best way to advance U.S. interests in the Middle East." (Each, 2013) Later they argued that it would not guarantee the United States' national interest due to the existence of a huge shift that occurred in the Middle East. Finally, they found out that the ultimate solution was to encourage political stability via embracing democracy to reach a long-term political stability.

How Should President Obama Change U.S. Policy in the Middle East? Stephen McInerney (2013) In this project, the author argues that the Arab street had received Barack Obama's speech in Cairo in 2009 enthusiastically, but soon became disappointed when Arabs saw there was nothing on the ground, as there were only words and nothing else. However, the Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED) in Washington DC tried to answer this concern: What is the greatest crucial shift in policy concerning the Middle East that President Obama needs to implement in his second term? *Abdel Fattah* argued: "One of the most important lessons of the Arab uprisings is that the United States cannot rely on its government to-government

relationships alone. Before the revolution, the U.S. relationship with Egypt was based almost entirely on interactions with the Mubarak government, which left the U.S. unprepared for the revolution and the political changes that have followed (McInerney, 2013).” Nevertheless, it seems that America has not benefited from past mistakes and returned to deal with power and neglected people again. Then demonstrated that the strength of any regime no longer measured with its military power but by to what extent the people and civil society organizations were satisfied with the performance of the government in terms of not violating freedoms and respect for human rights...etc. However, McInerney argued that the Obama administration should consider these matters through his dealings with the Middle East files in his second term. First, Barack Obama should be audacious in taking suitable steps to fit the progress that has occurred in the region. Second, Obama administration should expand its relations and deal with various actors in the community not only with power. Third, this administration should provide financial incentives to the actors and to America's allies to create a positive impact on the region.

New tactics, same strategy, U.S. policy towards the Middle East, by Ana Echagüe (2013) who argued that "The U.S. is changing its policy towards the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) in response to the region's shifting geopolitical realities. Confronted with new political actors and intractable political issues, U.S. President Barack Obama has adopted a more realist approach." (Echagüe, 2013) The author demonstrates that U.S. openness to Asia will not be at the expense of the Middle East, because the Middle Eastern oil will remain significant for the global economy in general and Asia in particular. Despite U.S. production of shale oil and gas, the Middle East will not lose its importance in U.S. foreign policy because the United States still

has vital issues to care about in the region, particularly Israel's security and the issue of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, as well as terrorism and radical Islam. Therefore, Secretary of Defense Panetta has affirmed that "the United States is strong enough that we can maintain a strong presence in the Middle East as well as in the Pacific" (Echagüe, 2013). Ana Echagüe argued that the Obama administration intends to share with the EU the resolution of the Middle East issues. Thus, the United States no longer underestimates the role of Europe after the rapid transformations occurring in the Middle Eastern region. Therefore, according to the author, Europe should prepare itself to play a remarkable role in the region and should develop a strategy that includes all regions in the Middle East. The author believes that the resolution of the Iranian nuclear problem will have a significant impact on the stability of the Middle East and will be the reason for ending sectarian tensions in the region between the Arab Gulf states and Iran on the one hand and Israel on the other hand. However, the author demonstrates that there need to be collaboration between the EU and the U.S. to provide Iran with the incentives that are attractive enough to convince Iran to stop its plan for uranium development. *The U.S. Democracy Promotion from Bush to Obama*, Emiliano Alessandri, Oz Hassan and Ted Reinerti (working paper 2015); in this work, the authors demonstrated that Democracy Promotion is one of U.S. foreign policy's objectives in the Middle East. They have argued that the incidents of September 11 were a catalyst important for the American administration to adopt promoting democracy in the region. Particularly, when President G.W. Bush interpreted what had happened on September 11 attacks as due to the lack of democratic regimes in the Middle Eastern region?" The Middle East will persist in producing rebels and insurgents that jeopardise the security of the U.S. and its allies for as long as the Middle East practises dictatorship that triggers despondence and

resentment. Hence, America is introducing a progressive liberation programme in a major part of the Middle Eastern region. The anti-reformists will be intimidated, those affiliated with terrorists will be challenged, and our allies will be expected to give better performance (Bush 2004). Nevertheless, the authors mentioned that, "Yet, the U.S. has not abandoned its reliance on autocratic regimes that cooperate on more immediate national security interests such as counter-terrorism, counter-proliferation, and the free-flow energy sources into the global market. Rather, U.S. democracy promotion in the MENA has become incremental by design and characterized by its gradualist and often-collaborative nature (Emiliano Alessandri, 2015). U.S. foreign policy in the MENA is, therefore, depicted by a cautious evolutionary stance rather than supporting revolutionary shifts in power" (Emiliano Alessandri, 2015). However, they argued that president George W. Bush had left a difficult task to his successor, Barack Obama when he invaded Iraq in 2003 and distorted the American reputation. On the other hand, the authors criticized Barack Obama and his administration when they said, " the Obama administration seems to have largely left unanswered a fundamental question that its predecessor has formally addressed, if only to be pushed back into the original dilemma: does Arab democratization – with its hiccups, risks, and many capricious side effects – help to fulfill core U.S. interests in the region, from Israel's security for the preservation of vital energy flows And if so, should democracy promotion be elevated to the category of national security interest?" (Emiliano Alessandri, 2015). This criticism indicates that the authors believe what realists believed; because it illustrated that they do not encourage the promotion of democracy in the Middle East if it does not serve U.S. national interests in the region. Therefore, the researcher criticizes this approach because it is not objective and non-academic. In addition, the academic researcher must move away from falling into bias.

In conclusion, according to the above it is clear that there is a consensus among the authors that the main objectives of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East are Israel's security, flow of oil and the war against terrorism, whilst there is a difference among them on the priority of some of these goals. For instance, Emiliano Alessandri, Oz Hassan, Ted Reinerti and Burhan Ghalyun argued that the promotion of democracy was not on the agenda of U.S. foreign policy until the events of September 11, 2001. However, Alessandri, Hassan and Reinerti demonstrated that if democracy promotion does not serve U.S. national interests, it should not be on the agenda of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. The researcher disagrees with this view because as he mentioned it is subjective and puts the researcher in an embarrassing position. The researcher also disagrees with *Burhan Ghalyun* when he argued that America struck nationalist movements that were calling for Arab unity. In fact, America was promoting the nationalist ideology prevailing in the Arab world to turn away from Islam and Islamic unity, one of the evidences to prove this statement is the opening of the American University of Beirut (AUB) in 1866 by Daniel Bliss, who is an American missionary. The name of the university at the beginning was the Syrian Protestant College; most of the *Baathists* and nationalist leaders have graduated from this university and had some calling it a cradle of nationalists after Syria. However, the researcher believes that these studies could not answer the following questions: why did the U.S. change its foreign policy towards the Middle East in terms of objectives and policies post-September 11 and the Arab spring? What are the reasons behind U.S. reluctance to intervene in the Middle East after the Arab Spring? Why did it not advocate for the Arab peoples and their revolutions against dictatorships in the region, particularly in Syria? The researcher finds that these studies did not mention Russia's role either, which became an influential role in recent times in the Middle East.

Therefore, the research attempts to investigate the reason for the shift in the U.S. international policy concerning the Middle Eastern region, the reasons that led America to non-interference in these uprisings to resolve the battle in favor of the oppressed Arab peoples. The study aims to look into the Russian intervention in Syria as well. Finally, is Russia preparing to extend its influence in the Middle East at the expense of America and its allies in the region? Will the United States return to a policy of containment, to stop Russia from extending its influence in the region? The study attempts to fill these gaps in the literature.

2.2 U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Iraqi Kurds

Much literature has been focused on the subject about the Kurds, but it was more about their history and the tragedy they have suffered through different stages of their struggle against the occupiers, who took their land. Many authors who wrote about the Kurds were equitable to their right others did not. Particularly, some Arab writers who have written about the Kurdish question, they described the Kurds as rebels, disobedient, agents of the West and so on. However, as for the literature about the relationship between the Kurds and the U.S., There is a little about such relationship. Because in reality, there was nothing called the relation and if it was anything, it was limited, secretly and through the CIA. Nevertheless, in 2003 after the United States invasion of Iraq a meaningful relationship began between America and the Kurds; the U.S. foreign policy toward the Kurds changed for the better. Consequently, some literature has been written about this relationship as well. However, this research will only focus on what has been written about the American Kurdish relations without exposing their nationalism, history, tragedy and so on.

The legacy of U.S. support to Kurds: two major episodes; Lokman I. Meho and Michel G. Nehme, (2004) the authors argued in their book that:” The Iraqi-Kurdish predicament dates back to the creation of the state in 1921. Iraq was created by the British to comprise three provinces, each contained different sectarian and ethnic group; the Baghdad province in the Middle mainly of Sunni Arabs and the Mosul province to the North dominant by Kurds." The authors demonstrated that the United States classified the Kurds in Iraq as good Kurds, whilst deliberately neglected the Kurds in Turkey, Syria and Iran. Then they argued that the West, led by America, when it imposed a no-fly zone, it was intended to weaken Saddam Hussein and not to protect the Kurds. They believe that the western alliance is working against the Kurdish desire for the independence of Kurdistan. Therefore, they argued: "The incorporation of the resource affluent area of the Kurds in the North to Iraq served two essential British objectives: First, it was cardinal for a viable Iraq and, second, it partitioned the Kurdish people thus decreasing future possibility of constituting a Kurdish national state" (Nehme, 2004).

They believe that America's position on the self-determination of peoples has not changed in the new world order and that the U.S. still believes in the sovereignty of the nation-state. The United States has increased interests in the Middle East and it is impossible to abandon them for the interests of minorities in the region. They demonstrated that the Kurdish leaders had hoped to achieve their goals in accessing the state and national rights through external support. but the Kurds did not realize that they were fighting a proxy war for America and its allies; the Kurdish leadership bears some upbraid for the lack of international insight and ignorance encouraged by the CIA to exploit the puzzled Kurds.

Is Iraqi Kurdistan a Good Ally? (2008); Michael Rubin in this work argues that the support presented by the United States to the Kurds based on emotion. After the World War I, the Kurds lost their chance for independence, obtained by others. The author demonstrated that America's lack of confidence in the Kurdish leaders makes it difficult to continue any alliance with them, because the Kurdish leaders are turning to despotism rather than democracy; neither *Massoud Barzani* nor *Jalal Talabani* are democrats. In addition, Kurdistan has been divided between the *Barzani* and *Talabani* families; both parties are in control of everything. Besides in Kurdistan there is no freedom of the press, elections are rigged and Kurdistan is turning back instead of moving forward due to bad administration of the two ruling parties in Kurdistan: the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) led by *Masoud Barzani* the former president of the Kurdistan Regional of Iraq and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) led by *Jalal Talabani* the former president of Iraq republic. Rubin argued "Although there are two independent newspapers in Iraqi Kurdistan—*Awene* and *Hawlati*—they are increasingly constrained. Both parties use their control over law courts to intimidate, bankrupt, and even imprison journalists who criticize ruling parties and officials. The PUK, for example, prosecuted *Hawlati* editors after the paper accused the PUK prime minister of abuse of power. *Nechervan Barzani*'s office has even threatened frivolous lawsuits against foreign writers and analysts who fail to adhere to his party's line." (Rubin, 2008) The author believes that: "Both the KDP and the PUK have betrayed Washington's confidence in their dealings with Iran" (Rubin, 2008).

The Five Stages of American Foreign Policy towards the Kurds, (2011) Michael M. Gunter in his article argues that the U.S.-Kurdish relations passed through five stages. Whereby the first phase of relations goes back to World War I and President Woodrow

Wilson's fourteen points; the point twelfth indicated the promise given by the President to the Kurds for independence from the Ottoman Empire. This stage ended with the establishment of the Turkish state by Kemal Ataturk. The second phase began when the United States supported the *Mullah Mustafa Barzani* in the early seventies' revolution against the Iraqi government. However, America betrayed the Kurds and abandoned them at that time with its ally Iran; this stage ended in 1975 with the "Algeria convention" concluded between *Saddam Hussein* and the *Shah* of Iran. Consequently, Iran abandoned the Kurds and withdrawal its support for them then the Kurdish revolution extinguished. The third phase started with the Gulf War in 1991, it led to the formation of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). The fourth stage began with the second U.S. war against *Saddam Hussein's* regime in 2003, which led to the so-called *de facto* alliance between the U.S. and the Kurds and has continued until now. The fifth stage, which is the stage of the PKK, interferes with the third and fourth stage; the phase of U.S. support to its ally in NATO Turkey against the PKK (Gunter, 2011).

Gunter demonstrated that the current U.S. support for the Kurds is to preserve the unity of Iraq and to satisfy the Kurds; the Kurdish issue did not occupy a prominent place in the U.S. national security. He argued that America followed this policy with the Kurds for certain reasons:

"(1) As a favor to its then-ally, Shah-ruled Iran; (2) As a ploy during the Cold War as Iraq was seen as an ally of the Soviet Union; (3) As a means to relieve pressure on Israel so Iraq would not join some future Arab attack on the Jewish state; and (4) as a means to possibly satisfy its own need for Middle East oil since Barzani had promised

that the United States could look to a friend in OPEC once oil-rich Kurdistan had achieved independence" (Gunter, 2011).

The Kurds and U.S. Foreign Policy: International Relations in the Middle East since 1945, (2011): in it Marianna Charountaki tries to investigate the role of the Kurds in U.S. foreign policy between World War II and the third Gulf War in 2003, and tries to answer these questions. Did the Kurds influence on U.S. foreign policy? Is there anything named a relationship between the Kurds and America? The author argues that the U.S. interest in the Kurdish issue until the fifties of the last century was largely confined a little aid and was provided by the American Embassies, in countries where they exist. The reason behind this policy was that the United States wanted to prevent the spread of Soviet influence in the region. In addition, the objectives of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East during the Cold War were to confront communism and Arab nationalism.

Charountaki demonstrated that during the Cold War period there were four factors determining the relations between America and the Kurds:" namely the U.S. relationship with the regional states; Kurdish relations with the states of residence; the empowerment of the regional states; and internal developments in both the U.S. and the regional states" (Charountaki, 2011, p. 130).

U.S. perspectives on Kurdish independence from Iraq, 1972-2011, (2012) Peshawar *Abdulkhaliq Muhammed* argues that: "Since the creation of Iraq in 1921, the Kurds have struggled to achieve autonomy as their minimum goal and independence as their ultimate objectives Indeed... In their search for national statehood and as a result of their status as a stateless nation, the Kurds of Iraq have suffered greatly." The author

describes the U.S. policy toward the Kurds as a fluctuating policy and the last support, which was given to the Kurds, was de facto autonomy, without support for independence. Then the author mentioned that the aim of the United States foreign policy in the Middle East is the stability of the region, because it believes that the stability of the region serves its national security, the establishment of a Kurdish state will lead to the instability of the region and this is what America does not want. *Muhammed* demonstrated that the Kurdish divisions among themselves have also a negative impact on U.S. foreign policy toward them. Nevertheless, "the U.S. cannot ignore the Kurdish question in Iraq because the status of the Kurds in Iraq has geopolitical implications for the region, and U.S. interests are affected by this accordingly. Of the numerous motives behind the U.S. policy towards the Iraqi Kurds, only a Kurdistan democratic model, its possession of natural resources, and Kurdish pro-Americanism are superficially noted here" (Muhammedargues, 2012).

In conclusion, the researcher agrees with the literature on the U.S.-Kurdish relations; the relationship between the two parties established in the seventies of the last century, but it was not actual relationship; it was limited and secret under the CIA. It was also based on U.S. national interests, and America was exploiting the Kurdish issue to achieve a balance of power in the Middle East, to reduce the influence of the Soviet Union in the region as well. The researcher also agrees with them that the United States does not support the independence for the Iraqi Kurdistan, fearing for its interests in the region, because the United States believes that the independence of Kurdistan will lead to more instability of the region, and will anger its Arab and Turk allies in the region. Furthermore, the researcher agrees with them on that the Kurds have been subjected to great injustice through their history; the superpowers took advantage of

these people to achieve their own interests at their expense. Occasionally, these people left at the mercy of successive dictatorships in Iraq and other countries where they live.

However, the researcher disagrees with Lokman I. Meho and Michael G. Nehme, when they argue that: "the Kurdish leaders assume part of the blame for lacking international political insight..." In fact, they were aware of all these matters; what made them like this, is the absence of the Arab League and Organization of the Islamic Conference, stood with the Arab dictators and called the Kurds, "rebels and disobedient" they sent telegrams of congratulation to the Arab leaders, when they carried any military operation against the Kurds. The international community was with the superpowers as well. Thus, the Kurdish people did not have any friend only the mountains. Consequently, the Kurdish leaders had no choice except to respond to the desire of America, when and where the Americans wanted; the Kurdish leaders took this as an opportunity through which they might get gain for their people.

The researcher disagrees with Michael Rubin on what he mentioned about the Kurds and their leaders in his article. Where it appears that, his information is incorrect about Kurdistan. The autobiography of the author shows that he was working in Kurdistan 2000-2004 and these were difficult years in Kurdistan, especially before the fall of *Saddam's* regime and the formation of the Kurdistan Regional Government in 2005. Although the article was written in 2008, it is clear that the author did not review his information about Kurdistan. The author in his article exceeded his border when he spoke about the Kurdish leaders and their families, *Massoud Barzani* and *Jalal Talabani*, describing them as tyrants and autocratic and that both families occupied Kurdistan and stole its riches. However, all of these accusations are false and incorrect

without evidence; the researcher believes that this author has to apologize to the Kurdish people about this abuse of their symbols.

As for Gunter, the researcher agrees with him on the first four stages, but believes that the writer was not successful in the fifth stage. However, the researcher argues that the fifth stage was the last change in the Middle East in 2013; it led to the emergence of new players in the arena such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) or (ISIS), this stage has made America change its policy with the Kurds as well. This change is considering as a fifth stage by the researcher.

Charountaki argues in her book, as did *Burhan Ghalioun* that the objectives of U.S. policy in the Middle East during the Cold War were to stand against the Arab nationalist movement. The researcher has explained this previously and argued that this is not true, because America itself activated this trend in order to stay away from bringing up the Islamic unity. Thus, serving the security of Israel, whereby the Palestinian issue made from the issue of the Islamic nation linked to the Islamic belief to an Arab issue. Consequently, the Palestinian issue made minor and that of the Arabs alone instead of the Islamic world as a whole.

As for the approach followed in the literature, the qualitative method was employed to analyze the data. However, the methods of data analysis were different from one approach to another. Some authors used the experimental and historical methods and others used with the historical approach the analytical method, but almost everyone used the historical method to analyze the data.

Despite the fact that all the literature addressed the U.S.-Kurdish relations, but different authors touched on one aspect of these aspects; for instance, *Peshawar Abdul Khaliq Mohammed* analyzed the U.S. view in terms of the independence of Kurdistan and Michael M. Gunter only addressed the historical stages of the relationship between the U.S. and the Kurds. The closer literature to this study in terms of title is *The Kurds and U.S. Foreign Policy: International Relations in the Middle East since 1945* of Marianna Charountaki; but in substance it is different, the researcher believes the author was not successful because she engaged in the boring details on the history of the Kurds. In addition, in her study the author did not focus on the Kurds in Iraq only, but in other countries as well. In the perception of the researcher if she focused only on the Iraqi Kurds, she would have been more successful in her study. This study differs with Marianna Charountaki's study in terms of the research questions.

2.3 U.S. Foreign Policy Toward ISIS

U.S. Policy towards the Islamic State after its Seizure of Ramadi and Palmyra; (2015) Michael Rubin. The author argues President Barack Obama addressed the nation, on September 10, 2014, against the backdrop of the ISIS's killing of American journalists. "Our objective is clear," he declared, "We will degrade, and ultimately destroy, ISIL through a comprehensive and sustained counterterrorism strategy." nevertheless, recent ISIS success in Ramadi, and Palmyra, show that almost nine months later, the U.S. objective is not on track to being met. and it is clear that the President's stated strategy is not working. but the Questions to consider are why, and what policies could strengthen the fight against the Islamic State organization(Rubin, 2015). First, the theories upon which the American officials depend its fight against the ISIS are often wrong. False assumption leads up to ineffectual strategies. Obama declared, "Now let's makes two things clear: ISIL is not 'Islamic.' No religion condones the killing of

innocents. And the vast majority of ISIL's victims have been Muslim. And ISIL is certainly not a state." John Kerry also opined that the ISIS is neither "a state nor truly Islamic." Both the president and the secretary may try to deny the religious basis of the ISIS so as to eschew antagonizing Islamic nation, but their concern is misplaced and counterproductive (Rubin, 2015). Because the religious explication underpinning the ISIS's behaviors is both real and legitimate, even if it is a minority interpretation which many Muslims eschew. To deny the religious basis for the ISIS is to ignore the battle of interpretation which underpins ISIS actions and more moderate Muslims' efforts to counter such intolerance. It is not the place nor is it helpful for any U.S. president, secretary, or diplomat to serve as an arbiter of what true Islam is or is not. For the sake of setting U.S. policy, we should take our adversaries at the word (Rubin, 2015). Second, the U.S. spends time discussing terminology. Lt. Gen. James Terry, stated, "Our partners, at least the ones that I work with, ask us to use [the Arabic acronym Daesh], because they feel that if you use ISIL, that you legitimize a self-declared caliphate." indeed, Debate about what to call the ISIS does not advance victory. Rather, it is a distraction, one that costs lives by substituting political correctness for progress and bureaucratic machination for battlefield success (Rubin, 2015). Third, Both the president and the secretary of State Department continue to construe the rise of the ISIS during the lens of grievance. This may be comforting to diplomats, because if gripe rather than ideology encourage terrorists, then diplomacy can settle such grievances. however, if the reason for the ISIS's existence is understood injustice in Baghdad, then why has the ISIS disseminated so rapidly outside of Iraq in Libya, the Sinai Peninsula, and perhaps Yemen as well? (Rubin, 2015). the study concluded that the battle against the ISIS will be long. There is no magic formula or short-cut. nevertheless, the U.S. does have actions it can take at a low cost and other

actions which may look good at first glance, but can actually worsen the situation(Rubin, 2015).

The Islamic State and U.S. Policy; (2018). This report was previously issued from Congressional Research Service on November 18, 2015 by Christopher M. Blanchard Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs and Carla E. Humud analyst in Middle Eastern and African Affairs. This report reviews background on the Islamic State organization, discussing its objectives, operations, and affiliates, in addition, analyzing connected U.S. legislative and policy debates.

The authors argue the Islamic State organization grew and developed as a considerable international security threat among more than a decade of conflict in Iraq after the occupation of Iraq in 2003 and the explosion of disturbance and conflict in Syria in 2011. The group's key membership remains in Iraq and Syria, and its efforts bolstered by a network of foreign fighters and affiliate groups in various states across the Middle East, Africa, and Asia(Blanchard & Humud, 2015). the study argued the ideology of the ISIS can be characterized as a uniquely inflexible version of violent jihadist-Salafism—the group and its proponents are willing to use violence in an armed struggle to establish what they view as an ideal Islamic society. Their visibility is instituted on a specific understanding of the life of the prophet Mohammed, the example of his earliest followers, and select events in Islamic history(Blanchard & Humud, 2015). in addition, the study mentioned U.S. Strategy, Policy Options, and Related Issues, when they stated that the United States government continues to lead a multilateral coalition that endeavors to “degrade and ultimately destroy” the ISIS by gradually reducing the geographic and political space, manpower, and financial resources available to it. Stated U.S. strategy to fulfill this goal consists of a number

of “lines of effort,” including, in partnership with several European and Arab continues: direct military action, backing for Iraqi and Syrian partner ground forces, intelligence gathering and sharing, and efforts to restrict flows of foreign fighters and disrupt the ISIS’s finances(Blanchard & Humud, 2015).

The study concluded as of late 2015, permits from leading U.S. military, intelligence, and diplomatic officials suggest that the confrontation between the ISIS and its supporters on the one hand and the U.S. and its partners on the other may be protracted, costly, violent, and challenging. however, the group’s transnational appeal and its adherents’ violent extremism pose massive risks to international security and appear likely to continue to force policymakers in the U.S. and other states to address complex questions regarding the use of power, privacy and civil liberties, intelligence sharing, identity, religious liberty, immigration, diplomatic negotiation, and national strategic priorities(Blanchard & Humud, 2015).

Did ISIS Directly Threaten the United States? (2019) David Sterman. The author argues that “for the counter-ISIS war to have been based in preventive war logic with regards to America’s homeland security, ISIS must have been seen as lacking the capability to direct major attacks inside the United States”.(Sterman, 2019. p 38) the author in his study displays the American official's statements concerning the ISIL threat and set of indicators of ISIL's capability to conduct attacks in the U.S.

Where President Barack Obama stated, who on September 10, while authorizing the escalation of the war into Syria stated that “we have not yet detected specific plotting against our homeland.” National Counterterrorism Center Director Matt Olsen said that “we have no credible information that ISIL is planning to attack the United States”

and described the threat as potential, adding there was no evidence of ISIS cell development inside the United States. Also, in September, Department of Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson stated, “At present, we have no credible information that [ISIS] is planning to attack the homeland of the United States(Sterman, 2019).”

Then the study mentions some indications of the ISIS threat to the United States, as the first indication of the threat to American national security at homeland was the great number of foreign fighters traveling to Syria and Iraq. In addition to the vast areas controlled by ISIS and the funds available to ISIL, allowing them to recruit many fighters around the world. In fact, these indicators are a source of concern to the U.S. authorities(Sterman, 2019).

However, the study derived, that ISIL lacked the capability to direct large, attacks inside the U.S. and finding out that ISIL did demonstrate a capability and intent to direct attacks in Europe, forming the basis for a justifiable European preemptive war logic. However, the comparison to Europe also clarified how far the U.S. case fell from similar the European level of threat(Sterman, 2019).

Kurds in Iraq and Syria: U.S. Partners Against the Islamic State; (2016) Congressional Research Service. This report was issued by the Congressional Research Service (CRS) on June 1, 2016 by five persons, four of them specializing in Middle Eastern Affairs and the last in International Humanitarian Policy. Their names have been redacted in the report by (CRS).

This report examines first: the roles played by United States and its coalition efforts to defeat the ISIS by Iraqi Kurds and Syrian Kurds. Second: Iraqi and Syrian Kurds

interactions with other actors. third: several advantages and challenges the Kurds actions and ambitions present for United States interests in the region. Fourth: the outlook for military processes (such as Mosul battle in Iraq and Raqqa in Syria) and political consequences. fifth: humanitarian concerns relating refugees in Kurdistan, and human rights concerns relating Kurdish military power' treatment of civilians in their areas. Sixth: particular United States policy questions as they regard to assessments of and plans for United States and Kurdish cooperation; and finally: The wide trajectory of the United States and Kurdish partnership(CRS, 2016). The authors argue in their report that the future route of the United States and Kurdish partnership beyond current anti-ISIS cooperation is ambiguous and could in largely rely on how the current cooperation and its outcomes unfold. may the current joint efforts interpret into a longer-term corporation in an area lacerate by chronic instability, ethnic tensions, and weapons proliferation? Policymakers may conclude that major United States and Kurdish proximity could promote better stability and political resolution due to some Kurdish groups(CRS, 2016).

The report concluded that the Trajectory of the U.S. and Kurds as anti-ISIS processes continue, United States officials seem slanted to embrace the interest's Kurdish military power can provide in Iraq and Syria. At the same time, American officials appear to concentrates on addressing and settling limitations or complications that might arise from United States and Kurds cooperation. For instance, officials might be aiming to augment the Kurdish' military successes with the empowerment of non-Kurds military that can command political legitimacy among local populations in predominantly Sunni Arab region such as Mosul and Raqqa. American officials might

also be looking to minimize disruptions in American relations with other partners—such as the Iraqi and Turkish governments(CRS, 2016).

However, the researcher does not agree with the view of the writer Michael Rubin, when he mentioned in a strategy based on false assumptions, In response to president Obama and his secretary of state John Kerry about ISIS that "Both the president and the secretary may seek to deny the religious basis of the Islamic State so as to avoid antagonizing Muslims, but their concern is misplaced and counterproductive. " The researcher believes that this analysis is an incorrect and unrealistic at the same time. The statement of the president and his secretary was equitable and fair to Islam. This is the truth of Islam that everyone should know, that ISIS does not symbolize in Islam, and it is far from Islam and its tolerant principles. The researcher believes that the writer was unsuccessful in explaining the second supposition as well. When he blamed the American official about their statement on the acronym the Islamic state organization ISIS. The writer was unsuccessful in this. Indeed, ISIS should not be called the Islamic State because they are first out of Islamic principles. Secondly, call them the Islamic State, you confer legitimacy on their state, as evidence they did not want people to call them *Daesh*, they were imprisoning everyone who said *Daesh*.

The researcher agrees with David Sterman in his analysis on whether or not ISIS is able to attack America in its own homes? The writer concluded that it is difficult for ISIS to be able to threaten America in its home, and that ISIS does not possess these capabilities to make such a threat.

The researcher does not agree with what was stated in the report issued by the Congressional Research Service (CRS) in 2016 by the title (Kurds in Iraq and Syria:

U.S. Partners Against). When they mentioned that the Kurdish forces violated human rights and destroyed Arab villages after they had recovered from ISIS, because the Kurds are a victim of the violation of human rights that have been practiced against them by successive Iraqi governments since the establishment of the Iraqi state. All the indicators suggest the regional authorities are innocent of these accusations, it is inconceivable for the regional authorities to make such violations. It is might that some of them are found here and there, if it exists, it does not mean it is directed by the regional authorities, but they are at the level of individuals.

In addition, the international reports always praising the peaceful coexistence of entities in the Kurdistan region. As well as, the number of Arab Sunni refugees who live in the Kurdistan region those flee from the oppression of Shiite rule in post-2003 Iraq.

However, the gap between this study and the literature is that the latter did not address the last event which occurred in the Middle East after the emergence of the ISIS and which made the United States engage in relations with the Kurds. In addition, the literature did not answer the questions of this study. Furthermore, this study aims to compare between two considerable events in the history of the relationship between two parties. First, in 1975 when the United States abandoned the Kurds, and in 2014 when America responded to the Kurds and did not let ISIS approach Erbil. This comparison, according to the researcher's knowledge, has not been done in the previous studies so far. In addition, this research is different from the literatures in terms of the theoretical framework as well. The study used realism in terms of the national interest and the Balance of power to interpretation Kurdish-U.S. relations. but in the literatures, some of them have used realism but in terms of defense and

offense theory to explain this relation, taking into their consideration some of failings of realism in its insistence that the state is the key player in the international politics. Where, recent incidents in the Middle East have proved that a state is not the main players in international politics, but non-state actor play a significant role in the region as well. The Kurds and the organization of the Islamic state ISIS and Hezbollah in Lebanon are example. At the same time is the replied to liberalism and a neo-liberalism who focus only on the economic factor for non-state actors such as multinational companies...etc. Thus, this study is trying to add to this literature the reasons and the consequences that made America abandon the Kurds in 1975, and defend them in 2014.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Theoretical Framework

Neoclassical Realism is the theoretical framework to be used in this study. "Realism (or political realism) is a school of thought that explains international relations in terms of power. The exercise of power by states toward each other is sometimes called *realpolitik*, or just power politics" (Goldstein & Pevehouse, 2009, p35). "Realism emphasizes the constraints on politics imposed by human nature and the absence of international government. Together, they make international relations largely a realm of power and interest"(Donnelly, 2000, p9). Realism has been predominant in international relations after World War II ended, in which the idealism theory could not retain peace and order [peace and security] in the international stage. In the idealists' perspective, the dictatorial regimes cause wars to erupt and thus, establishing democratic regimes will avoid the wars from happening since the fighting was in the interest of the monarchies and not the interest of the people (Hity '1985). Idealism considers that it is the people's interest and aspirations that bring about peace. If there is an opportunity, people will strive to attain their own aspiration and benefits. Accordingly, they deem dictatorship is the nemesis of peace; allegedly, in 1914, Germany, Austria, Hungary and Russia was under the control of authoritarianism and anti-democracy (Ainley, 2005). However, harmony of interest is a principle of idealism; it is believed that there is consensus between an individual's higher interest and the higher interest of the group. Therefore, when the individuals support the

interests of the group they are supporting at the same time the individual's interests. This is the focus of the philosophy of the Harmony of Interests (Hity, 1985). In addition, the idealists are trying to address international issues through three basic norms, which are moralist, optimism and internationalism. World War I changed idealistic thinking, when its proponents realized that peace was not a normal situation, but it must be made. Therefore, the idealists recognized that there must be an international authority or institution to organize international chaos and deal with the disputes between states. U.S. President Woodrow Wilson (1913-1921) was one of them; he stressed this point among the fourteen points he presented in front of the Congress. Thus, the League of Nations was established in 1920 (Smith, 2005). However, the outbreak of World War II refuted the idealistic theory and the ideas that were advocated by the historian Edward Hallett Carr through his book "The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919-1939", which was released in 1939. where he argued that the idealistic principle of the Harmony of Interests ignores the fact of the conflict in international relations; because in reality the conflict is between "haves" and "have-nots" (Carr, 1946). E. H. Carr argues that one of the key features in the world is the lack of enough necessities to meet peoples' needs in the world. This consequently would lead people: considered as "haves" and others as "have-nots"; the haves are law-abiding; they want justice to prevail in the international community to be safe from the evil of have-nots. While those have-nots do not respect the law, because this law would make them and put them in a position of followers (Carr, 1946). Therefore, Carr argues that War World II was between the "haves", the allies: "Britain, France, and America" and the "have-nots": "Germany, Italy, and Japan". Consequently, the haves would try to keep the situation of the international balance unchanged, while the have-nots would try to re-balance the situation by force. Thus, according to Carr, the

emergence of the struggle for power and survival; the main objectives of a state in international relations (Sørensen, 2013). Indeed, all classical realists such as Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes and Morgenthau believe that power is the prominent feature of international relations. International politics are a policy of struggle for power, states seeking power, in order to maintain their survival. Thucydides emphasized this fact in The Melian Dialogue in his book *History of the Peloponnesian War* that took place between Athens and Sparta (431-404 BC). When he stated: "the standard of justice depends on the equality of power to compel and in fact the strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept" (Thucydides, 1989. p 401-402).

However, the omission by the idealistic school of power in his interpretation of the events that happened before and between the two world wars and their view of the world as they want to be, not as it is in the reality. The outbreak of the first and second world wars, were the main reasons that questioned idealists' assumptions on international relations. Consequently, the realist theory had the upper hand on the first debate of the three famous debates in international relations, and the realist school dominated international relations after World War II and throughout the Cold War period.

The realist theory was considered one of the key theories in the international relations arena, because it was reflecting the reality of international relations in that period. Realism is not one, but several sub-theories. we can distinguish between three types of realism during its historical periods: classical realism (up to the twentieth century), its most famous proponents: Thucydides (c. 460-BC 406) in his book *the Peloponnesian Wars*; Machiavelli (1532) with *the Prince*; Edward Hallett Carr, *the Twenty Years'*

Crisis 1919-1939; Hans J. Morgenthau (1948) *Politics Among Nations*, modern realism (1939-1979). the neo-realism or structural realism from 1979 onwards with Jean-Jacques Rousseau *condition of war* (1750); Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State War* (1959) and *Theory of International Politics* (1979)] and John J. Mearsheimer *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (2001)] (Smith, 2005). This research is trying to highlight Morgenthau's ideas from classical realism and Waltz and Mearsheimer's ideas from neo-realism or structural realism.

Classical realism emerged in the beginning through its traditional form with the contributions of Hans Morgenthau, Carr, and other early realist thinkers who tried to adapt their ideas to the events of the twentieth century, which witnessed many manifestations of disorder, insecurity and exacerbation of conflicts and wars. However, Hans J. Morgenthau is one of the most prominent realist thinkers who have developed a classical realist theory, through his book *Politics among Nations*; He focused on human nature and the concept of the power theory in international relations; ought to be base on empirical facts with pragmatic objectives, and fitted with reality and logic. Carr and Morgenthau argue that human nature -selfishness and the desire to dominate- with the concept of power are the main causes leading to international anarchy. They consider that to change this situation is difficult to achieve (Sørensen, 2013), due to the human desire to gain more power rooted in his nature. States encourage continually struggle to increase their capabilities. The absence of a higher authority and global government to maintain security in the world gives the human appetite power to protect itself from the anarchical system that prevails in the world (Griffiths, 2007). Thus, the core classical realist ideas and their assumptions on international politics can be summarized in these points: Firstly, States are the key

actors in international relations. Secondly, it has a pessimistic view toward human nature. Thirdly, states, like men behave in a self-interested manner. Fourthly, it has a high regard for the values of national security and state survival. Fifthly, the aggressive intent of states combined with the lack of world government, means that conflict is an unavoidable and ever-present reality of international relations. Sixth, the main signpost that helps political realism to find its way through the landscape of international politics is the concept of interest defined in terms of power (Sørensen, 2013; Donnelly, 2000).

According to Morgenthau, men and women are by nature political animals: they are born to pursue power and to enjoy the fruits of power. Morgenthau speaks of the animus dominant, the human 'lust' for power. The craving for power dictates a search not only for a relative advantage but also for a secure political space, a territory to maintain oneself and to enjoy oneself free from the political dictates of others (Sørensen, 2013). International politics are necessarily power politics due to human nature. Classical realists demonstrated that competition, fear and war could explain the nature of man, which is the main feature in international politics. Morgenthau dictated that politics, like society in general, were administered by objective laws, rooted in human nature, the main opinion of Morgenthau is the existence of laws, first, and finally, finding suitable politics that are compatible with the key fact that human beings are flawed. For both Thucydides and Morgenthau, the fundamental continuity of the power-seeking behavior of states is firming in the biological drives of human beings (Smith, 2005). While there was a major difference between Carr and Morgenthau in the interpretation of the causes that lead into anarchy in international politics, whereby the latter saw that the view of Carr, the upstream of anarchy in international politics

lies in scarcity is not true; rather it lies in sin and human nature that have a tendency to aggression. The aggressive character is transmitted to the state; thus, the state becomes more dangerous because it has more possibilities than human beings do. The aggressive character of the state and its power seeking is rooted in human nature, which is not perfect. Thereby, the state seeks power for survival (Ainley, 2005). Morgenthau presented six principles of the theory of realism: Firstly, political realism believes that politics like society in general it is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature. Secondly, the main signpost that helps political realism to find its way through the landscape of international politics is the concept of interest defined in terms of power. Thirdly, Realism assumes that its key concept of interest defined as power is an objective category, which is universally valid, but it does not endow that concept with a meaning that is fixed for the last time. Fourthly, political realism is aware of the moral significance of political action. It is also aware of the ineluctable tension between the moral command and the requirements of successful political action. Fifthly, political realism refuses to identify the moral aspirations of a particular nation with the moral laws that govern the universe. Sixth, the difference, then, between political realism and other schools of thought is real, and it is profound. However, much the theory of political realism may have been misunderstood and misinterpreted, there is no gainsaying its distinctive intellectual and moral attitude to matters political (Morgenthau, 1978).

The structural realism or neo-realism term it is controversial, because many realists believe that the ideas adopted by neo-realism are the same as those of classical realism; and nothing has changed. Nevertheless, many observers believe that something has changed in classical realism in response to the pluralist challenge and structural realism

is one way of noticing this change (Ainley, 2005). The most prominent neo-realism, Kenneth Waltz, in his book *Theory of International Politics* in 1979 sought to present a scientific interpretation of the theory in international relations, Waltz showed a classical realism background, his first work, *Man, the State and War* (1959). John Baylis and Steve Smith, therefore, argue that all realists subscribe to the following 'three: statism, survival and self-help (Smith, 2005, p. 172); but they have a different perspective about the anarchical system in the international system and the reason states want power. The classical realist Hans J. Morgenthau argues that that human nature is selfish and aggressive and that the instinct for power owned by man is an animal instinct, represented in love with domination and control. This increases when moving from the individualist level to state level, because in the state the potential exists (C. Brown, 2009). Consequently, the state needs power to protect itself from the mess that pervades the international system.

On the other hand, the neo-realists like Waltz and Mearsheimer ignored human nature in their interpretation of the anarchic system in the political system. They demonstrated that the international system is anarchic, because there is no higher authority and world government in the international system that stands above the states, which can they resort to or call when a state is threatened by other countries. Therefore, the structure of the political system makes a state pursue power and protect itself from another state by-self-help to survive (Mearsheimer, 2001).

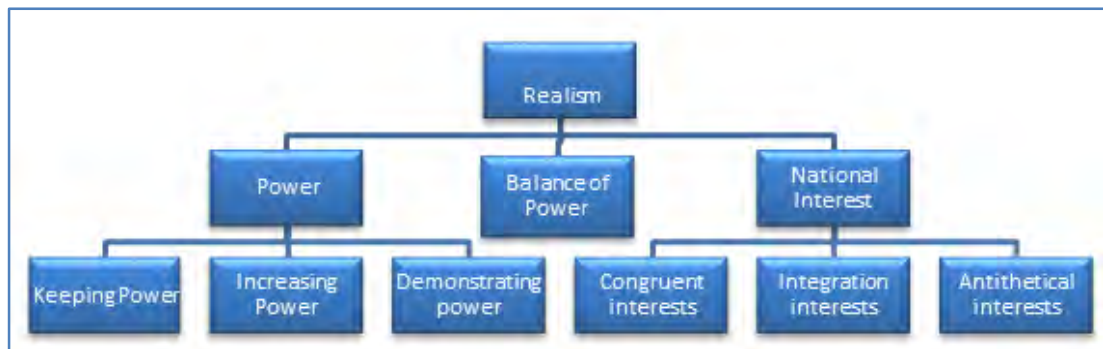


Figure 3. 1: Realism Theory

Power: it is founded on material capabilities, particularly the aggregate of military and concealed power. Not equivalent to the result of conflict, because of tautological, and non-material factors; often influences the result such as the Vietnam War. Offensive realists demonstrated that only maximum capability is more likely to result into a successful outcome (Mearsheimer, 2001). Any reconsideration should suggest that power politics is indivisible from social life because the desire for power is innate in all humans. The eradication of the damaging effects of power politics-not power politics, since it is out of reach of any political thinking or system- from the political realm requires logic skills that are separate from and above the logic of the scientific age (Morgenthau, 1965). In the framework that Morgenthau presented, "every political action is seen as directed toward keeping, increasing, or demonstrating power. In short, the animus dominants, the desire to dominate, is the social force that determines political activity" (Pham, 2008).

Balance of power: the international relations system in which states try to maintain the balance of power among many states; thus, preventing the preponderance of any one state. Decisive to the system is a willingness on the part of individual national governments to change alliances as the situation demands in order to maintain the balance of power (Niou, Ordeshook, & Rose, 1989; Paul & Wirtz, 2004; Waever,

2009) The balance of power is one of the oldest and most enduring concepts of international relations (Paul & Wirtz, 2004). Thucydides used the 'balance of power' to interpret the outset of the Peloponnesian War (Baldwin, 2012). The realists argue that the principle of balance of power is the best solution to maintain international world peace and security in the anarchic political system. The most important goal of the state is survival. Therefore, the state under this system, resorts to the principle of balance of power to protect itself, which can be achieved in two ways, either by increasing its military power or through alliances between countries. Because when states ally themselves to prevent the hegemony of one state over all others, they avoid war, the Cold War is the best example (Paul & Wirtz, 2004).

National interests: the realism school is organically linked, with the concept of a long-term national interest that define the behavior of international agents (Morgenthau, 1945), is a main term in international relations. All states are always working in the process of fulfilling or securing the objectives of their national interests. The policy-makers in all nations formulated their foreign policy based on national interest and it is always in the process for securing its goals. It is a commonly accepted right for each nation to secure its national interests. A nation always attempts to justify its actions because of its national interest. The behavior of a state is always conditioned and governed by its national interests (Waltz, 1979). The concept of national interest has been used by politicians and scholars since the foundation of nation-states to explain and interpret the ambitions and goals of sovereign entities in international politics (Stengel, 2013). Therefore, Hans Morgenthau argued that national interest means survival—the safeguard of physical, political and cultural identity against transgression by other nation-states. (Goldstein & Pevehouse, 2009)

However, as described by neo-realism, the balance of power and national interest are important principles of the theory. Two methods can be used to achieve balance of power are by increasing one's power and through alliance. Thus, as argued by Mearsheimer, a state needs to be powerful to maintain the balance of power in the region. In order to be powerful, two approaches are used. Firstly, take control of a region and exert influence on the controlled region. Secondly, ensure that no others rival you in the region that you control. That way the U.S. is able to pursue its country's interests in the region. That was what the U.S. plan to establish in the Middle East. Ever the U.S. took control of the region in 1991, it has prohibited other rivals from having any significant position in the region. However lately, following the Arab Spring, the Syrian crisis in 2011, and the arrival of ISIS, other countries had interfered in the Middle East, particularly Russia and its allies in the region such as China, Iran, and Hezbollah of Lebanon. They posed a challenge to the U.S. presence in the region, making the situation to grow more complex. The Americans policy-makers, however, took advantage of the Kurds and their problems in the Middle East to achieve the principle of the balance of power in the region so that they can pursue their national interests in the region. It will be apparent to an observer that in the last period, the U.S. policy regarding the Kurds: it supported the Kurds when it serves the U.S. purpose but abandoned them when the U.S. support is damaging to U.S. national security. Thus, the Americans simply abandoned the Kurds during difficult times. At the end of the cold war, the U.S. foreign policy regarding the Kurds was double standard; while the Kurds in Iraq are called good Kurds, the Kurts in Turkey are called bad Kurds. Thus, it was ironic that in Syria, even though the Democratic Unionist Party (PYD) is an ally of the *Bashar Assad's* regime and that it has an affiliation with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) as well as subscribed to similar ideology as the PKK, the U.S.

identified the PKK as a terrorist organization. Nonetheless, the United States treats the PYD in an entirely different manner by providing support and arms to the PYD members. The U.S. policy makers think that by doing so, they are serving their national interest.

In contrast, the study criticizes all types of realism for its inability to accommodate the contribution of the non-states in the international level although to a certain extent neo-realism acknowledged that non-states can get involved in international policy. Although the non-states play no roles in the international level, specifically in the Middle East, they are observed to have important influence in the international level, for instance the Kurds, Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) organization, and the Hezbollah of Lebanon. Realism maintains the belief that the state is the main player in international relations when in fact it was the opposite. The research also criticizes the liberalist theory since it views the contribution of a non-state as limited to economic institutions such as multinational companies and non-organizations. It disregards the non-state players comprising political bodies, for instance the Kurds, ISIS and Hezbollah. Today, these entities have major involvement in the international level.

However, the researcher picks out the neo-classic realism theory as a theoretical framework because he considers that it is the best theory that matches with the case of the study, due to the U.S. foreign policy is driven by nothing only the national interest, especially in the Middle East region. The U.S. decision makers care a lot about this region because of the presence of Israel in the region, as well as the huge reserves of energy with fighting terrorism (radical Islam), same thing with other branches of the realistic theory preferred by the researcher to form the theoretical framework for the study such as power and balance of powers. These two principles are substantial in the

U.S. foreign policy strategy and take it into consideration in the Middle East, where U.S. takes these principles to strike a balance in the region, particularly with the countries inhabited by Kurds, such as Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria. This was evident when the study presented the U.S. interests in the region and how America supported the Kurds to weaken the governments in these countries and once the relationship with these countries improves it gives them away. Therefore, the study focuses only on the power, the national interest and finally the balance of forces as standards consistent with the case of U.S. foreign policy with the Kurds in data analysis.

3.2 Methodology

The methods used in analyzing this study are a combination of the descriptive and historical analytical approaches. Given the nature and field of this study, the research largely deals with narratives of the existing historical events. Due to the empirical nature of this study, the research mainly focused on how, what and why the policy-makers come up with these policies and decisions. The research has been approached from an illustrative view by conducting comparison and contrasting of the current history of the U.S. foreign policy regarding the Kurds, established on the available primary and secondary data. Because of the contemporary nature of this study, it was denied access to various valuable confidential government documents. Thus, the primary and secondary data was mainly sources from the public library.

This research exploited five large materials of primary sources to allow a thorough understanding of the discussions and matters related to the U.S. policy towards the Kurds. The first material of primary sources applied in this study is mostly face-to-face interviews; this research used this method as the primary material to obtain the data that go beyond what is already known in the existing literature about the U.S.

engagement with Iraqi Kurds. Aiming to enrich the research with some unique information, this study provides an analysis of selective and exclusive interviews with key political figures on the U.S. and the Kurdish sides, think-tank scholars and academics. The interviews included informal, conversational and semi-structured interviews and interviews that use open-ended questions. Different types of topics are covered as part of the interview questions. Secondly, recently declassified official documents from previous administrations have been used extensively to help support this research. These documents were made available through The National Security Archive and the State Department 's Office of the Historian. They provided insights and helped develop a comprehensive understanding of U.S. foreign policy toward the Kurds that could not have been understood otherwise. The public records available is the third source of primary materials. Public statements made by senior administration officials in speeches, interviews and press conferences, and oral testimonies in congressional hearings as well as official and governmental reports is offering a rich source for this study. Fourth, the memoirs that have been published by the officials of the previous U.S. administrations is prove particularly useful to help the researcher to analyze U.S. foreign policy toward the Kurds. The final primary source is newspapers articles and news magazines that are heavily exploited for this study.

However, Considering the analysis of the research questions, the researcher determined to use qualitative methods. In opposite to the quantitative approach, qualitative methods objective to characterize differences and not quantify them. The qualitative approach has been chosen basically because of the non-statistical/numerical nature for the research sources. The study was fundamentally based on data collection and literature review, covering both the empirical and the theoretical aspect of the

study. therefore, the research considered that historical tracing is a substantial feature for the analysis in order to clarify the development and shifts in the U.S. foreign policy towards the Kurds in Iraq.

The documentary research paradigm and secondary analysis of qualitative data, namely Interviews and documents declassified by Congress on the topic, has been a valuable addition to the research design. Therefore, ultimately, the study decided to use a combination of the historical and interpretive approach in order to get a better understanding about the contextual framework that had implications for the past and the present U.S. foreign policy towards the Kurds well as.

3.3 Conclusion

This chapter addresses theoretical framework and methodology of the thesis. It shed light on Realism theory, and the study presented in this chapter. Realism theory in some detail and indicated that the study will focus on three main branches of real theories (power, national interest and balance of power). The researcher criticized the factual theory on the grounds that the state is still the main player in international politics while we see how the Kurds played an important role in defeating ISIS as a non-state actor in the International Arena. The researcher criticized the liberal theory as well, when it comes to mentioning the role of non-state actor in the International Arena focusing only on economic institutions and companies, ignoring the political parties that play a significant role nowadays and do not mentions any other non-state actors such as the Kurds and the Lebanese Party of God. The chapter referenced to five large materials of primary and secondary sources to allow a thorough comprehension of the discussions and matters related to the U.S. policy towards the Kurd

CHAPTER FOUR

THE U.S. FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD THE KURDS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND ITS INTERESTS

4.1 Introduction

The word “Middle East” is a coinage of British Naval Historian, Professor A.T Mahan. He used the word to refer to countries that are located in the trijunction of the three continents-Asia, Africa and Europe. In this sense, the term has been continually applied to the region where earliest civilizations occurred. In referring to the whole region before and after the First World War, the word Near East was commonly in usage. In addition, the word was used to refer to Turkey, the Balkans, the Levant and Egypt. Today, the definition is much more cumbersome and complex with different applications from different scholars and authors. The term Middle East today is used to refer to Egypt, Arabia, the Gulf, Iran, and Iraq. It needs to be stressed further that the defeat of Turkey in the First World War and eventual takeover of its former satellites of Arab states led to the general use of the word to all former Turkish possession (Mansfield, 2013). Therefore, all states encompassing the Middle East are one of the significant areas in the formulation of the U.S. foreign policy. The U.S. interests in the area are guided by national security and that dictates the direction of its foreign policy towards the region. Thus, the chapter aims to identify the U.S. interests in this region in general, and examines the U.S. policy toward countries that have significant population of Kurds in the region. This comprises Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria. In addition, the chapter focuses on the U.S. policy towards the Kurds Vis a Vis

these countries. In order to better understand this, the chapter attempts to answer the following questions: What is the U.S. interest in the Middle East region? Is the region still important to the U.S.? What are the U.S. interests with the countries inhabited by the Kurds? What are the policies formulated by the U.S. to achieve its goals in the Middle East? Have these processes changed or not?

4.2 The United States' interest in the Middle East

Ottoman Turks Empire was a force to be reckoned with in the region known as trijunction of three continents. The empire stretched from Europe to Asia and westwards to North Africa. This feat was attained between 1683 and 1919, at the end of the First World War (Villellas, 2011). The empire came to an end as a result of the political weakness of Turkey in the face of western threats. And such might explain why Turkey was described as the “Sick Man of Europe”. This is because the Ottoman could no longer maintain its hold on most territories it earlier controlled (Nautré, 2008). In a sense, the modern political and social history of the Middle East started at the conclusion of First World War with attendant dismember of Ottoman Empire. With the disintegration of the empire therefore the league of nations handed over the Ottoman's sphere of influence to Great Britain and to France for effective governance and administration (Fisher & Krinsky, 1959).

It should be noted that the U.S.' relationship with the Middle East before the First World War was relatively insignificant (Fain, 2008). Britain as a power had earlier established its hegemony in the Persian Gulf for much of 20th century. This does not mean that the U.S. was never in the region. The U.S. registered its presence in the region as early as the beginning of 20th century through American merchants, missionaries. In addition, the U.S. naval vessels had been visiting the region for more

than a hundred years (Hurewitz, 1972). With the conclusion of World War II, there was an intense expansion of military and diplomatic presence of the U.S. in the region. This was made possible mainly as a result of the neutrality of the U.S. in the colonization of the Middle East. It was readily acceptable to the region and was seen as a neutral party (Marsh, 2001).

Such U.S. venture was without reasons. The U.S. evolved complex state apparatus to guide its interests in the Middle East. One of such interests is the continual flow of oil to lubricate American industrial establishment. Another interest is the need to guarantee its own security and that of Israel. It is also in the strategic interest of the U.S. to stem the tides of terrorism and deal significantly with rogue states who might want to undermine the global peace and security. In attaining these lofty goals, the U.S. committed substantial diplomatic and economic resources toward its allies in the region (Timmermann, 2015; Modigs, 2003).

4.2.1 Oil

According to the British Petroleum in 2008, the largest concentration of energy is located in the Middle East and the region as a whole commands 60 percent of the global oil reserves, of which the substantial amount is located in the Gulf States (Gurney, 2008). This enormous energy concentration has stimulated the U.S. strategic presence in the region and as such defined it in terms of national security (Trilling, 2002). In reinforcing this stance, the President Jimmy Carter administration declared in 1980 thus: “an attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force”(Carter, 1980). Also in 2002, Roger Trilling stated emphatically thus:

“Ten years ago, a document called the Defense Planning Guidance—drafted for then secretary of defense Dick Cheney by then and [former] assistant secretary Paul Wolfowitz—was the first documentation of America's intention to unilaterally dominate the world, and when parts of it were leaked by The New York Times, it created a firestorm. Referring to the Persian Gulf, it reads, our overall objective is to remain the predominant outside power in the region, and preserve U.S. and Western access to the region's oil” (Trilling, 2002).

Nevertheless, the U.S. administrations have seldom publicly justified their policies in the Middle East in terms of assuring privileged access to the region's oil resources, or protecting the interests of U.S. oil companies (Gendzier, 2002). In the aftermath of the events of 9/11, however, U.S. policy in the Middle East has been couched nearly exclusively in terms of the U.S. ‘war on terror.’ Indeed, the pursuit of U.S. oil politics in the Middle East as well as Central Asia, has become inseparable from the ‘war on terror,’ but as the discussion that follows demonstrates, the politics of oil and the military have far deeper roots in U.S. policy (Trilling, 2002).

However, the Americans came relatively late to the search for Arabian and Persian Gulf oil. Despite the presence of three U.S. oil companies in the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC), it was not until the early 1930s that Americans became important players in the scramble for oil in the Persian Gulf (Fain, 2008). One needs to recognize that the U.S. did not regard oil in terms of a strategic value until the Second World War, when it recognized its potential ‘not only for prosecuting the war but also as a cheap supplement to declining U.S. reserves, and the West's oil-driven post-war economic development. Thus, the presence of oil in the Middle East has been a principal determinant of U.S. policy’ (Markakis, 2012).

The Middle East has since evolved into a permanent American geopolitical interest of paramount importance. In recent decades U.S. policy in the region has been determined broadly by the following objectives: maintaining secure access to oil, Israel's security and regional stability, countering terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and promoting political and economic reform (Geopolitics, 2007; Inbar, 2016; Kahl & Lynch, 2013; Nautré, 2008).

The most significant aspect of the U.S. foreign policy in the region is the continual flow of oil. The experience of the U.S. from the energy crisis of the 1970s was not palatable and such reoccurrence may cause serious economic damage to the U.S. Such awareness has been constantly guiding the interest of the U.S. in the Middle East, most especially the Persian Gulf, which accounted for 30 percent of total world oil production (Monthly Energy Review October, 2015; Crude Oil Imports from Persian Gulf Highlights, 2015). It needs to be reiterated here that apart from securing continual flow of oil for itself, the U.S. also guarantees the supplies to its strategic allies in Europe and Japan (Byman & Moller, 2016). Thus, oil as a strategic interest of the U.S. in the Middle East has always been a guiding post of its foreign policy. And as stated above, the U.S. is ready to go to war and apply all available means to ensure the continual flow of oil. Such stance explains the involvement and engagement of the U.S. in the Middle East oil assets as well as its undisturbed transportation network since 1945, a period after the Second World War.

Buttressing this line of reasoning, Crown Center for Middle East Studies at Brandeis University stated that the U.S.' approach to oil security in the Middle East has three important components (Woertz, 2009). The first approach is the maintenance of naval stations in the Persian Gulf. Such maintenance is to guarantee the safety passage of all

oil tankers that could pass through the region to eventual destination to the U.S. and all parts of the globe where its interests are maintained. Hitherto, the U.S. before 1979 was highly dependent on Saudi Arabia and Iran as key allies in the region to maintain the continual and safe passage of oil in the Gulf region. As the relations between Iran and the U.S. turned sour, then it was incumbent on the part of the U.S. to evolve a strategy that would strengthen its naval base in the region. It also needs to be stated here that the presence of the U.S. naval squadron in the Gulf region is not only to guide the safe passage oil tankers but also to respond to any global threats from the region that might stand to threaten its security and of allies. This intent might explain the assistance rendered to Kuwait in a bid to liberate it from the shack of domination of Iraq between 1990 and 1991.

Another aspect of the U.S. oil policy in the Middle East, most importantly in the Gulf region is the maintenance of good relations and rapports with all monarchs who are heads of governments in the region. This explains the close rapport of the U.S. with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman. The security of all these states are guaranteed and provided by the U.S. and other EU members such strategic assistance is embraced by all the monarchs in the Gulf region in order to secure them from rogues' states like Iraq, Iran, and Yemen.

The maximization of the U.S. interest in the eventual production of oil in the region is the last of the three interests. The process of oil production involves prospecting, production, refining, and transportation and the U.S. is grossly involved in all these processes through its multinational oil companies like Halliburton, ExxonMobil, Texaco, and British Petroleum (BP).

However, some analysts believe that the Middle East is no longer important to the U.S. interests, arguing that America does not need Middle East oil because its production of shale oil has guaranteed its self-sufficiency in oil and gas, the discovery of which has rendered the Middle East oil useless.

Despite the discovery of Shale Oil, which many analysts and scholars rely on in claiming the decreasing strategic importance of the Middle East to the U.S., the contemporary involvement of the U.S. in the region dictates otherwise. The securing of oil and other strategic interests are still guiding the interests of the U.S. in the region. It would thus be wrong of anyone to assume and think that the discovery of shale oil has rendered the strategic importance of the Middle East useless. The presence of high concentration of global oil and gas in the region is still an important determinant of global economic prosperity and advancement. As long as the world economies still rely on oil, so also the continual importance of the region to the global economy relations. Even if the U.S. has discovered the said shale oil, which is not a reliable alternative to crude oil, its allies like EU, Japan, and South Korea still need such priceless commodity from the Middle East. In this manner, if the U.S. foreign policy interests is anything to go by, of which one of them is the protection of allies interests across the globe, then, middle east still retains its strategic importance to the U.S. in this way, the liberal global economy still rely heavily on Middle East oil (Garfinkle, 2008). Several revelations have emerged from the U.S. political leaders and administrators about the continual relevance of the Middle East oil to the U.S. economy. One of such revelations emerged in the wake of 9/11 when the Assistant Secretary of State, William J. Burns addressed the Middle East Institute in Washington. His position was that as long as Middle East remains as a whole remain

in political and social debacle, there is no guarantee to global prosperity. In this manner, the secretary lamented that the U.S. needed prosperous, peaceful and calm Middle East as such will guarantee the global peace and prosperity (Gendzier, 2002).

4.2.2 Israel security

Those who argue in favor of the U.S. low interest in the Middle East seem to have forgotten the case of Israel, an important strategic ally of the West in the region. In this case, how one would treat the stability and security of Israel in the face of U.S. interest in the Middle East? The question appears complicated though, the region, with the presence of Israel as an important U.S. ally still remain strategic to the U.S. interest. The stability of the Middle East with its attendant result on the security of Israel still occupies its primacy in the U.S. foreign policy in the region (Bowen, 2015). The question now is: How has the U.S. been able to maintain security and stability in the region after the Cold War? One of such ways is the support being given to the regimes in the Middle East. It has been one of the core foreign policies of the U.S. to support the leaders in the region, possibly to ensure the security of the regimes in order to forestall peace and security in the region as whole. Such regimes include Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the collapsed Hosni Mubarak regime in Egypt. The zeal on the part of the U.S. to maintain stability in the region might also explain its intervention in the face of insecurity in the Gulf region in 1991, wherein the U.S. led a coalition forces against Iraq domination of Kuwait oil fields and other parts of Kuwait. It was therefore the government of George Bush that called for the restoration of legitimate government in Kuwait to displace the puppet regime of Iraq (National Security Directive 54 1991,” 1991). The U.S. interest enumerated above has been confirmed by document, which was issued from the White House on 20 August 1990 under the title “U.S. Policy in Response to the Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait”. It states thus:

"U.S. interests in the Persian Gulf are vital to the national security. These interests include access to oil and the security and stability of key friendly states in the region. The United States will defend its vital interests in the area through the use of U.S. military force if necessary and appropriate, against any power with interests inimical to our own. The United States also will support the individual and collective self-defense of friendly countries in the area to enable them to play a more active role in their own defense. The United States will encourage the effective expressions of support and the participation of our allies and other friendly states to promote our mutual interests in the Persian Gulf region" (NSD, 45).

Based on this principle the Clinton administration's primary focus in the Middle East was the Arab-Israeli peace process. This was because of the conflicts' impact on its core interests, regional stability and the global economy (Markakis, 2012). But even before the 1996 U.S. Presidential election the U.S. goals for the Middle East in the period were clearly and concisely spelled out by then U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, Robert H. Pelletreau in a speech before the Fifth Annual Southwest Asia symposium of the U.S. Central Command (CENTO) (Freedman, 1999):

"Securing a just, lasting and comprehensive peace between Israel and its neighbors remains a cornerstone of our overall foreign policy. A successful peace process will enhance regional stability, remove a rallying point for fanaticism, and enhance prospects for political and economic development. The United States is engaged in several fronts to advance peace negotiations, an engagement, which in turn helps achieve our other objectives in the Middle East. These include preserving Israel's security and well-being; maintaining security arrangements to preserve stability in the

Persian Gulf and commercial access to its resources; combating terrorism and weapons proliferation; assisting U.S. businesses, and promoting political and economic reform" (Pelletrau, 1996).

The Hegemonic domination of the U.S. has always been one-sided, One-sided in the sense that the U.S. foreign policy was formerly centered on the need to protect the interest and security in the Middle East. Such policy imbalance boomeranged for the U.S. in the 1970s when the energy crisis affected the western countries' in that sense the U.S. policy became reoriented towards Arab-Israel peace process (Hinnebusch, 2007). Thus, the lesson of U.S. alienation of Arab states in its policy in the Middle East, most especially during and Yom Kippur War of 1973, made the U.S. to yield to Arab demands and have balanced foreign policy towards the states in the region (Modigs, 2003).

It would be wrong to assume that Israel represents a parasite to the U.S. in the Middle East. There is symbiotic relationship as Israel represents an important agent of divide and rule in the Middle East since its creation in 1948. It serves military and political agenda of the U.S. in the Middle East and as well represents the western outpost of democracy in the region. In this way, Israel also serves the U.S interests in the region and most of the U.S. military installations are located in the region and ready to be used in the case of military and security threats to the U.S. and western interests (Rossi,1998; Garfinkle,2008). Besides, radicalism nationalist movements and terrorist's outpost in the Middle East are been kept redundant by Israel, who serves the western interest in the region. This is particularly true of Lebanon, Jordan and Syria (Modigs, 2003).

However, after the Arab Spring in 2011, especially when the Syrian people revolted against Bashar al-Assad's regime and then the emergence of the Islamic State organization, the security of Israel is at stake and it represents a serious concern for both the U.S. and Israel. It needs to be reiterated that Israel has more than 70 kilometers border with Syria. While *Ronald Tiersky Eastman* argues that:

"The civil war in Syria has now spilled over massively into Iraq. Paradoxically, the Syrian internal conflict had increased Israel's security because the Assad regime and its army were weakened as a possible military threat (including giving up all or most of its chemical weapons capability). The sudden emergence of ISIS as an international force dominating a large territory means that Israel could conceivably end up facing it on the Golan Heights. Israel's army couldn't be defeated, but terrorist attacks might develop that would damage Israeli society materially and above all psychologically. Israeli cities would become unsettled, some Israelis might move away from the borders and others might just leave the country" (Tiersky, 2014).

It needs to be said here that contrary to popular opinion, Israel does not hold any concern about ISIS threats; this is confirmed by a twitter account of the ISIS, the response goes thus:

"We (the ISIS) haven't given orders to kill the Israelis and the Jews. The war against the nearer enemy, those who rebel against the faith, is more important. Allah commands us in the Koran to fight the hypocrites, because they are much more dangerous than those who are fundamentally heretics" (Maitra, 2014).

Thus, the Arab Spring and the emergence of ISIS do not have any impact on the security of Israel. On the contrary, Israel is safer than before because almost all the countries in the region live either under internal or proxy war and only Israel as a state live in relative peace and security. In this instance, the U.S has achieved one its foremost foreign policy goals in the Middle East- the security of Israel.

4.2.3 Terrorism

The U.S. foreign policy before the end of the Cold War centered on the adoption of the policy of containment against the Soviet Union in the Middle East, and such policy represented its foremost objective in the region during the Cold War era. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, which eventually left the global structural political system unipolar, the U.S. was no longer afraid about the spread of communism in the region. This in essence made the U.S. to evolve a strategy to contain terrorism and radical Islam, which began to appear in the Middle East towards the end of seventies. Thus, terrorist's activities from the Middle East region has been an important issue bordering the U.S. policy makers for decades. Such concern became intensified with the 9/11 terrorist attack on the Pentagon and World Trade Centre. The terrorist attack represented a remarkable turning point in the U.S. approach to terrorism and Islamic radicalism in the Middle East. It has been established that terrorists have the potential to launch devastating attack on the western nations as shown by Paris attack.

Such realization changed the perception and approach of the U.S. policy makers toward the Middle Eastern region (Bowen, 2015). It was based on the realization that President George Bush declared war on Al Qaeda and its affiliates around the globe. In addition, war was also declared on those who might have shared their ideology or

sympathized with them (Bush, 2001; Bush, 2002). The approach was intensified as Bush declared war on terror organizations and affiliates around the world. In this manner, Bush surmised that,

“The defeat of terrorism required a change in the government and societies where terrorist organizations grew and thrived. Bush arguably believed it was in the U.S.’s national interest to use military force and diplomatic pressure to promote democracy around the world and through force, if necessary. In his estimation, democracies would ensure the U.S. homeland was free from terrorism and secure in the world” (*The National Security Strategy United States of America*, 2002).

The Bush administration’s rationale for promoting democracy in the MENA was implicit in assessing why the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 occurred. For the Bush administration, inadequacy in freedom human rights abuse, most especially in both economic and political terms, in the MENA allowed terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda to extend their sinister motive to radicalize the so called downtrodden. As a result, the zeal to propagate democracy formed an important agenda in the political language of the administration. The introduction of democratic governance in the region is two-fold strategy. One of such is the need to evolve democratic ethics and principles for long-term counterterrorism approach. It is also a means to engage the MENA region and its governments (The White House, 2002). The idea that democratization was a potent avenue to combat terrorism was an idea that was seen with much doubt in the U.S. and elsewhere, and the enforcement and implementation of democratization policies was therefore always criticized by doubting Thomas in the U.S. government. Usual counter- arguments are that there is no direct connection between underdevelopment, a democratic deficit, and terrorism. It needs to be said that

democracy in fact contributes to political turmoil; that the Middle East is simply not fertile to democratic values due to socio-cultural and historical reasons, and that free and fair elections would lead to Islamists taking over the mantle of power. Such Islamist take-over would no doubt become a staunch enemy of the U.S policies in the Middle East (Nautré, 2008). These concerns about the introduction and institutionalization of democracy in the Middle East can be a subject of debate with each considering the pros and cons of such policy.

However, the forceful appearance of ISIL's as a regional and global security problem arose from the politics of Syria and Iraq. The U.S. invasion of 2003 could be attributed to the emergence of the deadly ISIL. It is crucial to know that ISIL represents a security challenge to the U.S. as it is still within the foreign policy of the country to ensure that such is not extended to its territory in the western hemisphere (Bowen, 2015). Interestingly, though, Obama did not, at initial stage see ISIL in terms of national interests. Rather, he saw it in moral terms, trying to link the U.S.-led coalition's attempts to counter ISIL on the battlefield (Bowen, 2015). However, the vociferous appearance of the ISIL has raised concerns and trepidations in the west, most especially in Europe. Western officials have concerned that young European Muslims who have travelled to engage in fight in Syria as anti-Assad idealists may come back as anti-Western terrorists sponsored by the ISIL. According to Foreign Bureau of Investigation (FBI) director James Comey warned,

“All of us with a memory of the '80s and '90s saw the line drawn from Afghanistan in the '80s and '90s to Sept. 11.” He then warned, “We see Syria as that, but an order of magnitude worse in a couple of respects” (Horwitz & Goldman, 2014).

Notwithstanding the potential threats of the ISIL, such can be, the Islamic State-linked Syrian foreign fighter threat can easily be exaggerated (Byman & Moller, 2016).

Both Joe Barnes and Andrew Bowen are of the view that the U.S. should make the following points to avoid the general risk of Islamic terrorism. First, the U.S. needs to disabuse the fantastical notion that the U.S. is going to “defeat terrorism” in the way that the U.S. and its allies, for instance, vanquished Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan during World War II. Islamic terrorism, it should be recalled, is a phenomenon that finds root in the extreme precincts of Islamic fundamentalism. The latter, in turn, has a long, complex and ongoing history that differs substantially by country. The idea that the U.S.—as outsiders and outsiders—is in a position to decisively shape the course of what is in many ways, an internal dynamic within Islam is not just far-fetched; it is dangerous. Second, this does not mean the U.S. is defenseless. Far from it the U.S. can work with like-minded states to harden potential targets, improve intelligence-gathering, and use military means—notably drone strikes and special forces operations—to neutralize dangerous individuals. The current crises in Iraq and Syria have again highlighted the importance of both limiting the flow of foreign fighters to the region and closely monitoring their return. Third, it has also reminded us of the importance of stopping private funding for terrorist organizations, much of it emanating from Gulf Arab states. Another and more difficult problem is the historic support, notably by Saudi Arabia, of fundamentalist Islam within the Middle East and beyond. Let us stress that few adherents of fundamentalist, such as *Wahabism* are terrorists or supporters of terrorism, but fundamentalist institutions—notably schools—provide a fertile breeding ground for extremism.

However, although ISIS has lost much of its territory, especially in the recent period in Iraq and Syria, but it is still constituted a real and potential threat to the security of the region and the U.S. interests and its allies, this is because the extremist ideology which ISIL holds makes it hard to eliminate it so easily. Despite, the alliance that led by U.S. against ISIL inevitably will defeat it militarily and expelled it from Iraq and Syria but the real challenge facing the U.S. and its allies in the region is how to end this extremist ideology? In addition, how a stop can be put to its intellectual influence on the liberated areas from ISIS or foreign jihadists? Who have returned to Europe?

However, the U.S. foreign policy is focusing on these three objectives in the Middle East, but that does not mean the U.S. does not have other motives in the region. In the region, the U.S. still have policy interest in the promotion democracy, human rights and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons... etc. Democratic promotion became a paramount objective of the U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East by Bush Administration after the September 11 Attacks. Bush states that one of the main reasons that led to the exposure of the U.S. to attack is the lack of democracy in the Middle East. Nevertheless, after the Islamist movements won in the general elections in Egypt and Palestine the Bush administration realized that the promotion of democracy means the arrival of Islamist parties to power, which led Bush to back down from the goal, because it did not serve the U.S. interests in the region.

In spite of all these crucial goals and important national interests of the U.S in the Middle East, it needs to be said that the region is no longer serving the U.S. interests. The outbreak of the Arab Spring cum revolutions that led to the shifts in the regional stability bothers the U.S. administration and. The decline in the U.S. role in the region and the ineffectiveness of this role led to China's growing role in the region, which

poses threat to American interests. It should be noted that the geopolitical rivalry with China will not only be confined to the Pacific Asia, it will extend to the Middle East inevitably (Nas, 2013).

Some scholars and public policy analysis have been trying to advance reasons for declining U.S. role in the Middle East. Aron (2003) states the following,

“First, the prospect of a new Cold War between the U.S. and its competitors-Russia and China - in the Middle East. Second, the end of the U.S. war on terror and the use of drones by the U.S. to target elements of terrorist groups in the region. Third, the U.S. is no longer in need of the region’s oil after the discovery of shale oil and gas. Fourth, the collapse of the U.S. allies in the region and qualitative superiority of Israeli on Arab neighbors” (Aron, 2013).

It should be noted that the declining role of the U.S. in the Middle East has impact on international and regional powers such as Russia and Iran. In this context, *the Washington Institute for Near East* Allocated its political forum to discuss the U.S. policies in the Middle East, which were attended by Robert Satloff, Stephen Hadley, and Dennis Ross. Policy forum concluded that the U.S.'s allies in the Middle East have reservations for the U.S. policy in the region. Some countries in the region, most especially Syria, Iraq and Palestine, see that the U.S. policy in the region is a regressive one. Such realization led to some of them leaning towards other powers such as Russia and Iran to influence the events in the Middle East region. Speakers in the policy forum (The Washington Institute) disagree with some analysis and political views that the Middle East is no longer important to the U.S. foreign policy, especially after the U.S. discovery of shale oil and gas. The Policy Forum lamented that the fact that the U.S.

discovered the shale oil does not automatically translate to declining role of the U.S. in the region. In addition, the U.S. cannot abandon the region because of the discovery of the shale oil; the U.S. still has in its policy retention the role to play in the Middle East. The other interests like geostrategic locations, economy and balance of powers are still there.

As mentioned above, the Middle East is still important to the U.S. foreign policy making. In such a way, the U.S. policy in the region cannot be described as regressive; and it is wrong to say that the importance of the Middle East is related with the existence of oil and gas. As mentioned earlier, there are other considerations to the U.S. interest in the Middle East.

4.3 The U.S. Foreign Policy Toward the Kurds In Turkey and Its Interests

4.3.1 The U.S. interests in Turkey and its foreign policy towards the Turkish Kurds.

This chapter addresses theoretical framework and methodology of the thesis. It shed light on Realism theory, and the study presented in this chapter. Realism theory in some detail and indicated that the study will focus on three main branches of real theories (power, national interest and balance of power). The researcher criticized the factual theory on the grounds that the state is still the main player in international politics while we see how the Kurds played an important role in defeating ISIS as a non-state actor in the International Arena. The researcher criticized the liberal theory as well, when it comes to mentioning the role of non-state actor in the International Arena focusing only on economic institutions and companies, ignoring the political parties that play a significant role nowadays and do not mentions any other non-state actors such as the Kurds and the Lebanese Party of God. The chapter referenced to five

large materials of primary and secondary sources to allow a thorough comprehension of the discussions and matters related to the U.S. policy towards the Kurds.

However, the U.S and Turkey have continuously stood shoulder-to-shoulder in facing serious foreign and defense policy challenges. This close rapport started during the Korean War, in which 15,000 Turkish troops fought alongside the U.S. soldiers and to Washington's leadership in securing Turkish joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1951. During the ensuing decades, Turkey maintained the second largest military in NATO and played an important role in the defense of Europe as well as in planning for what later came to be known as "out-of-area" contingencies (Cook, 2006). The political and diplomatic relations between the Republic of Turkey and the U.S have always been progressive and reflective of the historical moment in time. During the Cold War, the common strategic threat posed by the Soviet Union aided the cooperation between the two countries. Yet even then, relations were still dictated by regional issues and domestic politics in both capitals. The traditional foundation of the U.S.-Turkey alliance has always been the two countries' militaries, which are highly connected and integrated in the context of a harmonized NATO framework and as a result of continuous bilateral cooperation (Walker, 2010).

The termination of the Cold War had an important turning point on Turkish foreign policy. During the Cold War, Turkey devoted its attention primarily on containing Soviet power and strengthening its ties with its allies in the West. The end of the Cold War, however, removed the Soviet threat, which resulted in fears among Turks that Turkey would lose its strategic importance to the U.S. These fears have proven otherwise as Turkey's strategic importance has been intensified and acknowledged. This is because the U.S. needs Turkish strategic cooperation in Eastern Europe and the

Middle East (Larrabee, 2008). The pivotal goals of the U.S. in the Middle East are to improve stability, speeding up democratization process, introduction of a free market economy and making sure that it operates smoothly. In addition, improvement in trading and commercial relations, controlling nuclear weapons and to encourage human rights standards, thus the main goal can be defined as blocking the spread of influence of existing radical regimes and preventing the creation of new ones (Aras, 1997). It has been said that the only places where all these goals and objectives can be attained are Middle East, Balkans and Caucasus. According to Henry Kissinger

“Turkey is located between “three revolutions” consisting of the traditional state system of Europe, the radical Islamist challenge to historic notions of sovereignty, and the drive of the center of gravity of international affairs from the Atlantic to the Pacific and Indian Oceans” (Flanagan & Brannen, 2008).

Therefore, Turkey remains a prime actor in many crucial issues of the U.S. foreign, national security, and economic policy. For six decades, a sound relationship with Turkey has been central to advancing U.S. interests in Eurasia and the Middle East and to creating new strategic opportunities for the U.S. and its other NATO allies (Flanagan & Brannen, 2008).

Scholars have argued that if Turkey, a key ally of the U.S., turns away from the U.S., the damage to American interests will be intense and long lasting. Turkey remains invaluable to the U.S. and no doubt more so than during the Cold War. According to Menon, Rathbone, and Wimbush (2007) and Migdalovitz (2010) the following are true for the continuous U.S. interest in Turkey:

- Turkey is neighbor to pivotal countries for American policy and interest.
- The instability within Turkey easily affects the other country in the Middle East because of Turkey's location and ties with Middle East countries.
- Turkey has critical waterways (Straits) and narrows which are trade and energy linkages.
- Turkey's economic contribution to small countries of region makes them economically stable.
- Turkish-American friendship is a good example for other Muslim countries, which are opposed to the U.S. due to religion.
- Turkey's cooperation for Iraq is important to decline violence and to increase political settlement of Iraq.
- Turkey's contribution to the U.S. about global terrorism is significant to defeat terrorism from the Middle East.
- Turkey contributes to NATO with its army force and NATO installations in its soil.

The strategic importance of Turkey in the U.S. foreign policy has improved more after the emergence of the ISIL. This is because Turkey shares border territories with most of the countries suffering terrorist attacks. In addition, most terrorists live in countries that share borders with Turkey. It also needs to be reiterated that Turkey is a neighbor to the largest terrorist organization and such presence threatens U.S. interests in the region and makes it difficult for America to do away with its strategic ally in the Middle East after the new developments in the region.

In the case of the U.S. foreign policy toward the Kurds in Turkey, Kurds in Turkey are not strategically important to the U.S. unlike the Iraqi Kurds. In this manner, the U.S.

classified PKK a terrorist organization and as such assisting Turkey in mitigating the activities of this party on Turkish government. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) played a major role in 1999 to capture the head of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, Abdullah Ocalan, in Nairobi.

However, disagreement does exist between Turkey and the U.S. on the Democratic Union Party (PYD), which largely represents the Syrian Kurds. With the emergence of ISIL, the U.S. used PYD to fight ISIL but Turkey believes the YPG is an extension of the PKK and in such conclusion Turkish government did not want the U.S. to support this faction as it has been declared a terrorist group. In this way, Erdogan was of the view that the U.S. has to choose between Turkey and PYD. The U.S. in this case opined that the organization should not be seen as a terrorist organization rather a group that is peaceful and civil.

4.3.2 Kurdish historical background in Turkey

The expression of Kurdish nationalism started during the 19th century, when the Ottoman Empire was undergoing a process of centralization. Before the centralization process, the Kurdish Emirates had enjoyed near autonomy. The Kurds had been ruled under Ottoman authority as early as the 16th century, and due to a special plan, the Kurds were organized into Emirates (principalities) enjoying a degree of autonomy, although still under the Istanbul control (Yegen, 1996). The Kurds, as a people had been living on the frontiers of empires, then on the borderlands as they emerged, and then across borders as they evolved, fashioned out complex strategies for solving issues of sovereignty and access to resources (Webinger, 2015).

It needs to be reiterated that towards the tail end of the Ottoman Empire the Kurds as people began to enjoyed some degree of developments in social life alongside the emergence of Kurdish national awareness as an intellectual movement. The French Revolution, with its ideologies of freedom, enlightenment, nationalism and the right of man radiated to all parts of Europe. It was during this period that Kurds came in contact with the idea of nationalism which strengthened loyalty and bond among all the Kurds. In way, therefore, the French revolution spurred the growth and development of nationalism in the social and political dictionary of the Kurds (Aydın, 2005). The nationalist sentiment thus grew among the Kurds like other nationalities within the Ottoman Empire. This nationalist urge led to the formation of secret societies to disentangle from the clutches of Ottoman imperial domination (Farouk-Sluglett, 1991). The response of the Ottoman leaders to Kurds aspirations was met with stiff resistance which led to periodical uprisings (1808- 1839). Nearly all the resistance failed because of the inability to carry along the majority of Kurds as well as those in the administrative cadres. It also needs to be noted that the disunity among the Kurds which is a reminiscence of power struggles among various tribes led to the failure of the struggle against the center, the Ottoman Empire (Haddad, 2001). Most Kurdish leader of the Ottoman period did not really understand what constituted the national entity of Kurds and most of the leaders also pursued personal interests instead of collective interest (Webinger, 2015). However, the Young Turks' revolt in 1908 had first promised to retain equal rights for all the ethnic nationalities residing within the Empire, but terminated by stopping all non-Turkish forms of cultural and political emancipation (Haddad, 2001). The nascent period of Kurdish nationalist sentiment met with conflict from Turkish authority and such led to conflictual situation as opposed to peaceful co-existence between the two. From the year of Republic

formation, the Turkish authority has been resenting an attempt by Kurds to have regional government cum autonomy. Any attempt at having such is met with condemnation from central authority. In this way, the government of Turkish has been practicing exclusionary policy to detriment of the Kurds nationals within the statehood (Mango, 1999).

The political and social debacle in Turkey which is generally termed “the Kurdish Question” is based on historical and cultural connections to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. When the Ottoman Empire disintegrated following the First World War, the Kurds were dismembered between what are now Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey. After an initial strategic concern to ensure Kurdish autonomy by the Great Powers enunciated in the Fourteen Point Programme for World Peace in 1918 and the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920 (Hinnebusch, 2003; Flanagan & Brannen, 2008). Nevertheless, European concerns over the potential of Soviet influence combined with historical events and finally the fallout of the Turkish War of Independence culminated in Turkish sovereignty over the Kurdish-dominated area prevented independence at Sèvres. The other Kurdish possessions were divided between Iran, Syria and Iraq without giving a participation or observer status to the Kurds in the dialogue as to the future of their lands (Democratic Progress Institute, 2013).

It should be noted that the independence program of “Turkification” that followed in the southeast of the country culminated in senior administrative positions being occupied by the ethnic Turks and all issues pertaining to Kurdistan being removed from official materials. The employment of the Kurdish language in public affairs including in schools was prohibited as was old Kurdish wear and music culminating in two major Kurdish revolts in 1925 and 1930 (Brown, 1998; Aydın, 2005; Webinger,

2015). Martial law was announced in the southeast and in 1934 and following a succession of coups d'état in 1960, 1971 and 1980 Martial law was ensued throughout the country. The Kurdish population of Turkey was portrayed throughout this period as a threat to state harmony and the use of the term Kurdish, use of the Kurdish language, Kurdish folk songs, giving children Kurdish names were stopped in 1983. Kurdish villages were given Turkish names. "Deterrent" sentences were handed down periodically by the courts for infractions of these laws. With the commencement of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) armed struggle in 1984 Turkish military presence in the southeast increased (Democratic Progress Institute, 2013).

The emergence of the PKK in 1984 as a revolutionary organization in demand of Kurdish independence marked an important development in the evolution of the Kurdish national movement, entering a stage of continuous armed struggle, which is thirteen years' duration now. Such long time represented the longest in the history of Kurdish rebellion in modern Turkish (Brown, 1998). The emergence of the PKK and its militant organization, which staged various protests and deadly attacks against Turkish military forces worsened the tension between Kurds and Turkish governments since the 1980s (Celik, 2008). The PKK is really a strange phenomenon among Kurdish nationalist movements, particularly in its left-wing origins. Most other Kurdish parties—mostly in Iraq—have developed from more conservative Kurdish environment with a concrete regional and tribal affiliation. The metamorphosis of the Kurdish protracted problem in Turkey into its contemporary situation is not only due to the PKK. Political and social developments in other parts of the Near East, mostly the Iran-Iraq and the Gulf wars, provided the PKK with crucial political and military opportunity to maneuver (Brown, 1998).

From the beginning, the PKK has its established goal and objective, which is the creation of a unified, independent Kurdish state. It thus not in any way hide its pan-Kurdish intention. The PKK did not only seek for independence, but also a political and social revolution among the Kurds in order to change their society's feudal structure. It stated early on as Marxist- Leninist and aligned generally with left-wing anti-imperialist rhetoric of the time to go against "imperialism," including "Turkish imperialism" in Turkish Kurdistan (Cagaptay & Yolbulan, 2013).

4.4 The U.S. Foreign Policy Toward the Iranian Kurds And Its Interests

4.4.1 Kurdish historical background in Iran

Iranian Kurdistan (also known as East Kurdistan) is the unofficial name given to a region in North Western Iran, which is occupied by the Kurds (Hejab, 2010). The Kurds are a group of people that represent a distinct nation with common culture and language. Although there exists no single Kurdish identity, and the language varies from region to region. The people that are called Kurds share a culture different from that of their surrounding neighbors (Yildiz, & Taysi, 2007). It has been estimated that over 12 million Kurds live in Iran, representing about 17 per cent of the population. They live majorly in the provinces of West Azerbaijan, Kurdistan (*HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES AGAINST THE KURDS*, 2008). The political fortunes of Kurds have, in the past, often been dictated by events outside Kurdish control (Farideh, 2003). Kurdistan's first official division took place in 1514 AD, following the *Chalderan* War between the Persian *Safavid* Empire and the Turkish Ottoman Empire. Four centuries later, the colonial powers of the time further changed the political landscape of Kurdistan by dividing Ottoman Kurdistan into additional three more parts. The present borders between modern Iran and Turkey have not changed much since the first division 500 years ago with Iranian Kurdistan remaining relatively the same under

Persian/Iranian control (Behruz, 2013). The relationship between the Kurds and Iranian governments has always been a complex one. In pursuing a policy of consolidating power, the Safavid kings used the Kurds to guard the borders in the Kurdistan region against the Uzbeks in 1600 (Hroch, 1993).

However, the history of the Kurds in Iran, as well as all other states in which Kurds live, clearly shows that the state in question has evolved overtime goals that are not in consonance with the demands and aspirations of Kurdish society (Yildiz, & Taysi, 2007). Therefore, the most important Kurdish resentment during the nineteenth century occurred in the area along the Ottoman–Persian border, between Lake *Van* and Lake *Urmiyeh*, in 1880. The revolt led by a religious leader, *Shaikh Ubayd Allah* -he was to the *Naqshbandi* way- who sought Kurdish control of the region, he was heavily subjugated by Ottoman and Persian armies as well as tribes in conflict with him. His movement was a tribal uprising which used ideas of national awareness (Behruz, 2013). *Shaikh Ubaydullah* failed to achieve his goals, but the idea of a Kurdish independent state or region resonate in the memory and minds of the Kurds (Farideh, 2003).

The outbreak of World War I did not affect the Iranian monarch's possessions in the way it did for the Ottoman Empire. Nonetheless, the Iranian state at the time did not completely in control of much of the countryside which form parts of Iranian Kurdistan which had been tenuously ruled by Iran since 1639 (Romano, 2006). The regional power vacuum created by the end of the First World War presented an ample chance for the Kurds to break away from the hegemony of the ruling territorial powers. The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, the Treaty of Sèvres, revolts in both Iraqi and Turkish Kurdistan, and the general weakness of the powers in Tehran were all factors

that influenced the Iranian Kurds to revolt (Yildiz, & Taysi, 2007). The resultant turbulent condition in the country provided great encouragement for Kurdish leaders, who were determined to try once again to set up an independent Kurdish State (Hejab, 2010). Perhaps the most outstanding of them was *Ismail*'l Agha, known as *Simko*, chief of the *Shakak* tribe living to the southwest of *Rezaiyeh*. His movements were strictly confined in the area west of Lake *Rezaiyeh* and he established an autonomous Kurdish government there from the summer of 1918 to 1922. Simko was subjugated by Iranian troops in August 1922 and had to flee to Ankara, eight years later, in 1930, on his way to negotiations with the Iranian government, Simko was ambushed and killed (Farideh, 2003; Behruz, 2013). After that, the Kurdish movement in Iran had to wait until World War II to re-emerge. A major turning point was the establishment of the Kurdistan Democratic Party in Iran (KDPI) in 1945, which was soon to establish the creation of the autonomous Democratic Republic of Kurdistan in *Mahabad* (MEHO, 1997).

The WWII, like the first, marked a watershed in Kurdish history in Iran. This was partly on account of the war itself. Britain and the Soviet Union occupied western Iran in August 1941 (McDowall, 2004). In 1941, *Rezaza* Shah Pahlavi was forced to leave his throne by the British for his support for the Nazi government. Reza Shah's abdication came as welcome news for many Iranian Kurds because of his policies of forced sedentarisation, direct control of tribal politics, and westernization, which clashed with traditional practices (Gresh, 2009). Thus, the new Shah was little more than the mayor of Tehran, and the ability of the Iranian state to repress opposition became extremely limited for a brief period. Kurds living around the city of *Mahabad* utilized the occasion to organize and make a push for self-rule (Romano, 2007). It was the first time the Kurds were able to set their first self-government with the assistance

and advice of one major foreign power with modern political form and structure (Behruz, 2013). Soon however, the Iranian troops marched towards the borders of Mahabad Republic and as soon as the Soviet Union forces withdrew from Iran, the Iranian army began to attack the young Kurdish Republic and was able to occupy the city of Mahabad, the capital of the Republic. In such attempt, *Qaze* Mohammed, the leader of the movement, was executed with some of his comrades in the square where he declared the Republic. The Kurds dream thus destroyed and the state lasted for only eleven months.

Decades after the collapse of the Kurdish Republic, the Kurdish nationalist leaders in Iran found very little space to explicitly show their demands for autonomy. The movement went clandestine (Farideh, 2003). Although, the Kurds in Iran established other political parties called Komala, after the 1979 revolution. But all their rights were established after the success of the revolution and the assassination of Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, Secretary-General of the PDKI on 13 July 1989, in Austria alongside two of his colleagues, during negotiating with Iranian envoys. Sadeq Sharafkandi Abdul Rahman's successor suffered similar fate on 17 September 1992 in Berlin. Thus, the Kurds lost the hope to demand for their rights peacefully. Iran after revolution in 1979 became powerful and it is difficult for Kurds to get its rights through military means.

4.4.2 The U.S. Interests in Iran And Its Foreign Policy Towards The Kurds in Iran.

The U.S. foreign policy toward Iran is a policy shifting from the other country in the region. Iran was a strategic ally of America before the Islamic revolution led by Khomeini in 1979, after the revolution, everything changed, America became the archenemy of Iran, the leaders of the revolution raised the slogan (death for America).

however, the researcher views the opposite, where he believes that the objectives of U.S. and Iranian politics are the same in the Middle East, both of whom believe that radical Islam (Sunni Islam) poses a threat to them and both Iran and America work together to kill Sunni Muslims everywhere. The researcher knows that this statement is serious, but unfortunately this is the truth. The emergence of ISIS in Iraq was the best proof of that, as evidence that ISIS, who was supposed to be an enemy of the Shiite, nevertheless, ISIS did not enter into any a Shiite village or city in Iraq. On the other hand, all Sunni cities were destroyed by ISIS such as Mosul, Anbar, and Salahuddin. Not escaped from the hands of ISIS until the Sunni mosques and the tombs of the prophets and religious archaeological areas such as the Prophet Yunus Mosque and the lighthouse of Hadba in the Great Mosque symbol of the city of Mosul, while ISIS was very close to Baghdad, it was at the gates of the city of Samarra which includes two large shrine, Imam Ali Al-Hadi and his son, Al-Hassan Al-Askari but they retreated and did not entered to the city. Iran shows its hostility to Israel and has a legion called the Quds Force, this legion fights everywhere in Iraq, Syria, Lenin and Yemen except in Jerusalem. Perhaps whoever asks if it is, as you say, why America imposes a siege on it, because Iran exceeds its limit that America has placed for it and the region has lost the balance of power, especially between Iran and the Gulf allies allied to America like Saudi Arabia and even with Turkey, therefore, nowadays the policy that America pursues with Iran is a balance policy, to strike a balance of power among Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey..

Foreign policy is always a complicated decision to be made. Each nation formulates its own foreign policy toward the other nations cut across different periods and circumstances. The U.S. is the world's strongest power both in economic and political

terms. Additionally, the U.S. has passed through many stages and has faced many different situations toward the other nations in which their foreign policy adjusts. The U.S. and Iran relationship is quite dynamic as well as complicated.

Iran is a country of nearly 80 million people, located in the heart of the Persian Gulf region. The U.S. was an ally of the late Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who ruled from 1941 until his ouster in February 1979. The Shah resumed to the office when Britain and Russia compelled his father, Reza Shah Pahlavi, from power because of his perceived connection with Germany in World War II (Katzman, 2017). Travis Sharp, a military policy analyst at the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation in Washington, D.C., argued that current hostility between the U.S. and Iran runs deep because of the historical grievances each side brings to the conflict. Many Americans are ignorant of the fact that in 1953, the CIA helped stage a coup against the democratically elected Iranian Prime Minister, Mohammed Mossadegh (Katzman, 2017). Iranians typically see this event as the commencement of bad blood between the two nations. In contrast, Americans who do not know this history believe, the February 11, 1979, which marked the fall of the Shah of Iran, who was a key U.S. ally, opened a deep and ongoing rift in U.S.-Iranian relations (Sharp, 2009). On November 4, 1979, revolutionary students seized the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and took 66 of the embassy's employees' hostage, after a while 13 of the hostages were liberated, while the other 52 remained in captivity for 444 days. The hostage crisis, it was a humiliating experience for Americans, leaving a deep wound in their collective memory. Since that time, there have only been very limited diplomatic relations and direct talks (Quosh, 2007).

As far as the U.S. interests in relation to Iran is concerned, there are two important factors that directed the U.S. policy in its relations, if any, with Iran in the post-war period. First, Iran's geo-political significance made it even more important for the U.S. to contain the USSR on its southern flank. Second, Iran possessed rich oil and gas resources. In order to have proper mastery on the flow of this strategic commodity to Western economies and military forces, the U.S. determined to sustain the so-called "friendly" regimes in Iran (Özcan & Özdamar, 2009). Therefore, historically, the strategic significance of the Gulf area is closely related to the geopolitical value of the towering Iranian plateau, located on the southern tier of the Soviet Union, blocking direct Soviet access to the Indian Ocean. Due to its location, Iran became the center of Russo-British rivalries and intrigues on countless occasions. The strategic location of Iran and its use for logistical supply was the main rationale for the Allied occupation of the country during the Second World War (Irani, 1973). Although the present chaotic situation between the U.S. and Iran appears to be regarding Iran's nuclear program, but the actual reason emerges from a dispute of interests in the Middle East. In accordance to the National Security Strategy of the United States of America, 2006, the U.S. primary interests are: to provide security for the supply of oil and gas, to eliminate threats from terrorist organizations, and to prevent the development of WMDs, to maintain the existence and qualitative military benefit of Israel (Özcan & Özdamar, 2009). Former National Security Adviser established this position, Zbigniew Brzezinski, during his interview with NPR News. He says:

"I think our ultimate interest is to have Iran as a stabilizing regional power: a power that is not hostile to the United States, a power that can be a friendly partner, a power that can incidentally can also return to the status of a friend of Israel. I think that is the

long-range interest. The more immediate interest is to avoid either an Iranian nuclear bomb, which contributes to instability in the region, or more generalized hostility between Iran and the United States” (news, 2009).

In addition, Anthony H. Cordesman argues in an article in the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) that:

“The events in Iran and the Gulf during the last week have been a grim reminder that Iran remains the major threat to U.S. strategic interests in the Gulf and the Middle East, and that General James Mattis has been all too correct in singling out Iran as such a threat. Islamist extremism and terrorism are very real threats—but they are limited in scope and lethality” (Cordesman, 2017).

That is why the new Trump administration perceives Iran as a real threat to American interests in the Middle East. The influence of Iran in the Middle East region is now of great concern to the U.S. as Iran now controls four Arab capitals: Baghdad, Beirut, Damascus and Sanaa. This growing influence of Iran in the region has troubled America and its Arab allies, especially the Gulf States, particularly Saudi Arabia, the strategic ally of America in the region.

However, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations reacted to the growing threats of Iran in relation to the U.S. interests in the region; saying the U.S. would act against this grow menace. then stated that if we are speaking honestly about conflict in the Middle East we need to start with the chief culprit, Iran, and its partner militia, Hezbollah, for decades they have conducted terrorist acts across the region” (Foroohar,

2017). Therefore, Trump believes that the nuclear agreement with Iran does not serve U.S. interests in the region, and he described it at a press conference as follow:

“It was a terrible agreement. It shouldn’t have been signed. It shouldn’t have been negotiated the way it was negotiated. I’m all for agreements, but that was a bad one, as bad as I’ve ever seen negotiated. They are not living up to the spirit of the agreement, I can tell you that. And we’re analyzing it very, very carefully and we’ll have something to say about it in the not-too-distant future. But Iran has not lived up to the spirit of the agreement. And they have to do that. They have to do that. So we will see what happens” (White House, 2017).

Based on the official statement quoted above, therefore, it is believed that the U.S. policy towards Iran is heading toward conflict escalation in order to restore sanity to the balance of power in the Middle East. This is expected to exist between the main players in the region-Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia-, which makes the region more stable as well as volatile. In this case, the step will serve U.S. interests, because the stability of the region is the priority and goal of the U.S. foreign policy in the region, a region that provides the continuous flow of oil to world markets with reasonable prices. Not only that, the preservation of Israel's security, the growing of Iranian influence and its strategic ally, the Lebanese Hezbollah, are form part of the U.S. interests in the region.

However, the U.S. foreign policy toward the Kurds in Iran has not prompted the same importance that the Kurds in Iraq got it from America. Thus, when the Kurds founded the Republic of Mahabad in eastern Kurdistan (Kurdistan Iran) America did not provide any support for this republic, because it was founded by the Soviet Union at

the beginning of the Cold War. In addition, Iran was a strategic ally of America until the outbreak of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979. It also needs to be reiterated here that America interests during the nascent formation of the republic was mainly with Iran not with the Kurds of Iran. Although this revolution raised the slogan-“Death to America”- and completely cut off its diplomatic relationships with America after the hostage crisis of the U.S. diplomats held by Iran after the Islamic revolution led by Khomeini, but America did not lend any support to the Kurds afterwards.

4.5 The U.S. Foreign Policy Toward The Syria Kurds And Its Interests

4.5.1 Kurdish Historical Background In Syria

The north, most importantly, the north east of Syria is the Kurdish strongholds and the place is known as Kurdish Syria or *Rojava* (Gentz., 2013). Kurds are the largest non-Arab ethnic minority in Syria (Danish Immigration Service, ACCORD/Austrian Red Cross, 2010). Their native language is Kurdish, an Indo-European language that is part of the Indo-Iranian subgroup which includes Farsi (Ziadeh, 2009). According to Human Rights Watch, there are unstable statistics on the total number of Kurds in Syria, although reliable sources place the number of Kurds between 8.5 percent and 10 percent of the population of 13.8 million. The Syrian government told Human Rights Watch in July 1996 that it has no information about the total number of Kurds in Syria. Thus,

“The provisions of the Constitution as specified in Article 25...stipulate that all citizens are equal under the law as far as their rights and duties are concerned. Therefore, no governmental institution in Syria differentiates between Syrian citizens and non-citizens, Kurdish or others. It is not feasible for this reason to know what the number of Syrian Kurds is by means of civil registers or population censuses, and it is

impossible to provide any figures as to their numbers” (Human Rights Watch/Middle East, 1996).

Most Kurds are followers of the Sunni Muslim faith, although a large minority belong to Shi’a Muslim sects, and smaller numbers are non-Muslim, Yazidis (Neriah, 2012). The largest number of Kurds in Syria is Hasakeh governorate in the northeastern part of the country. Aleppo governorate in the northwest is also home to a large number of Kurds, mainly in and around ‘Ayn al-’Arab, and in Afrin and its surrounding villages (Danish Immigration Service (DIS) and ACCORD/Austrian Red Cross, 2010). The Kurds of Syria, in contrast to the Kurds of Iraq and Turkey, are little known in the West, but they have similarly strained relations with the state that governs them and face human rights abuses as minority (Ziadeh, 2009). But the Syrian Kurds' appeared to shine after the Arab Spring in 2011 and became more known after the occupation of Syria in 2014 by ISIL. It needs to be noted that the emergence of the Democratic Union Party (PYD), which allied with the PKK in combating ISIL on ground as the U.S. supporter, created more awareness about Kurds existence in Syria.

However, the relations between the Syrian state and its Kurdish minority became problematic even before the current regime came to power in the aftermath of the 1963 Baathist takeover (International Crisis Group, 2013). One needs to recognize that enmity has existed between Syria’s Kurdish minority and its Arab majority since Syrian independence in 1946. This is quite similar to that observed between Kurds and the ethnic majorities in other states such as Iraq, Iran, and Turkey. The official name of the Syrian state since 1961 has been the Syrian Arab Republic, which is a form of provocation against the Kurdish population (Caves, 2012; Kajjo, 2011). What is strange is that the Syrian opposition after the Syrian revolution, represented by the

Syrian National Council (SNC) - anti-regime Syrian groups formed in August 2011 based in Turkey - rejected the Kurdish demands at the conference held in Istanbul in 2011 to rename the Syrian state as the “Republic of Syria” instead of the Syrian Arab Republic. The SNC also refused to establish the federal system in Syria after the departure of Assad regime, which made the Kurdish delegation to withdraw from the conference without reaching any compromise.

In 1962, the authorities used census data from the Al-Jazeera region (the area between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers) in the north-east to strip approximately 120,000 Kurds of their Syrian citizenship, claiming they were illegal immigrants from Turkey (CNN, 2011). In 1965, the Syrian government decided to form an Arab settlement in Al-Jazeera region along the Turkish border. The settlement would be 300 kilometers (186 miles) long and 10 to 15 kilometers (6 to 9 miles) wide, stretching from the Iraqi border in the east to *Ras al-Ain* in the west. Formulation execution of the plan began in 1973 as Bedouin Arabs were brought in and resettled in Kurdish areas, while names of villages were completely Arabized (Neriah, 2012). Thus, many Syrian Kurds see themselves as victims of oppression, pointing accusing finger to the Syrian authorities of denying them their basic social, cultural and political rights. Tens of thousands have been stateless since changes to Syria's nationality laws in the 1960s (BBC news, 2011). These policies coincided with the beginning of Barzani’s uprising in Iraqi Kurdistan and the discovery of oil in the Kurdish-inhabited areas of Syria. In June 1963, Syria took part in the Iraqi military campaign against the Kurds by providing aircraft, armored vehicles, and 6,000 troops. Syrian soldiers crossed the Iraqi border and moved into the Kurdish town of *Zakho* in pursuit of Barzani’s fighters (Neriah, 2012). However, the Kurds in Syria remained in this situation and the suffering continued

even after the departure of Hafez al-Assad and the arrival of Bashar al-Assad to power in 2000. Despite Bashar al-Assad's promises to make some reforms, nothing was done to uplift the social and political conditions of the Kurds in Syria. Instead, he continued his father's approach to authoritarian rule and such approach is evident in his dealing with the events of *Qamishli* in 2004.

in March 2004, Kurds took over the statues of Al-Assad, lifted up Kurdish flags instead, and burnt Baath Party headquarters in rebellion to Bashar Assad's wickedness towards Kurds (Tanir, 2012). During the time of the uprising, at least 36 people were killed, 160 injured, and more than 2,000 detained amid "widespread reports of torture and ill-treatment of detainees" (CNN, 2011). Despite the brutality of the Ba'thist regime in Syria and the arbitrary manner in which it operates in relation to the opponents to the regime in the political arena, the Kurds did not stand idle. The Kurds maintained their stand, fought against the regime, and demanded their cultural and political rights, which they had been denied since Syria independence from France in 1946. Although their political struggle was belated compared to the Iraqi Kurds, it should be noted that their political movement started in 1957.

A year before the implementation of the short-lived union between Syria and Egypt as the United Arab Republic, the power of Arab nationalist ideology was at its zenith. The founding of the first Kurdish party came to the fore, in part, in reaction to this state-sponsored program, which aimed to submerge the Kurds in Arab culture (Kajjo, 2011). The Kurds, in reaction to the state-sponsored attempt to suppress the rights of the Kurds in Syria, formed many political parties, but the problem that faced those parties is that there was no proper coordination sometimes the parties clash with each other, as is with the political parties in the north, south, east, and west of Kurdistan.

Some observers of the Kurdish politics believe that the biggest weakness of the Kurds in Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria are the division and lack of unity. Thus, making it easier for the countries in which they reside to employ all means to deny them of their legitimate rights.

Richardson Institute argued that the division of Syrian Kurds into three main groups reflects conflicting geopolitical interests of outside actors as well as historic influences (Gentz., 2013). The three main groups are briefly defined below.

The first one is the Kurdish National Council (KNC). Kurdish National Council in Syria is a combination of about ten Kurdish parties in Syria, founded in October 2011. The KNC attempted to join the Syrian National Council (SNC) but its demands were not met and so it left the SNC shortly after its formation. The KNC is under the directive of Massoud Barzani, the president of Iraqi Kurdistan and is a more moderate Kurdish party representing a wider range of Kurds (Tanir, Wilgenburg, & Hossino 2012). The Second is the Kurdistan Democratic Party in Syria (KDPS). This is connected to Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party in Iraq it has not been recognized by the Syrian government, 2000 Kurdish fighters defected from the Syrian army and are training in Iraqi Kurdistan. It is the second strongest political party and is also a member of the Kurdish National Council (Hevian, 2013). While the third one is the Democratic Union Party (PYD) this was Founded in 2003 as an offshoot of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), the PYD is one of the most popular Kurdish opposition parties in Syria (Edelman, Morton and Abramowitz, 2013).

The PYD's provocative stance against other Kurdish factions, and "tactical cooperation" with Assad, is a major issue contributing to the division of the Syrian

Kurdish parties, and of the ability of Kurds to mobilize as a united front. The Kurdish National Council (KNC), backed by *Barzani*, seems to be making the most effort to form an alliance with both the PYD and the SNC, but has so far been unsuccessful in the task. Further integration between and within groups is necessary (Sidki, 2012; Hevian, 2013; Gentz., 2013).

4.5.2 The U.S. Interests in Syria And Its Foreign Policy Towards The Kurds in Syria.

American foreign policy towards Syria activated after the Arab Spring in 2011, became more active after the emergence of ISIS in 2014, when ISIS took control over much of the Syrian territory, ISIS began threatening security in Israel. After the Arab Spring, the Syrian army withdrew from the Kurdish cities in Syria, the Kurdish People's Protection Units (PYD) took control of these lands and established political cantons to administer the area. American foreign policy towards Syria and the Kurds there is characterized by national interests, predominately, after the situation in Syria was complicated by Russia's interference in Syria. America adopted a power balance policy when it took the Kurds in Syria as a pressure card and took them as allies against ISIS despite Turkey's opposition to this step because Turkey considers the Kurds in Syria (PYD) as part of the PKK and classifies them as a terrorist organization.

Like all other countries in the Middle East, the relationship between the U.S. and Syria has had a form of complication. The Middle East was largely overlooked in U.S. foreign policy until the mid-20th century when President Roosevelt declared in 1941 “the defense of ... the Middle East is vital to the defense of the United States” (Ismael, 1974). At the end of the First World War, in line with the general principle of self-determination, President Woodrow Wilson showed that the U.S. was sympathetic

towards Arab aspirations, stating as the twelfth of his 'Fourteen Points' that "The other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development" (Gani, 2011). Therefore, before World War I, the U.S. interests in the entire Arab world, especially in Syria, were limited to missionary activities and cultural centres as well as commercial interests. It should be noted that the preoccupation of the U.S. with Latin American issues and physical and geographical distance from the Middle East region might explain the policy apathy of the U.S. towards the region before World War II. This was pursuant to President Monroe's principle of non-interference and its policy in the Pacific and East Asia. In addition, the U.S. opined that the Middle East regions were under the British and French influence (Albaidhani, 2013). The U.S. held a typically isolationist stance towards the Middle East and saw European took control over the region to be in the best interests of all parties involved (Gani, 2011).

The outbreak of the First World War represented a new phase in the U.S. foreign policy toward the Middle East (Al-Baidhani, 2014). There is no doubt that the establishment of the state of Israel, with its proximity to Syria, was one of the significant reasons that led the U.S. to extend its foreign policy intensification to Syria. The U.S. foreign policy toward the Middle East in general and Syria in particular cannot be separated from the developments which occurred in the Middle East after the Second World War, especially the formation of the state of Israel. The U.S., since the creation of Israel in 1948, has been an important strategic protector of the Israel and thus sees its security as inextricably intertwined with that of Israel. Such position has been the guiding post of the U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East since 1948. In order to achieve this lofty

goal, the closeness to the government of Syria is inevitable. It would be wrong to assume that the issue of Israel alone prompted the U.S. to move closer to the Syrian regime. Not at all the threat of communist bloc during the Cold War era was also significant in this respect.

In 1949, the U.S. made its first appearance in Syria's fractious political debacle to lend assistance to General Husni al- Za'im to overthrow the Al-Quwatli regime on 30 March. The U.S. was of the view that Al-Quwatli regime was a 'Banana Republic dictator type' (Rabil, 2006; Douglas, 1990). It needs to be said that despite this contradiction of outward U.S. rhetoric for the pursuit of democracy, what mattered here was that the new dictator was recognised as someone who would work with the west and help them execute schemes for peace with Israel. Moreover, it was hoped he might bring stability to Syrian factionalism, even if that meant through repression, and that in turn he would be able to reduce Soviet influence in the country (KENNEDY, 2017). And indeed, Za'im delivered to a large extent on these expectations. He signed an armistice with Israel and facilitated western economic interests by approving concessions for pipeline, which transported ARAMCO oil from Saudi Arabia to the Mediterranean. He improved relations with Turkey, a NATO member and important ally of the U.S. in the strategic interface between the east and the west, at a time when Turkey was experiencing a widening rift with its Middle Eastern neighbours. He unilaterally steered Syria away from a pan-Arab agenda towards western preferences, imprisoning Ba'thists (Curtis, 2017).

However, the U.S. foreign policy towards Syria has changed since the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri in 2005. In this scenario, the U.S. withdrew its ambassador from Damascus and accused Damascus of being the major

culprit behind the assassination. Washington accused Damascus of supporting international terrorism and its links to terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah as well as its strategic relations with Iran. All these political issues led to the strain in the U.S.-Syrian relations and what has made the matter worse was the killing of demonstrators by the army of the regime Bashar al-Assad in 2011 during the Arab Spring.. Thus, a new phase of relations between the two countries started apace.

Speaking in May 2011—after the ousting from power of Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia and Hosni Mubarak in Egypt,—President Barack Obama declared the political upheaval in the Middle East thus,

“a historic opportunity ... to pursue the world as it should be.” In pursuit of such a world, Obama continued, the United States would oppose “the use of violence and repression” against the people of the region, while supporting “a set of universal rights” and “political and economic reform in the Middle East and North Africa that can meet the legitimate aspirations of ordinary people throughout the region.” Such a world would protect America’s core interests, President Obama insisted, but he also expressed the “firm belief that America’s interests are not hostile to people’s hopes; they’re essential to them.” He ended by calling for “concrete actions” in support of this vision, actions to be “supported by all of the diplomatic, economic, and strategic tools at our disposal.” (W. House, 2011; Edelman, 2013).

Another public commentator and scholar opined that,

“The ‘Arab Spring’ revolutions in the Middle East are creating a new, complex environment with significant ramifications for both regional and international players. The family of Syrian President Bashar al Assad and its loyalists have ruled the country

since 1970, oppressing the Sunni majority. In March 2011, opposition groups rebelled against the regime, with the conflict now entering its third bloody year. Faced with a continuously escalating and increasingly ambiguous situation on the ground in Syria” (Catlett, 2013).

In 2011, the Obama Administration called for Syrian President Bashar al Asad to step down in the face of serious protests in Syria inspired by the “Arab Spring.” This call was as a result of concern that, if left unchallenged, the Syrian government’s use of force against demonstrators would set a dangerous precedent that political violence against civilians could continue unchecked. Asad refused to abdicate his position, and the conflict intensified. Humanitarian pressures and threats posed by terrorist groups worsened (Humud, 2017).

With Asad unyielding position to relinquish his position, the crisis became internationalized in 2011. Russia and Iran have maintained their unwavering support for the regime, providing aid, military assistance and intelligence, weapons, and even troops, and key Gulf States (Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, and Kuwait) began bankrolling the opposition as the situation transformed into a deadly and protracted civil war (Pukhov, 2012). Thus, Syria after Arab spring in 2011 became a fertile ground and an international arena for proxy wars and a place for settling accounts among the international, regional and internal rivals. In addition, there is a conflict between two superpower the U.S. and Russia, a struggle between radical Islam and secularists, Sunnis and Shiites, finally Kurds and Arabs all of them pursue their own interests. The only loser in this equation is the Syrian people in all its spectrums and doctrines. The U.S. initially tried to pursue a tough policy against Bashar al-Assad, which was evident in Obama's first speech on the Syrian revolution. The U.S. could

not strictly execute the policy of strictness on Syria as planned. This is because, the Russian took advantage of its power in the Security Council and vetoed any decision that stood to criminalize Syrian regime. The Russian stance is no doubt inimical to the U.S. policy position in Syria. In such a circumstance, each party to the Syrian civil war, the U.S. and Russia take different stance and make the political atmosphere in Syria more tense and delicate. Russia has important interests in Syria, its remaining ally after Libya's fall in the MENA region. Russia does not want what happened in Libya to repeat itself in Syria and as such trying to protect its interests just like the U.S., in an article in the New York Times, Ruslan Pukhov said:

“many in the West believe that Russia's support for Syria stems from Moscow's desire to profit from selling arms to Bashar al-Assad's government and maintain its naval facility at the Syrian port of *Tartus*. But these speculations are superficial and misguided. The real reason that Russia is resisting strong international action against the Assad regime is that it fears the spread of Islamic radicalism and the erosion of its superpower status in a world where Western nations are increasingly undertaking unilateral military interventions” (Pukhov, 2012; Burchett, 2017).

However, According to a report made available by the Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC) and written by two Former U.S. Ambassador to Turkey, Ambassador Morton Abramowitz and Eric Edelman, both are of the position that the U.S. interests would likewise be threatened if the regime were to be replaced by Sunni Islamists, whether dominated by the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood—undoubtedly an important player in any post-Assad Syria—or, worse, more extreme groups. This would worsen the Middle East's growing Sunni-Shia sectarian schism, destabilizing neighbouring countries with their own delicate sectarian balances, namely Iraq and Lebanon; further

isolating Israel; and undermining the U.S. regional influence. Empowered Sunni Islamists would fail to respect human rights at home, most importantly those of minorities, while encouraging radicalism as well as terrorism abroad. The report also stated that this general risk of political instability and stalemate could also influence upward pressure on oil prices in the form of a risk premium, even if such conflicts do not physically disrupt the flow of important quantities of oil. For example, prices rose nearly 4 presents for a month during the second Lebanon War in 2006, despite its limited geographic scope in an oil-poor sector of the Middle East (Edelman, & Abramowitz, 2013). While another report prepared by Congressional Research Service Which was made available for members and committees of congress and written by a group of experts specializing in Middle East affairs, they argue that Syria's descent into chaotic conflict over the past six years has generated several interrelated threats to the U.S. national security and challenges for U.S. decision makers. Direct threats to the U.S. security and interests include the following:

First, the rise to power in some areas of Syria of violent Islamist extremist groups, some of whom use Syria as a safe haven to plan and train for transnational terrorist attacks; Second, the use of chemical weapons by Syrian government forces and non-state actors; Third, the proliferation of small arms and military weaponry among a broad spectrum of Syrian non-state actors; Fourth, the destruction of major urban areas and economic infrastructure in Syria, the resulting internal and external displacement of millions of Syrian civilians, and corresponding pressures placed on neighbouring countries, refugee transit and destination countries; and Finally, interventions in Syria by regional and extra-regional actors, with associated effects on regional and international balances of power. The report thus reiterated that the above-mentioned

threats have posed a lot of challenges to the U.S. policy makers. First, it should be noted that the present political scenario in Syria has made other diplomatic priorities, such as negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program difficult; Second, the civil war in Syria is clearly threatening global norms associated with international humanitarian law; Third, the Syrian protracted civil war is seriously straining the international humanitarian response system; and Finally, the effectiveness and usefulness of international organisations and global military powers is being called to question. Thus raising questions about the credibility and effectiveness of the U.S. foreign policy commitments and international institutions (Humud, Blanchard & Nikitin 2017).

Therefore, The Obama Administration sought to enhance its diplomacy and counterterrorism policy toward Syria through the provision of nonfatal U.S. support to select Syrian opposition groups, reported covert assistance to some armed groups, and overt training and lethal assistance to certain vetted Syrian forces. Obama Administration officials often asserted that there was “no military solution to the conflict” (Humud, Blanchard & Nikitin 2017). The U.S. policy toward Syria has made America's allies in the region concerned about this policy, especially after Bashar al-Assad crossed the red line set by President Obama. asserting that "We have communicated in no uncertain terms with every player in the region that that's a red line for us and that there would be enormous consequences if we start seeing movement on the chemical weapons front or the use of chemical weapons." (CNN, 2017) While Bashar al-Assad did not care about this warning and used chemical weapons against the civilian population. Obama did nothing this making Saudi Arabia; the UAE and other allies feel disappointed with the U.S. foreign policy towards Syria.

The current U.S. President, Donald Trump, seems to be different from the Obama administration. This is because Trump and his associates are all hostile to Iran and its allies in the region. This was evident from the first Trump's administration reaction to the chemical weapons attack against civilian areas of Khan Sheikhoun in rebel-held Idlib in northwest Syria. In reaction to such devastating chemical attack, fifty-nine Tomahawks were launched against the Al Shayrat air base in Homs province from the destroyers USS Porter and USS Ross, currently stationed in the eastern Mediterranean. "It is in the vital national security interest of the United states to prevent and deter the spread and use of deadly chemical weapons," Trump said (Mead, Marusic, & Bernard, 2017; TODAY, 2017). The strike was a clear message to Syria and its strategic ally, Russia that the Trump administration is not like its predecessor.

Pertaining to the U.S. foreign policy toward the Kurds in Syria, it does not have a long history of any substantial relations like what obtains in the case of Iraqi Kurds. The relationship between Syrian Kurds and the U.S. started after the Arab Spring when the Syrian bull broke out against Bashar Assad's regime and the relation became stronger after the emergence of ISIL. Washington has taken PYD as an ally to fight ISIL on the ground through the military wing of the party, the People's Protection Units (YPG) which controls the largest area in Kurdistan part of Syria (Rojava). The PYD is the most powerful group in Syrian Kurdish. The PYD took control on Rojava in coordination with the forces of Bashar al-Assad, where the forces withdrew from the Kurdish areas and handed them over to the Kurds without a fight. This development made both Turkey and the Syrian opposition to get angry as PYD is accused of being loyal to the regime of Bashar al-Assad.

International reactions to this move came swiftly. Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, accused the Assad regime of attempting to destabilize Turkey by turning over much of the border region of northern Syria to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) insurgents, reputed to have close ties with the PYD. He thus warned to intervene militarily in northern Syria if the PKK used that territory as a launching pad to attack Turkey (Zaman, 2012). The Syrian opposition registered the smooth transfer as proof that the Kurds were not committed to the Syrian revolution, preferring to cut a deal with Assad than defeat him (WILGENBURG, 2014). It is therefore based on this position that some analysts interpreted the regime withdrawal from Kurdish areas as a plot to break Syria into several warring parts in order to ensure the long-term survival of a coastal Alawite enclave (Badran, 2012). It is of interest to know that the Kurdish National Council (KNC), the PYD's main Syrian Kurdish political rival, accused the PYD of collaboration with the regime on the grounds of the seamless security transfer (Morris, 2012). Regardless of how these parties explicated the move, it drew fundamental world attention to Syrian Kurds and especially the PYD, which has become the dominant force on the ground in Syria's Kurdish areas (Egret, & Anderson, 2016). Therefore, Eliza Egret & Tom Anderson in their report argue that many people accused the PYD, the Syrian wing of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), of collaboration and co-operation with the regime. This narrative is not very accurate. What happened was a pragmatic concourse of interests between the two sides in 2012. For the [Assad] regime, the primary aim of this 'understanding' the withdrawal of the regime apparatus from the predominantly Kurdish areas and deigning their administration over mainly to the PYD was the neutralisation of the Kurdish areas in the revolution, both militarily and politically so as to not open up another major front in the north-eastern part of the country and to disperse the

opposition along ethnic and sectarian lines. The second objective was to utilize the PYD as a trump card against Turkey, the most significant supporter of the Free Syrian Army at that time (Egret, & Anderson, 2016).

It is therefore right to assert that the Syrian civil war provided ample chance for Syrian Kurds register their political influence and weight in Syria. In the late 2012, when the Assad regime's forces withdrew from the north of Syria, the PYD occupied three main provinces, namely Jazira, Kobani, and Afrin, and began to develop a local autonomous rule in these areas. Turkish policy makers perceived the PYD's advance in northern Syria as a threat to Turkey's national security mainly because, along with the KRG, which emerged gradually in northern Iraq beginning in the early 1990s, this would be the second Kurdish autonomous establishment in Turkey's immediate neighbourhood (Pusane, 2016).

The Kurdish question in Syria has long been a point of debate between the U.S. and Turkey. Throughout the administration of the former U.S. president, Barack Obama, the main issue shaping the U.S. strategy against ISIL was a reliance on Kurdish forces. This furtive reliance existed despite Turkish refusal to allow the Kurdish- dominated Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to spearhead the battle to liberate Raqqa (Nidal, & Bitar, 2017). This relation got worse when the U.S. decided to arm YPG as Turkish regarded the move as a direct threat to its national security.

Turkish President accused the U.S. of creating a "pool of blood" in the region by failing to recognise Kurdish organisations as terror groups. The Turkish president was of the view that the inability of the U.S. to register Kurdish organisation as a terror group in Syria helped aggravated the political and military debacle in the Middle East. This

lamentation came to the fore in when the Turkish was trying to provide reason why the political stalemate in Syria would not cease in as hoped. In an impassioned and sometimes angry address, Mr Erdogan asked whether the U.S. was an ally or was working with groups Ankara lists as terror organisations. (BBC, 2016) "Hey America! How many times have we had to tell you?" Mr Erdogan said in his fiery address. "Are you together with us or are you with the PYD and YPG terror groups?"(News, 2016). The president's fierce reaction generated controversy in the U.S. and among the NATO allies in Europe. In such an intense diplomatic row, Turkey summoned the U.S. envoy to Ankara in protest after the U.S. State Department spokesman said that Washington did not recognise the PYD as a terror group and would continue to support its operations in Syria (Morning, 2016). While a report presents by Congressional Research Service argued that A number of sources point to evidence of close and continuing operational and personnel links between the PKK and PYD/YPG. One such source claims that although the PYD and PKK are officially independent, "in practice, Syrian Kurdish PKK cadres with years of service in Qandil (the organisation's northern Iraqi mountain base) dominate the YPG leadership and are the decision-makers within the self-proclaimed 'autonomous administration'" in Syria. This same source even states that U.S. support for the YPG has encouraged the broader PKK organization to pursue escalation in Turkey. (RedactedA, 2016)

The New York Times mentioned in an article that Turkish concerns are focused on the apparent ascendancy in the region of the PYD, a Syrian Kurdish movement regarded as an offshoot of Turkey's banned Kurdish Workers Party (P.K.K.). Turkey has fought an intermittent war on its own territory against the P.K.K. separatists since the 1980s.

As Sebnem and Jeff write: “The Turkish government considers Kurdish separatists to be the greatest national security threat” (Morris, 2012).

In fact, the U.S. relationship with the PYD and its military wing, YPG, is one of the biggest challenges facing the relationship between America and its strategic ally in the region, Turkey. Turkey is not comfortable with this relationship at all. Kadir Ustun, the Executive Director of the SETA Foundation in Washington DC., mentioned that Turkish discomfort with the U.S. support for the YPG is not based on an opposition against Syrian Kurds. Despite their efforts to promote themselves as the representatives of Syrian Kurds, the YPG poses a direct national security threat to Turkey. The group is the Syrian arm of PKK, designated by Turkey, the U.S., and the European Union as a terrorist organisation, which has been fighting the Turkish government since 1984. The two groups' close ties have previously been established by the U.S. officials including the former U.S. Defence Secretary, Ash Carter, in a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing (Ustun, 2017).

However, Patrick J. Buchanan, from the American Conservative Institute sees that the U.S. Should follows these following points to protect its interests in the region and avoiding a deeper involvement in the war. First, the U.S. government should recognize that ISIL and the al-Nusra Front are our primary enemies in Syria, not Assad or Russia. Geostrategists may be appalled, but the Donald may have gotten it right. If the Russians are willing to fight to crush ISIL, to save Assad, be our guest. Second, there should be an attempt at oppose any removal of Assad unless and until we are certain he will not be replaced by an Islamist regime. Third, the U.S. should assure the Turks it will keep the Kurds east of the Euphrates and not support any Kurdish nation-state that involves any secession from Turkey (Buchanan, 2016).

The Kurds in Syria should exploit this opportunity in Favour of their cause and leave the internal differences and work on the unity of the Kurdish parties in Syria. This is because if these parties cannot unify their positions, it is going to be difficult for them to achieve their aspirations and demands. Presently, Syria is passing through the most difficult stage of its existence as a state and the Democratic Union Party bears the responsibility more than any other parties because it is a strong party and it governs the Kurds in Syria. It has been stated that numbers of international reports argued that the party monopoly of power and the suppression of freedoms and multi-party in the areas controlled by Syria has become an arena for settling internal, regional and international accounts. It is thus difficult in the midst of all these conflicts to be able to get any political demands through. The most crucial issues confronting the Kurds now is unity of purpose. Therefore, everyone has to work for the benefit of the Kurdish people and leave the partisan politics as the prevailing opportunity may not be repeated. It also needs to be reiterated here that the Kurds should align with the political dynamics of the Middle East, most especially in relation to international actors in the region. In this case, the Kurds should try and maintain healthy political relations with the would-be external powers (like Russia, the U.S., Israel, and Britain) in the region. Doing this will provide Kurds with political leverage to drive, how their demands and aspirations when the occasion arises?

4.6 Conclusion

The Middle East term is an English term which is one of the modern terms used for the oldest human civilization. Nowadays, it is the most widely used term referring to Arab countries, Iran, Turkey and Afghanistan. The Middle East occupies a significant place in the U.S. strategy; although the U.S. presence in the region was limited before World War I, it has been paid considerable attention by U.S. policymakers due to the

geopolitical importance of the region. This importance lies in the geographic location occupied by the region, which lies in the heart of the world, connecting three continents Asia, Europe and Africa. The region is considered as a rich location in natural resources oil and gas, with more than 60 percent of the world's oil and gas reserves. Likewise, Israel's presence in the region and the protection of Israel security is one of the main goals of U.S. foreign policy ; therefore, the President Jimmy Carter declared in 1980 “An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region which can be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force”(Carter, 1980). Thus, the study concluded that the U.S. interests in the Middle East include: First, the continued flow of oil and gas to Europe with appropriate prices. Second, the protection of Israel's security and finally the containment of the Soviet Union; but after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the fight against radical Islam became alternative to containing the Soviet Union.

The study also found that U.S. objectives have not changed, but U.S. policy to reach these objectives has changed, especially after the Arab Spring in 2011. This happened when the USA abandoned its Arab dictators' presidents such as former Egyptian President, *Hosni Mubarak*. It was not imagined that America would ever abandon *Mubarak*, because he was called the righteous son of America, same thing were with *Ali Abdullah Saleh*, President of Yemen, *Ali Zine El Abidine*, President of Tunisia, and *Muammar Gaddafi*, President of Libya were true.

However, America has given up some of its Middle Eastern goals when it realizes that these goals do not serve U.S. interests in the region, such as the spread of democracy in the Middle East, where U.S. former president, George W. Bush was very

enthusiastic about spreading democracy in the region after the September 11 attacks. He said that the cause of terrorism in the Middle East is the lack of democracy in the region, but he soon abandoned this goal when Hamas came to power in the 2006 elections in Palestine and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 2011. Thus, we conclude that the spread of democracy, human rights and freedom of expressions are all instruments that U.S. foreign policy makers use them when these principles serve American interests in the region and give up when they see the opposite.

As for the question posed by the research in terms of whether the Middle East is still important for U.S. foreign policy? Some American researchers like "Aaron David Miller" see that the U.S. strategy in the Middle East has declined for the following reasons: Firstly, the fear of a Cold War between America and its rivals in the region, Russia and China. Secondly, the end of the war on terrorism and the use of modern technology in fighting terrorists, such as unmanned aerial vehicles to strike the terrorists. Thirdly, the U.S. dispensing of the Middle East oil after the U.S. shale oil. Fourthly, the departure of America's allies from power after the Arab spring in 2011 and Israel's clear superiority over Arabs in all aspects, militarily and economically.

On the other hand, according to a symposium of the "Washington Institute for the Near East" to discuss U.S. policies in the Middle East, which was attended by: Robert Satloff, Stephen Hadley, and Dennis Ross. They concluded that the statement that "the Middle East is no longer important to the U.S. strategy". It is not true, because the importance of the region lies not only in oil, but also there are geopolitical considerations for the region in U.S. foreign policy and Israel's security. Despite Israeli superiority, it still needs America. Furthermore, Islamic terrorism feared by America and Israel continues to pose a threat to security in the region. Despite the end of the

ISIS on the ground, the extremism is still difficult to control easily, especially in areas that have been under the occupation of the ISIS for more than three years.

As for the oil and its importance in the U.S. strategy, America and Europe cannot easily dispense with oil from the region. Because of the U.S. shale oil is growing. Certainly, that seems to be true, but it only fills the American need; in addition to the cost of this kind of oil, its cost for one barrel between 35 to 75 U.S. dollars are likely to be causes environment pollution as well. Finally, it is a need for much water. As a result, all these reasons make it difficult to America to give up oil in the Middle East. Therefore, it can be claimed that that the Middle East is still important in U.S. foreign policy, because its importance lies in geographical location where its presence is based on the three continents of Asia, Europe and Africa.

In this Chapter, the study highlighted the U.S. foreign policy with the countries in which the Kurds live; it has investigated the U.S. interests with countries such as Turkey, Iran, Syria and Iraq. It is clear that Turkey has great importance in the U.S. foreign policy because of its geographical location linking three continents. Similarly, Turkey is the bridge between East and West, between Islam and Christianity. Turkey, on the other hand, is a strategic ally of America in the region and is the second largest NATO army; it is the only Islamic state to recognize Israel publicly and has security and military cooperation with Israel as well. Based on this importance, the U.S. has labeled the Kurdistan Workers' Party, PKK as a terrorist organization and the United States provides a great support to Turkey in its fight against the PKK. In this respect, the U.S. intelligence had a major role in the arrest of *Abdullah Ocalan*, head of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Nairobi in 1999.

As for Iran, it was a strategic ally of America during the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi from 1941 until the Islamic revolution in Iran on February 11, 1979 led by Ayatollah Khomeini. The relations became worse because of the hostage crisis at the U.S. embassy in Tehran after the revolution. America had strategic interests with Iran, the U.S. taken Iran as a buffer against Soviet expansion to reach its south, as well as Iran's natural resources such as oil and gas.

Nowadays, the USA considerer Iran as one of the most dangerous countries that threatens U.S. national security, especially after Trump withdraws from the nuclear agreement which was signed among Iran and the United States and the European country. Iran threatens the security of Israel as well. Its influence has become widespread in the Middle East. It is now controlling four Arab capitals. This is what disturbs America's Gulf allies, especially Saudi Arabia, which has resulted in imbalance of power in the region. The principle of balance of power is one of the main principles for the U.S. foreign policy and the realism theory which adopted by this study in its analysis of foreign policy In the Middle East. Therefore, America should work to restore the balance of power in the region between the countries in the region, Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, to achieve stability in the region and thus helps the flow of oil to Europe. This is what the new administration in the White House tries to achieve through the recent escalation against Iran by withdrawing from the agreement Nuclear weapons and re-imposing sanctions on the Iranian regime to press Iran to return to the international community and preserve the stability of the region. Without a balance of power in the region, it is difficult to achieve stability among these countries.

This was confirmed by former national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski during his interview with NPR News when he answered question: What are U.S. interests when it comes to Iran? he says : “I think our ultimate interest is to have Iran as a stabilizing regional power: a power that is not hostile to the United States, a power that can be a friendly partner, a power that can incidentally return to the status of a friend of Israel. It is thought that that it is the long-range interest. The more immediate interest seems to avoid either an Iranian nuclear bomb, which contributes to instability in the region, or has caused more generalized hostility between Iran and the United States” (news, 2009). The study concludes that U.S.-Iranian relations are moving towards escalation, and that Iran's behavior threatens not only the U.S. interests, but also the security and stability of the whole region. The Trump administration works by all means to force Iran to abandon its nuclear weapons and stop supporting the terrorist organizations such as Lebanese Hezbollah, Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria, the Houthis in Yemen and al-Qaeda. The U.S. should restore stability in the Middle East by reducing Iranian influence in the region.

The U.S. foreign policy toward the Kurds in Iran is not the same as with the Kurds of Iraq, because the U.S. interests were with Iran until the Islamic Revolution. Therefore, America did not provide any significant support to the Kurdish Republic of *Mahabad*, which was founded in Iran in 1946, so the Republic lasted less than a year. Even after the Islamic revolution, America did not find its interests with the Iranian Kurds and did not use this card against the new Iranian regime despite its declaration of hostility to America and raise the slogan of "death to America".

The study is also interested in the U.S. foreign policy and national interests in Syria as a country inhabited by Kurds, where there are nearly two million Kurds in Syria.

America has been interested in Syria for two reasons. First, Syria is a neighbor of Israel, second, the exclusion of Syria from the Soviet influence. However, U.S. policy changed after the assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister *Rafiq Hariri* in 2005, where the United States accused Syria of being behind the assassination and accused it of supporting terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah and its strategic relationship with Iran. Furthermore, the situation became worse in 2011 when the army of Bashar Al-Assad fired live bullets at the demonstrators against the regime.

The Syrian people rebelled against the regime; the regime almost collapsed but the intervention of Russia and Iran make the regime to stand up this revolution. Russia and Iran presented financial and military support to Syrian regime in order to thwart the popular uprising. America did nothing Although Obama said that the use of chemical weapons was a red line, the regime did not care about this threat and used chemical weapons several times against the innocent people and was put in isolation, this led to the anxiety of America's allies in the region and the American public's dissatisfaction with Obama's policies towards Syria. However, the new administration in the White House, which is known for its great hostility to the Tehran regime, was stricter than its predecessor when it responded with rockets when Bashar al-Assad hit civilians. It is determined to respond to Bashar Assad's regime and to limit Russian expansion and its role in Syria, which has begun to worry U.S. policymakers.

The U.S. foreign policy towards the Kurds of Syria began after the Arab Spring in 2011 when the Syrian forces withdrew from the Kurdish areas and became under the control of the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) and America became closer to Syria Kurds after the emergence of the Islamic state and allied with the Kurds, the U.S. used them in their fight against the Islamic state, which angered Turkey, where Turkey

considers the Democratic Union Party and its military wing the People's Protection Unit , YPG of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, which is classified as a terrorist party by the U.S.. Turkey did not like this duality in dealing, which led Erdogan to say that America should choose either Turkey or the Democratic Union Party.

This duality in dealing with the Democratic Union Party, which is rooted in the Kurdistan Workers' Party, confirms what the researcher used in this study to analyze the U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East which is the realism theory and national interests in the theoretical framework when he said that nothing drives American decision makers except the U.S. national interest. The Democratic Union Party and its founder is the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). It is associated with PKK in everything. However, America does not regard it as a terrorist organization because it serves U.S. interests at the moment. Therefore, America continues to provide arms, money and logistical support to the People's Protection Units until it was able to liberate *Al-Raqqa*, the capital of the Caliphate state, the last bastion of the ISIS. But when the danger of the ISIS ended, the U.S. agreed with Turkey and forced Kurdish troops to withdraw from the areas that liberated from ISIS by the Kurds in Syria. Thus, what happened to the Kurds in Iraq happened to the Kurds in Syria as well, where America supports them when their support serves U.S. interests and abandons them when their support is against the American interests.

CHAPTER FIVE

U.S. FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD IRAQI KURDISTAN BETWEEN 1961 AND 2003

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines U.S. foreign policy towards Iraqi Kurds between 1961 and 2003. The chapter attempts to elucidate the U.S. policy in the Kurdish region within Iraq, beginning from 1961, when the Kurdish nationalist movement in Iraq inflamed and first sought the U.S. support under the Kennedy administration. The chapter highlights the most vital relationship during this period. It first provides a short historical overview covering the pre-1975 period, which is predominantly marked by unsuccessful bids by the Kurdish leaders to develop contacts with the U.S. The chapter proceeds in looking at the considerable American engagement with the Iraqi Kurds in the period 1961 – 2014, which according to this study the relationship between them during this period passed through three important phases. The first stage was between 1961-1975 and the second stage was between 1990-2003. The last stage was between 2003-2014 when the ISIS emerged and threatened the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and became near from the capital of the Kurdistan Region (Erbil). The study in this chapter focused on the reactions that occurred during these stages and the factors that led American to support the Kurds in the September 11, 1961 revolution and the reasons that led America to abandon their revolution. In order to better understand this, the chapter attempts to answer the following question: Why has the U.S. relationship with

Iraqi Kurdistan vacillated between engagement and estrangement all through its history?

5.2 Iraqi Kurds and Foreign Relations: An Overview

American foreign policy towards Iraq is a policy is characterized by the national interest, as America has a lot of interests with Iraq, given that Iraq has an important geographical location and is the heart of the Middle East region, as well as that Iraq is an important source for supplying the global market with energy. in addition to what Iraq contains a prominent religious center for Shiites in the world, at the same time Iraq is the neighbor to Iran, which competes with America for influence in Iraq, and Iran enjoys great influence in Iraq, given Iran's leadership of the Shiite sect in the world.

As for the U.S. foreign policy towards the Iraqi Kurds, it was characterized by the national interest, on one hand, and the balance of power, on the other, as required by the U.S. interest. During the Cold War, America used the Kurds in Iraq to strike a balance in the region. America was afraid of Soviet influence in Iraq; therefore, it supported the Kurdish revolution against the government of Abdul Karim Qassem and provided support and upheld the revolution through Iran. This was to contain the influence of the Soviet Union in the Middle East, preventing Iraq to from the influence of the Soviet Union, as soon as this threat ended, America abandoned them. In 2014, the U.S. support for the Kurds was to preserve American interests in Iraqi Kurdistan, especially after Kurdistan appeared on the energy map, as there are a lot of giant companies that have invested in the energy field, such as Exxon Mobil and Chevron. Therefore, U.S. protected the Kurds and did not allow ISIS to enter the city of Erbil.

However, the historical relics and monuments point to the fact that Kurds as people have their past in terms of politics, science, literature, art and military. The Kurds are primarily one of the aboriginal people of the Near East where most of the great civilizations sprang up. The Middle East region of today could be regarded as the primary home origin of the Kurdish people, regardless where they are today. The fact that some Kurds elements could be found in central Asia and Eastern Europe does not mean they are not related with the predominant Kurds population in the Middle East. People do migrate in the course of history and such may in turn change social demography of a people or race. Thus, Kurdistan region of Iraq has been the Kurdish people's homeland since the dawn of history (Ahmad & Politics, 2012). The twin factors of World War I and the eventual demise of the Ottoman Empire led to the Kurds demanding for political emancipation and national sovereignty (Higginbottom, 2009). After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Treaty of Sevres in 1920 promised the Kurds an independent state. It needs to be said that the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 superseded that of Sevres. The international and regional circumstances have thus far prevented the realization of statehood by the Kurds and in such circumstance; Kurds were divided against their will among four countries.

It needs to be reiterated here that the creation of Iraq by the British colonial government worsened the Kurdish political emancipation progress. The Woodrow Wilson 14-point agenda, among which is the declaration that each people should choose the form of government under which they want to live, was a brilliant attempt at stamping out the crime of colonialism from the Third World countries. This declaration did not work well for some countries as European colonial states began to give the speech different interpretations. One of such interpretation is the idea that the speech of Woodrow

Wilson about political independence was only limited to the Eastern European states and other states in the western hemisphere. The U.S., whose aim was to liberate all lands from the shackles of colonial yoke was unfortunate not part of states that would determine the so called the emancipation of rubbles from the Sick Man of Europe. In such a manner, the U.S. did not have any political authority to coerce the colonial British officers to grant independence to the Kurds. The U.S came to the center-stage of Middle East politics in the 1970s and such foreign policy formulation affected the status of Kurds in the Middle East (Dewhurst, 2006). The sudden appearance of the U.S. in the Middle East's Issue in the 1970s was primarily to curtail the advancement of the USSR in the region as well as stabilization program to ensure stable supply of oil. Such stability program became expedient on the part of the U.S. as a result of energy crisis that pervaded global economic space in the 1970s (Ostor, 2000). These developments in the Middle East made the U.S. to be apathetic to the Kurds aspirations. This was because of the need to preserve its vital interests in the region. The U.S. foreign policy did not affect the status of Kurds until the 1970s, the beginning of the U.S policy towards the Iraqi Kurds.

5.3 The U.S. Policy toward the Iraqi Kurds: Pre-1975 History

Kurds, it needs to be established, are ethnic group that can be found in some countries in the Middle East, principally in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. The idea of self-governing has always been the main concern of Kurds in whatever country they find themselves. The principal component of harmony and unity among Kurds are can linked to the existence of a common language, race, religion and historical experience (Ahmad & Politics, 2012). It thus right to assert that the Kurdish history is a history of many struggles in terms of identity and territorial claimant (Studies, Studies, & Mundus, 2014). Iraqi Kurds often see themselves as victim of circumstance. The

various attempts by Kurds to attain self-determination have been affected by mutual suspicions and rivalries among the principal Kurds elements in Iraq. Not only this but also the politics of international powers can also be blamed for such self-determination failure (Ahmed, 2010). As the U.S. gradually gained regional influence in the Middle East, with the attendant result of dissolution of the British Empire, the issue of Kurds has been an important factor dictating the foreign policy of the U.S. in the Middle East (Shareef, 2010). One of such earliest-documented indicators of such interest came in a memo sent by Ambassador Edward Crocker II, the first U.S. Ambassador to Baghdad, on 10 April 1950. The cable was sent from Baghdad to the State Department indicating the possibility of the publication of a new Kurdish language news bulletin, prepared weekly by the U.S. Information Service at the American embassy in Baghdad. Crocker described the venture “as an effort to fill the gap in the democratic activity countering Soviet propaganda to the Kurds” (Crocker, 1950).

One of the declassified documents in the Department of State Documents on April 4 1954 describes thus,

“The American attempt to reach The Kurds goes back to the early fifties of the last century, during the cold war era. Diplomats from the American embassy in Baghdad started to visit Kurdistan and distributed leaflets and information as propaganda to influence The Kurds to not become a Soviet ally. That fear was always presence during the entire cold war era” (Department of State, April 4, 1954).

Therefore, reaching The Kurds, as Kissinger puts it, is the “central objective of our strategy and; reducing the Soviet influence” (Kissinger, Simon & Schuster, 1999). In addition, the U.S. also has an interest in Iraq’s Kurds because of their historic

connection with Moscow. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the Soviets had assisted the Iranian Kurds with the establishment of the short-lived Kurdish Republic of *Mahabad* in western Iran between 1945 and 1946. This development raised concerns from the U.S. policy quarters that the Soviets would use the Kurds to prevent Washington's regional Communist containment strategy (Geschiedenis, 2014). Thus, by the end of the 1940s, the U.S. and the Soviet Union had become increasingly embroiled in a Cold War competition for influence in the Middle East. Because the U.S. military planners acknowledged the important role of the Western access to oil from the Persian Gulf in case of a war with the USSR, Washington adopted a regional strategy for the Middle East, which was designed

“To protect the Gulf, prevent the Soviets from establishing control over its oil reserves, and to prop up the pro-Western conservative regimes in the region” (LaFantasie, 1992). The U.S. concerns about the role of the Soviets in the Middle East are confirmed by Department of State Document that was issued on October 24, 1974 and such document stated thus:

“Iraqi policy trend toward non-alignment and rapprochement with west appears to have resulted in major soviet effort to avoid displacement by west. Iraqi regime is vulnerable to soviet pressures because of Kurdish war and what it perceives as military threat from Iran. Although soviets may not be able to reverse trend, they may succeed in slow down. For the U.S., this could mean limitation on economic activity and further delay in resumption of normal relations” (U.S. Department of State, 1974).

In addition, the document reiterated further that, “publicly, soviets seem to stand firmly behind Baath regime's effort to resolve Kurdish problem through forced application of Iraqi version of soviet "nationalities policy.... privately, however, soviets believed to see benefits of keeping Kurdish revolt alive as means of pressure on Baghdad” (State, 1974).

During the tense American-Soviet competition for influence in Iraq, a fourteen-year-long Kurdish War-ravaged Iraq from autumn 1961 till March 1975, with few continuous interruptions. After the pro-Western Hashemite monarchy of Iraq was overthrown, Washington began to examine whether the Iraqi Kurds and their Kurdish nationalism could be beneficial in restricting the advancement of Soviet influence in Iraq and in the Middle East in general (Little, 2010). In a way thus, the Cold War international political climate was one of the variables that dictated the direction of U.S. foreign policy towards the Kurds.

It needs to be stressed here that the significant diplomatic contact between the U.S. and the Kurds only evolved in the 1960s, when the U.S. was pressuring the Shah of Iran, and began supporting the Kurds as a political instrument in threaten the government of Iran. When Saddam Hussein emerged in Iraq as a potent threat, Iraqi Kurds resisted and held out with assistance from Iran, Israel and the U.S, which had sent Central Intelligent Agents (CIA) to arm and train the Peshmerga (Ahmed, 2010). Thus, the U.S. policy started affecting the Kurds following the formation of a pro American Defense Pact among the states of the "Northern Tier" (Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Pakistan) to halt the political advancement and influence of the Soviet Union. The pact, known as the Baghdad Pact, was first signed between Iraq and Turkey in 1955 to stop external aggression. This was later expanded to include other countries in the

region. It should be noted that the United Kingdom announced its intention to adhere to it, and it was followed by Pakistan and, finally, Iran (Muhammed, 2012).

It needs to be noted that the U.S. interest in the Iraqi Kurds at this time were two-fold. First, it was an attempt at keeping the Kurds as an entity away from Soviet influence and political domination. Second, it was to help the pro-Western Iraqi monarchy keep the Kurds under control. In a declassified telegram from the U.S. embassy in Tehran, Henry Grady encouraged the broadcast of Voice of America (VOA) in Kurdish; he also emphasized that it should in no way encourage Kurdish political nationalism, but rather promote Kurdish support for the central Iranian government (Grady, 1951). This U.S. political standing on Iraqi Kurdish represented a remarkable policy juggernaut that tended to manipulate the political situation in the Middle East to its own benefits. Such attempt later boomeranged as Kurdish was later trying to befriend other powers to achieve their aims and objectives in Iraq.

5.3.1 The September Revolution of 1961 under the leadership of *Mulla Mustafa Al-Barzani*

The *Barzani* Kurds of Iraq, *Mulla Mustafa* in particular, played a significant role in political developments in Iranian Kurdistan. This was attained after *Mulla Mustafa's* expulsion from Iraq in the autumn of 1945 (Yassin, 1995). *Mulla Mustafa Barzani*, the younger brother of the *Barzani* religious and tribal leader *Shaykh Ahmad*, came to the fore in the early 1930s as the principal figure in Iraqi Kurdish politics, a position that he held until his death in exile in 1979 (Sluglett, 2001). Having first participated in combat during a rebellion against the British authorities in 1919 as well as in the early 1930s (Lawrence, 2008), he later went on to play an integral role in the formation of the short-lived Kurdish Republic of Mahabad during 1945-46 in the Soviet-occupied

Iran. It should be stated that after Mahabad collapsed in late-1946, Barzani led his followers in a Fifty-day-long running battle with the Iranian military until reaching safety in Soviet Azerbaijan (Gibson, 2013). With his political asylum within the Soviet enclave, Barzani stayed in the Soviet Union for nearly 11 years until 1958 when Abdul Karim Qasim and his fellow Free Officers in the Iraqi army led a revolt against the monarchy in Baghdad to reach power and changed the political regime to a republican one.

The *coup d'etat* by Qasim on 14 July, 1958 was premised on the assumption it would better the lives of the people as well as for the Kurds. When he took power, Qasim promised the formation of a democratic republic and formed a cabinet composed of officers and members of the United National Front (McDowall, 2007). In an attempt to unify the country and to broaden his support base, Qasim needed the support of the Kurds (Resool, 2012). On 27 July, 1958 the Provisional Constitution was firmly established, and Article 23 of the established constitution stated that 'the Kurds and the Arabs are partners within this [the Iraqi] nation. The Constitution guarantees their rights within the frame- work of the Iraqi Republic'. Qasim also released many Kurds, and Barzani himself was forgiven for his previous insurrections. He was, after many rounds of negotiations and consultations between Ibrahim Ahmed and the Government of Iraq, formally invited to return to Iraq. On 6 October, 1958 he returned to Baghdad from exile amid widespread jublations (Ghareeb, 1981; Sluglett, 2001). This time, like his predecessors, Qasim pledged equality in relationship between Kurds and Arabs. This he did in order to buy the time needed to consolidate his rule and refuted such an understanding when he felt able to do so against the Kurds. As he consolidated his hold on the political terrain in Iraq, Qasim adopted a pro-Atatürk

policy, according to which he excluded any recognition of the Kurdish existence, banned any Kurdish political activity by ordering the closure of the KDP bureau on 24 September, 1961 and prepared for military assault (Mirza, 2007).

One needs to recognize that by the end of 1960, all hope of the establishment of democratic institutions vanished (Sluglett, 2001). Edgar O'Ballance argues thus,

“The Kurdish Revolt in Iraq began to gather momentum in March 1961, when Mullah Mustafa Barzani arrived back in Barzan. In September, when government forces bombed Barzani villages, Barzani found himself leader of a full-scale armed movement against President Qasem. When he had rid- den into the mountains his main intention had been to pay off a few old scores and he had had no intention of rising in arms against the central government: he was drawn into revolt by circumstances” (O'Ballance, 1996).

This was confirmed by Massoud Barzani, the son of Mullah Mustafa Barzani and the President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, when he described the situation in that period in his book titled “Barzani and the Kurdish Liberation Movement” as,

“The relationship between Abdulkarim Qasem and KDP deteriorated in the early 1961, especially after the return of Mustafa Barzani from Moscow to Baghdad in January 1961. Qasem suspected Barzani and was not happy with his moves. Barzani tried hard to meet him but Qasem ignored him and did not respond to his request until February. Barzani tried to assure Qasem during the meeting and told him that his doubts did not have any ground. He tried very hard to convince Qasem that neither he nor the KDP had anything against Qasem” (Masoud Barzani, 2002: p22-23).

He reiterated further that,

“.... Barzani decided to leave Baghdad for a period of time and urged the Kremlin to support the Kurds. They instead decided to give money to Barzani himself in order to buy weaponry from regional arms dealers, money that they sent through their embassy in Baghdad. Naskov was the contact person in the embassy. Barzani drew a plan to buy arms and appointed some people to do so. By this time, the regime had started harassing the KDP members, then closed *Khebat*, the official KDP newspaper. The government then started a campaign to arrest KDP members. Some were arrested, and some managed to escape to Kurdistan and some blended into the towns and cities” (Masoud Barzani, 2002: p22-23).

As one would be expected, the intense political lashes between the two sides began in December 1961. The Kurds were able to exhaust both Qasim's militarily and political capabilities, and pushed his regime towards his final downfall. He finally could not deter *Baathists* and *Nasserists* threat who overthrew him in a new coup d'état on 8 February, 1963 (Mirza, 2007; McDowall, 2007). The Kurdish Revolt began in earnest in March 1961. The first stage of Barzani's strategy was to consolidate his hold on the mountainous areas of Iraqi Kurdistan by fighting his old enemies, the Lolani and Zebari tribes. The revolt escalated when Barzani's allies, the Arkou, launched a military attack. Qassem's response was devastating and inhuman as his regime indiscriminately embarked on aerial bombing of rural areas, including Barzan villages, which eventually resulted in the Barzanis and other tribes rebelling. By the end of September, Barzani was in control of a swathe of land stretching from Zakho to Suleimaniyah (O'Ballance, 1996). Qassem's forces faced little hurdles in reclaiming the urban areas and connecting roads. However, Barzani retained the mountainous

areas. Qassem, therefore, focused intensely on the rural infrastructure by bombing the mountain villages, resulting in the destruction of almost 300 villages before the end of the year (Stansfiel, 2003).

However, Kurdish political emancipation attempts in the 1960s took place within a series of rebellions against the Government of Iraq as well as a series of coups; the Ba'ath Party replaced the Qassem regime on 8 February 1963 that was in turn overthrown on 18 November 1963 by the army under *Abdul Salam Aref*. When President Aref was killed in a plane crash on 14 April 1966 his brother, Abdul Rahman Aref, ascended the throne of political authority. The Ba'ath Party again regained power on 17 July, 1968 under the leadership and presidency of Ahmed Hassan Al-Bakr, and his vice-president, Saddam Hussein (Stansfiel, 2003).

With these political developments, however, the United States began to care about Kurds. This was most apparent after the withdrawal of Iraq from the Baghdad Pact in March 1959 that eventually saw Iraq government went to Soviet bloc for military and political support. These series of events were a major blow for American interests in the Middle East (M. Gunter, 1994). Gibson argues that,

“In the fall of 1958, U.S. officials became concerned about Soviet subversion in Iraq. This analysis was based on three premises: 1) concerns about the return of a Kurdish nationalism leader to Iraq, *Mulla Mustafa Barzani*, who had been in exile in the Soviet Union since 1946; 2) the establishment of a Soviet-Iraq arms-supply relationship; and 3) *Qasim*’s increasing reliance on the Iraqi Communist Party for support following his fallout with *Arif* and the Arab nationalists” (Gibson, 2013).

Because of the renewed cordial relationship between the Republic of Iraq and the USSR, the U.S began contemplating various grand strategies and mechanisms of regaining Iraq (Little, 2010). The U.S. interest towards the Iraqi Kurds during this period was twofold. First, it was an attempt at keeping the Kurds away from the political ambit of Soviet influence. Second, it was to help the pro-Western Iraqi monarchy keep the Kurds under control (Grady, 1951.). The Kurdish leadership, led by Mullah Mustafa Barzani, realized that the Kurdish revolution was difficult without the support of Western countries, especially the U.S. In this case, therefore, an attempt was made from the beginning to establish strong contacts with the U.S. Barzani thus solicited for the U.S. support in the Kurdish revolution. Again, the U.S. was reluctant and later developed interest to provide support for the Kurds. The U.S. has been cautious towards Barzani because it feared its interests towards Iran and Turkey, the far better productive foreign policy issue.

As Qasim's promise of Kurdish autonomy went unfulfilled, Iraqi Kurds sought support from the Western power against Qasim, which started in 1961 (Muhammed, 2012). The objective of such alliance and romance with the U.S. was to gain recognition for their national cause and obtaining military and financial support to continue their armed struggle (Shareef, 2010). The later issue was later found difficult to achieve as the U.S. would be reluctant to supply any arms and ammunitions to aid the Kurds struggle in Iraq. The U.S. was reluctant mainly to avert a situation where the arms would be employed for different purpose that might create political turmoil in the Middle East. As early as 1962 in an interview, Mulla Mustafa Barzani told correspondent of New York Times Dana Adams Schmidt that “let the Americans give us military aid, openly or secretly, so that we can become truly autonomous, and we

will become your loyal partners in the Middle East” (Quoted in Gunter, 1994, p.54; (Ghareeb, 1981, p. 44).

On the other, the U.S. insisted on ignoring Barzani’s requests for supporting his revolt against Qassem. The U.S. reaction against such assistance was based on several issues concerning Arab resistance in the Middle East. First, the U.S. government was of the conviction that a Barzani-dominated regime would have difficulty surviving in the face of a consolidated Arab opposition. Second, the Soviets were so well established economically in Iraq that even if Barzani succeeded in overthrowing the Ba’athis, it would be unlikely that he could break Iraq’s ties with Moscow unless the U.S. was prepared to step in with immediate effect to provide large-scale assistance. Third, the U.S. support for a coup operation, which was understood to be ill organized, would be difficult to conceal and thus the U.S. would risk further strains in its relations with the other Arab states because of support for a non-Arab movement backed by other non-Arab states i.e. Iran and Israel against the Arabs. It needs to be said that facilitating the coming to power of a Kurdish-supported government in Baghdad also risks arousing the expectations of Kurds in neighboring Iran and Turkey, thus causing-concern in at least Turkey if not Iran.

This later concern was the most difficult of all. If the U.S. lend its support to Iraqi Kurds, such assistance will eventually destabilize the entire region as the Kurds elsewhere would rise against the constituted authorities in their various states (Killgore, 1972). Moreover, the U.S. was cautious of committing itself to a guerrilla campaign, the greatest success of which could only be a standoff with the government in Baghdad and preservation of Kurdish autonomy. The U.S. knew that if the battle turned against the Kurds, they would have neither the assets nor the interest to provide

concrete support to arrest the situation. In terms of financial effect, the U.S. was of the view that the issue supposed to be a regional-based issue that would enable financially buoyant countries like Saudi Arabia and Iran to contribute immensely. In such an instance, the U.S. recognized regional partners to assist the Kurds in this case. Finally, the U.S. considered the implications of supporting the Kurds in the context of the Moscow Summit talks of May 1972. It knew that the Soviets had made a recent effort to persuade the Kurds to join the Baath Party in a national unity government in Baghdad. Hence, the U.S. recognized that his support for the Kurds would be perceived politically as a direct anti-Soviet move (Saunders, 1972).

Therefore, if one looks at what the main U.S. policy interests were in relation to the Kurds during general Qasim's reign, it seems there were not many at all. One of the complicating factors for supporting the Iraqi Kurds was the fact that two major U.S. allies in the region, Turkey and Iran, could become destabilized if their major Kurdish minorities would also be motivated to ignite Kurdish nationalist activities (Rubin, 2007). The costs of weakening the Qasim government with a Kurdish insurrection did not outweigh the costs of spoiling relations with the two strategically crucial allies of Washington (Geschiedenis, 2014).

It thus needs to be said that the only major strategic objective that the U.S. and the Iraqi Kurds really had in common during General Qasim's reign was failure of the regime. And the U.S. in this regard saw the Iraqi Kurds as a useful instrument to destabilize the Qassim regime, as common foe. Strategically, the U.S had its reason for denying Kurds assistance in getting autonomy in Iraq. Most crucial of all was the fact that providing assistance to the Iraqi Kurds during the 1961 Kurdish insurrection

would be in contravention to the U.S.' two primary objectives of its main strategy for the Middle East (Geschiedenis, 2014).

In discussing Kurds relations with the U.S. in the Middle East during the 1970s, one important issue that needs, to be recognized is the Iranian issue. Iran grew alarmed at the emergence of Arab nationalism in Iraq and the potential that these nationalistic feelings might be moved towards its Arab-populated province of *Khuzistan* and the Gulf. In addition, Iraq's close rapport with Nasserism and Pan-Arabism, particularly during the emergence of the Egyptian-Syrian United Arab Republic, and Iraq's gestures of joining this unified Arab republic put Iran on the defensive. Thus, Iran began to use the Kurds as important political instrument to cause instability in Iraq, which would serve as an impediment for Baghdad to secure its own territory in the north (Peter, 1997). Given Iraq's weakness during the 1960s, Iran began an attempt to amend the 1937 Treaty that allocated to Iraq all Shatt al-Arab River, which served as their common border in the south. As one would be expected, the Shah of Iran began to recognize the Kurdish card as an avenue to put pressure on Iraq. Such development brought U.S., an important ally of Iran, to the political scenario (Gunter, 1994). Emerging in the early 1962, the Kurdish issue took on greater importance due to Iran's sudden interest in supporting them against Baghdad without minding the effect of such support on its own Kurdish elements (Gibson, 2013). This development led to a precarious situation toward the end of May 1962 when the U.S. learned that Iran was reconsidering its policy toward the Kurds. Such realization on the part of the U.S. was a turning point in the Kurdish issue in the Middle East. This led the U.S. State Department to warn its embassy in Tehran on May 24 of "indications that important elements in the Government of Iran ... may be considering a change in basic Iranian

policy from the past and present line of half-hearted opposition to the Kurdish rebellion to one of covert cooperation with the rebels” (Gibson, 2013).

From the early 1962 onward, the Kennedy administration’s policy toward Iraq assumed another dimension which was diametrically in opposition to what obtained under the Eisenhower administration’s “wait and see” policy. It was changed from the policy of engagement to overt and covert action to deal with impending policy loom. This step became imperative because of two main factors. First, a recognition among senior Kennedy administration officials of the need to evolve a more intensive policy to counter Soviet moves in Europe, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. Second, Iraq’s expropriation of the IPC’s concessionary holding convinced the Kennedy administration the Qasim regime posed a threat to the U.S. interests. These conclusions resulted in the adoption of a dual track approach towards Iraq (Hahn, 2005); (Resool, 2012). In the early 1962, it needs to be emphasized; the Kurdish question took on greater importance due to Iran’s sudden interest in supporting them against Baghdad. While the Kennedy administration sought to dissuade the Shah from helping Barzani, it was fruitless. Even after the downgrade, the U.S. persisted in advising Iran against such move. However, it seems likely that British and American diplomats in Baghdad during this time conspired to undermine the Qasim regime. This included the sending of Western journalists into Iraqi Kurdistan to interview Barzani (Gibson, 2013). However, Nixon and Kissinger had decided to act now for a variety of reasons. Thus,

“The Pike Committee Report concluded that "the project was initiated primarily as a favor to our ally [the Shah], who had cooperated with United States intelligence agencies, and who had come to feel menaced by his neighbor [Iraq]." Former United States Ambassador William Eagleton, Jr. concurred with these findings when he

wrote: "My impression ... is that by far the most important reason for the U.S. intervention was a desire to respond positively to the Shah's request, which was apparently based on Barzani's insistence that some kind of big power support was needed to balance Iraq's Soviet connection. The Cold War".

The argument continues,

"A continuing Kurdish insurgency would sap the strength of Iraq, a Soviet ally. Did Nixon and Kissinger — who, as mentioned, were just returning from a summit conference in Moscow — believe they were somehow serving the interests of detente by checkmating the Soviets here? A continuing Kurdish problem in Iraq would tie Baghdad's troops down at home and make it less likely that Iraq would enter any future Arab-Israeli conflict. As Kissinger later noted in his memoirs: "The benefit of Nixon's Kurdish decision was apparent in just over a year: Only one Iraqi division was available to participate in the October 1973 Middle East War" (Kissinger, 1979, p. 1485; Eagleburger, 1976, pp. 204-209; Gunter, 1994, p 467)).

This was the beginning of a new phase in the Kurdish revolution in relation to the U.S., Israel and Iran support. Each of these countries had their own goals and interests in supporting Barzani and such support was not based on any universal principle of self-determination. Therefore, they encouraged Barzani to fight against the Baathist regime in the early 1970s. Such insurrection led to the Baath government granting limited autonomy to Kurdish region in the North. Such autonomy was backed by March 11 Agreement of 1970 that recognized the Kurdish national rights and autonomy in the areas with Kurdish majority. In the meantime, however, Baghdad defaulted and agreement reached in 1970 was implicitly disbanded. Such step led to the resumption

of rebellions against the center by the Kurds. A report of a research study prepared by the CIA in Washington in November 1976 states thus,

“On 11 March 1974, four years after the initial agreement had been signed and the date, by which it was to have been implemented, the Revolutionary Command Council RCC announced the granting of self-rule to the region in which the majority of residents were Kurds. Irbil would be the capital city of the autonomous province which would have a legislature, an executive council and a special budget with revenues derived from property taxes. The KDP rejected this unilateral declaration of autonomy and more clashes were reported by mid-March. The Kurds of Kurdistan, announced the KDP, would become part of a voluntary federation with the Arabs of Iraq and Mullah Mustafa Barzani, by virtue of his position as chairman of the Kurdish Executive Council, would become Vice President of the Republic. This the Baath rejected and major fighting ensued” (Historian, 1976, p 865).

The period between 1972 and 1975 marks a watershed in the U.S. policy towards the Kurds of Iraq. Employing the Kurds to actualize its interests, the U.S. remarkably lent its support openly to the Kurdish nationalism during this period. It did this by maintaining Iran's leadership role in the Middle East. It attained this by containing the Soviet influence in the region and weakening the Iraqi Baath regime. The Kurdish issue in this period was thus inextricably intertwined with global issues relating to the wider Cold War (Muhammed, 2012).

The U.S' interests with the Kurds during this period can be categorized into two main areas: supporting the Shah of Iran's leading role in the Middle East, including attempts at destabilizing the Iraqi regime through utilizing the Iraqi Kurds; and supporting Israel

in its stand against its Arab foes (Randal, 1998). Therefore, sustaining Iran as a pivotal regional power was the key factor behind the U.S. changing its policies towards Iraqi Kurds. The emerging influence of Iran was mainly focused on controlling Iranian oil and maintaining a strategic alliance with Iran against the Soviet Union (Pike, 1977); this was one of the main reasons that made Iran a strategic ally of the U.S. until Khomeini's Islamic revolution in 1979.

In addition to the political-economic interests, other factors made the U.S. see the Shah of Iran as a loyal ally. In particular, it was crucial for the U.S. that the Shah had the same views on major issues; such as opposition to the radical Arab regimes, support for Israel, opposition to the Soviet Union and alliances with conservative Gulf monarchies (Kostiner, 2009). It needs to be said here that Israel had first approached Barzani in 1963 through its intelligence service Mossad. Such initial contact spurred the mobilization of funds and weapons from Israel (and other Western sources) to the Iraqi Kurds. Israel employed its friendly diplomatic relations with Iran to transit the money and arms to Barzani. This inflow eventually included weapons, ammunition, military advisors, training, an Israeli cabinet minister, agricultural experts and a field hospital (Peter, 1997). The support of Israel at this point in time played a major role in sustaining the battles against the Iraqi regime. Israel's aim in supporting the Kurds, ostensibly were to create an adequate political and social instability within Iraq to serve as deterrence to Iraq from committing forces in any future against Israel. This support could be seen in the way Barzani offensive in 1967 coincided with the war in Israel. This was with the intent to tie down Iraqi units that might otherwise be sent to support the Arab armies against Israel (Ghareeb, 1981). This assistance, which was provided by the U.S., Iran and Israel played a major role and allowed Barzani to continue his

offensive against the Iraqi forces. This assistance made Barzani felt a certain amount of strength in his negotiations with Baghdad. With those assistance rendered; it was possible for Barzani to reach an agreement that satisfied both sides. Barzani's perception that these countries are serious at the point in time in supporting the Kurdish later proved to be otherwise. As soon as all parties concerned achieved their desired aims and objectives Kurds were left alone as usual. It should be stressed further here that in an attempt to disorganize the calm political climate in Iraq.

However, the Shah of Iran demanded the U.S. support towards the Kurds against the Iraqi Baath regime. This played into the hands of both Iran and the U.S. The U.S. needed a stooge regime to represent and serve U.S. interests in the Middle East, and with U.S. support the Shah sought to improve his power within the region even further (Muhammed, 2012). Subsequently, the U.S. provided secret assistances to the Iraqi Kurds in their revolution against the Iraqi government in the 1970s. Based on proof gathered by the Pike Committee, the project was supported primarily as a favor to the Shah of Iran for his collaboration with U.S. intelligence agencies (Pike, 1977). The use of this strategy by the Shah supporting the Kurdish rebels against Iraq was successful in achieving the desired goals. Confronted with the prospect of total economic and military failure, Iraq was forced to accept the revisions to the border demanded by the Shah in return for an Iranian promise to forgive its aid, both from Iran and the U.S., to the Kurds in Iraq (Anderson & Stansfield, 2004). On March 6, 1975, Shah entered into agreement with Saddam Hussein, the Vice President of the Republic of Iraq at the time in Algiers, Algeria. Despite direct pleas from the Kurds and the CIA station chief in the area to the U.S. President, Henry Kissinger, the U.S. refused to extend humanitarian assistance to the thousands of Kurdish refugees created by the abrupt

termination of military aid (Pike, 1977). Thus, the Barzani revolution ended with the Kurdish dream of obtaining self-rule. America and Iran abandoned them and became a victim of the superpowers and regional countries' interests. Therefore, Barzani was forced to withdraw from the fighting because he believed from the early days of the revolution that without American and Western support it would be difficult for the revolution to succeed. Consequently, Barzani realized that after the 1975 Algiers Agreement was signed between the Shah of Iran and Saddam Hussein, the struggle for autonomy would not bear any fruit. Besides, his old age did not give him the opportunity to continue the struggle it was. In addition, his health was also not good enough to embark in another fighting as he suffered a chronic and serious illness. He then went to America for treatment and died there at Georgetown University Hospital in 1979. However, it should be noted that the incessant conflicts between Iraq and Iran got its root from the Algiers Agreement of 1975 that handed over the disputed border area to Iran. The agreement was signed, it should be stressed to force Iran to withdraw its support for the Kurds emancipation in Iraq. Thus, as soon as Saddam Hussein assumed power in 1979, he declined totally to abide by the Algiers Agreement and conflict between the two countries ensued. The result of the war on Iraq was devastating as the Iraqi economy collapsed, oil prices plummeted and Iraq's debt grew. These national disasters prompted Saddam to enter Kuwait and occupied it in 1990. One needs to recognize that if Saddam Hussein had agreed with Barzani based on the March 11 agreement that he signed in 1970, he would not have to sign the Algiers Agreement and relinquish Iraq's sovereignty over the border dispute. That was irrational on the part of Saddam Hussein and that could be regarded as ineffective proactive foreign policy.

5.4 U.S. Policy towards the Kurds in Iraq: 1975-2003

5.4.1 The U.S. Realpolitik and Kurdish Tragedy in Iraq: 1975-1990

After 1975, in the last two decades of the twentieth century, some important events took place in the Middle East that later affected the interest of the U.S. in the region. Islamic revolution in Iran led by Ayatollah Khomeini took place in 1979 and the regime became the staunch opponent of the U.S. in the region. America lost an important strategic ally in the region, Mohammed Reza Shah. He was replaced by an Islamist regime that publicly declared that he would strike out American interests in the region and labeled America as “the Great Evil”. The year of revolution also saw Saddam Hussein assumed the presidency of Iraq. A long eight-year war broke out between the two countries. All these events made America to abandon the Kurds and their cause in order to preserve their interests in the region, especially the Arabs. Khalidi argues that, the American-Iraqi Baath relationship improved rapidly in the 1980s, despite having been severed since 1967 when Iraq accused the U.S. of supporting Israel in the Six Day War. The revival of U.S. relations with Iraq was largely due to the Iranian Revolution of 1979, which had the potential to undermine U.S. interests in the Middle East (Freedman & Karsh, 2004). The revolution, which later became an Islamic one, required the U.S. to reluctantly seek friendship with Saddam Hussein and considered Iraq a new ally that could replace the Shah of Iran, on whom the U.S. had relied heavily to maintain American leadership position in the region. To attain this objective, however, the U.S. had to sell more arms to Saudi Arabia and mitigate the Soviet influence in Iraq, aiming to change it from a leftist state to a pro-American moderate state (Brune, 1993). As would be expected, the Kurds were totally abandoned by the powers as they no longer served the interest for which they were hitherto befriended.

Thus, the Kurds were exposed during this period to a great tragedy, eight thousand civilian members of Barzani tribe were disappeared in 1983 and one hundred and eighty-three thousand Kurdish civilians were physically mass murdered in 1988, according to the Kurdistan Regional Government. Saddam Hussein named the onslaught against the Kurds “Al-Anfal campaign” and destroyed more than 4500 Kurdish villages and hit the town of Halabja with chemical weapons in 1988 and killed more than five thousand, including women and children. Besides, more than ten thousand people were injured and the town still suffers from the effects of this chemical weapons. What one would have expected was the prompt condemnation and reaction from global powers and international community. Such reaction was completely unknown and the international community kept silence as if nothing had ever happened in that part of the world. Thus, neither America nor the international community reacted to all these violations by Saddam Hussein against the Kurds, because the interests of the U.S. and Western countries in the region at that time required so. This is a case of double standard in foreign policy making. The West only reacts to issues when it affects their own interest and keeps mute if such is in connection with their interests. Weapons supplied by Western nations were used against the Kurds and Western governments were well aware of these crimes against humanity in Kurdistan region of Iraq and no official objection was raised. This is not strange at all. This has been the standard pattern of the West’s dealings with the Kurds. When it was deemed advantageous to support the Iraqi government, as in 1988 during its war with Iran, the plight of the Kurds was conveniently ignored (Anderson & Stansfield, 2004). Mahmoud Othman was appointed the Kurdish representative and visited the U.S. in December 1988 to inform U.S. officials about the oppression facing

Iraqi Kurds. As Othman explains, the U.S. government refused to receive any Kurdish delegation at that time and turned a blind eye to the Kurdish tragedy in Iraq.

Moreover, to avoid any diplomatic issue in its relations with Baghdad, the U.S. government claimed that “the Halabja chemical attacks were perpetrated by Iran not Iraq” (Othman, 2018). Hikmat Bamarni the KDP ‘s North America Branch Head, explained that the U.S. had no intention of dealing with the Kurds, because it was considered an internal Iraqi matter and intervention was seen as not in the interest of the U.S. (Bamarni, 2008). Thus, the Reagan administration continued to believe that Iraq ‘s behavior could be moderated and that, as a strategic asset, it could protect the U.S. interests in the region (O’Leary & McGarry, 2005). The questions one needs to ask here are: at what stage, as required by international humanitarian law, does a state intervene in another when it commits genocide? Is there no international law limiting the extent of offensive a national government can launch against its citizens? And will world fold harms anytime a national government perpetrates crime against humanity against its citizen in the name of national sovereignty? The international politics has been in flux for centuries and law only applies to the weak both at national and international levels.

The U.S. strategy at that time required the weakening of both Iraq and Iran. Iran, after the Islamic Revolution, declared that it would wipe Israel off the map and Iraq was as well heading toward Arab nationalism, especially after the Baath party came to power. There is no doubt that the threat to Israel's security is a red line for America; because maintaining Israel's security is one of the priorities of the U.S. foreign policy regardless of administration. Thus, America has worked to weaken both Iran and Iraq as their weakness, especially in military and economic terms, would guarantee the security of

Israel in the Middle East. The war between Iraq and Iran served American interests the most. It was in the interest of the U.S. to end the war between both countries without making any of them stronger as that would undermine the balance of power in the region. So, perpetually keeping both Iran and Iraq in a state of disrepute in the Middle East is one of the cardinal principles of the U.S. Both countries are staunch enemies of Israel and any economic and military breakthrough may equip them with much-needed zeal to wipe out Israel from the region, as earlier promised by Iran.

A National Security Directive (NSD) issued in November 1983 stated that the U.S. would do “whatever was necessary and legal” to prevent Iraq from losing its war with Iran (Galbraith, 2006). Galbraith argued further that Reagan made a serious effort to avoid the Iranian triumph in the war as Iran's control of Iraq could have endangered the supply of oil and might have threatened the pro-American regimes in the Middle East, and would also have upset the Arab-Israeli balance of power (Galbraith, 2006). The war between the two countries ended after eight years without the victory of either side over the other as America wanted. The only beneficiary in this war was America and Israel. The two countries came out from war absorbed economically and militarily. In order to find alternative means of getting out of its financial quagmire, Iraq invaded and occupied Kuwait, and oil-rich Gulf state, in August 1990. With Iraq's occupation of Kuwait, the U.S. policy toward Iraq changed dramatically.

The Iran-Iraq war however, was expensive and eight years of brutal warfare left terrible after-effects on the economy of Iraq. This made Baathist regime desperate for a financial solution to his rapidly failing economic and political situation (Ahmad, 2012). After the Iran-Iraq war, relations between Iraq and Kuwait worsened, especially when Kuwait demanded that the Iraqi government had to repay its debt to the Kuwaiti

government. In turn, Iraq requested that the debt should be forgiven because it had incurred financial commitment during the defense of Arab nationalists and national dignity. The Iraqi Government also accused Kuwait for its aggressive stand against Iraq which included stealing from the *Rumaila* oil-field (Sarah, 1999). Consequently, on 2 August, 1990, under the guidance of his cousin Ali Hassan *Al-Majid*, the Iraqi troops occupied Kuwait after all the Princes and ministers had fled to Saudi Arabia. On 28 August 1990, Saddam decided on the full occupation of Kuwait as the 19th province of Iraq (Ahmad, 2012).

However, western countries recognized the Kurdish claims of the crimes committed by the Ba'th regime against them. It was a late response indeed. According to Gunter, "on the eve of the 1991 War, the U.S. Department of State reported that an estimated 250,000 to 300,000 Kurdish villagers were forcibly relocated in 1988, since 1987, an estimated 500,000 people have been uprooted" (Gunter, 1992). Then, the Kurdish situation was employed to support Western objectives (Anderson & Stansfield, 2004).

President George H. W. Bush made serious efforts to maintain a close relationship with Saddam Hussein's Baathist Iraq. During the George W. Bush presidency, the U.S. would have been prepared to continue to ignore to the internal repression of the Kurds if Saddam chose to play a more responsible role in regional affairs (Freedman & Karsh 1993). But the occupation of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein in 1990 had sparked reactions from the international community, which led to the establishment of Operation of Liberation of Kuwait, also known as Desert Storm. The U.S. was in coalition with other countries mainly from the West and the Middle East. Nevertheless, this operation was not successful in Overthrowing Saddam Hussein's regime (Amiri, 2011). With the outbreak of the Gulf War in 1990, however, the Bush Administration

felt the need to alter its policy of engagement towards Iraq. As noted by John Dumbrell (1997), the U.S. be afraid losing its energy resources in the Middle East if the region fell under the control of an Islamic Iran. Furthermore, Cold War international political atmosphere shaped the U.S. policy towards Iraq and the Kurds during this period (Dumbrell, 1997). Additionally, if the U.S. overtly supported the Kurdish uprising at this phase, it might provoke the Kurds uprising in neighboring countries. The U.S. could ill afford to lose the support of Syria and Turkey, if it wanted to isolate Iraq politically and economically (Gunter, 1996). Secretary Baker echoed this fear, stating “from a practical standpoint, nothing short of direct United States military operations would have guaranteed success by the insurgents” (Baker, 1995, p. 439).

Jalal Talabani visited Washington D.C. again on 10 August 1990, a week after Saddam taken Kuwait. He offered U.S. officials’ military intelligence and cooperation against Saddam's regime in return for military, financial and political support to the Kurds (Galbraith, 2006). The Allied coalition was reluctant to offer open assistance to the Kurds before or during the conflict for fear of presaging the breakup of Iraq, which was contrary to the desires of the coalition. A unified Iraq was also viewed as preventing the possibility of neighboring countries intervening in Iraqi territory, thereby changing the regional balance of power (Peter, 1997). The Kurdish main concern of not wanting to incur the wrath of Iraq's neighbors was justified in comments by Turkey's President *Turgut Ozal*, who noted that Turkey, Iran and Syria would not agree with the emergence of an autonomous Kurdistan in Iraq upon the conclusion of the war (McDowall, 2007). Therefore, the U.S. for the sake of the unity of Iraq as well maintaining good relations with neighboring countries, most importantly, Turkey, the U.S. did not provide any support for Kurds during this period. It needs to be noted that

a junior State Department official meet *Talabani* in a café for discussion. Thus, the U.S. policy towards the Kurds did not change even after Iraq invasion of Kuwait.

5.4.2 The Kurdish Uprising and no-fly zone: 1991-2003

The invasion of Kuwait was seen as a new opportunity and hope for the Kurds to restart military activities against the national government. However, on 3 August 1990, the Iraqi Kurdistan Front (IKF) which included the PUK, KDP, the Iraqi Communist party and also several smaller Kurdish parties, condemned the invasion and demanded Iraq's withdrawal. The Kurdish leaders decided to suspend all operations against the Saddam's regime until the end of the crisis as well (Ghareeb, 1981).

The increasing importance of the Kurdish issue began with Iraq's defeat in the 1991 Gulf War. After the U.S-led coalition expelled Iraqi force from Kuwait the U.S. consequently called on the Iraqi people - including the Kurds - to stage uprising against the government of Saddam Hussein (Muhammed, 2012). During a political speech, Bush called for the uprising of the Iraqi people against their dictator. Though he described this moment in his memoir as an "impulsive ad lib," and the Kurds and Shiites took him seriously and utilized the opportunity to their advantage (Galbraith, 2006). With the coalition's overwhelming defeat of Iraqi land forces on 28 February events inside Iraq began to move rapidly. Almost immediately much of Shi'ite southern Iraq rose in revolt, encouraged by mass sacking from the army. With most of Saddam's surviving forces committed to recovering the major provinces of the south, unrest gathered pace in Kurdistan, amidst *peshmerga* attacks on army units (McDowall, 2007).

In Iraqi Kurdistan, the uprising started on 4 March 1991. Under the unifying banner of the Iraqi Kurdistan Front (IKF), the partisans (*Peshmerga*) of the KDP, PUK and other Kurdish political parties were able to organize the rebellion as they could. Consequently, it led to Iraqi Kurdistan being put under Kurdish control on 19 March 1991 (Bulloch & Morris, 1992). Compared to the uprising in the south, it is clear that the northern uprising under the banner of the Iraqi Kurdistan Front (IKF) was considerably more organized and better formed. Despite that the victory of the rebel movements of the Kurds and Shiites continued for a short period only, largely because the coalition failed to offer necessary assistance to that effect (Ahmad, 2012).

However, the specter of the popular uprising in Iraq caused grave concern in the U.S. State Department. Allowing Iraqi army units and helicopter gunships to crush the uprisings unhindered, the White House subsequently issued a policy paper and stated that “in no way should we associate ourselves with the 60-year-old rebellion in Iraq or oppose Iraq’s legitimate attempts to suppress them” (Muhammed, 2012). The U.S. rhetoric made clear that the nation had decided not to intervene and, thereby, no any attempt to support the rebels (Scharmann, Visholm & Svecova, 2013). The reason can be linked to the strong relation between the U.S. and Turkey. Turkey had become very dynamic in terms of its economy and, thereby, asserting its influence both regionally and globally. Even though Turkey had been depending on its NATO allies, however, its expanding economy and military had helped to strengthen its position (Zanotti, 2012). The other countries in the region, such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the Gulf countries, feared the emergence of a Shiite-dominated regime in Baghdad (Khadduri & Ghareeb, 1997). Therefore, when The Kurds were officially received for the first time in Washington on 7 October 1991 by the Assistant Secretary of the State, Edward

Djerejian, he asserted that the U.S. did not back any particular opposition faction, nor did it aim to shape a government to succeed Saddam Hussein. This was a crucial policy stance for Iraqi people. The U.S., it said, supports peaceful political reform within Iraq, not Iraq 's breakup. The State Department also argued that the meeting with the Iraqi Kurdistan Front delegation took place within the context of broadening the U.S. Government contacts with a wide range of groups opposed to Saddam Hussein regime (Shareef, 2014).

However, for some reasons, the U.S. chose not to intervene in the Internal Iraqi political stalemate. The sole objective of the U.S. was the liberation of Kuwait, and therefore domestic or international support for continuing the war was believed to be eroding (Michael, 2002). Moreover, fear of the disintegration of Iraq was another justification for ending the war quickly. In particular, it was feared that supporting the Kurds against Saddam's regime might have led to an independent Kurdish state in the north of Iraq. This political scenario would affect Turkey's commitment in supporting U.S. policy in the region (Kissinger, 2001). In this respect, Dick Cheney, the then U.S. Secretary of Defense explains,

“If we [the U.S.] had gone to Baghdad we would have been all alone. There wouldn't have been anybody else with us. There would have been a [U.S.] occupation of Iraq. None of the Arab forces that were willing to fight with us in Kuwait were willing to invade Iraq. Once you got to Iraq and took it over ... you could very easily end up seeing pieces of Iraq fly off: part of it, the Syrians would like to have to the west, part of eastern Iraq - the Iranians would like to claim, they fought over it for eight years. In the north you've got the Kurds, and if the Kurds spin loose and join with the Kurds in

Turkey, then you threaten the territorial integrity of Turkey.... It's a quagmire if you go that far and try to take over Iraq” (Cheney, 1994).

President George Bush's assessment of the uprising in 1991 is described in Brent Scowcroft 's memoir as follows,

“Occasionally, he [Bush] indicated the removal of Saddam would be welcome, but for very practical reasons there was never a promise to aid an uprising. While we hoped that a popular revolt or coup would topple Saddam, neither the United States nor the countries of the region wished to see the break-up of the Iraqi state. We were concerned about the long-term balance of power at the head of the gulf. Breaking up Iraq would pose its own destabilizing problems. While Ozal put the priority on Saddam and had a more tolerant view of the Kurds than other Turkish leaders before or since, Turkey—and Iran—objected to the suggestion of an independent Kurdish state. However admirable self- determination for the Kurds or Shiites might have been in principle, the practical aspects of this particular situation dictated the policy. For these reasons alone, the uprisings distressed us ...” (Galbraith, 2006).

However, the interactional media spotlight on Kurdish families freezing to death on snow-covered mountainsides, evoking a swell of sympathy in Western countries. As would be expected the American, British and French governments were compelled by public opinion to help the Kurds. ‘Operation Provide Comfort’ (called ‘Operation Poised Hammer’ by the Americans) was inaugurated to provide aid and ‘safe haven’ camps for Kurdish refugees. Iraqi troops were ordered to remain south of the 36th Parallel and allied combat planes monitored what became a no-fly zone over Kurdish terrain (O’Ballance, 1996). In addition, the unprecedented United Nations Security Council Resolution 688 of April 5, 1991, condemned “the repression of the Iraqi

civilian population . . . in Kurdish populated areas” and demanded “that Iraq . . . immediately end this repression” (Gunter, 2008). As symbolic as it may have been, never before had the Kurds received such official international mention and protection. On 16 April 1991, President George Bush senior declared that U.S. forces would enter Iraqi territory to establish refugee camps, to help feed and provide shelter to Kurdish refugees stranded on the Iraqi-Turkish border. He stated:

“The approach is quite simple: if we cannot get adequate food, medicine, clothing and shelter to the Kurds living in the mountains along the Turkish-Iraq border, we must encourage the Kurds to move to areas in northern Iraq where the geography facilitates, rather than frustrates, such large-scale relief effort. Consistent with UNSC Resolution 688 and working closely with the United Nations and other international organisations and with European partners, I have directed the U.S. military to begin immediately to establish several encampments in northern Iraq where relief supplies for these refugees will be made available in large quantities and distributed in an orderly manner...adequate security will be provided at these temporary sites by U.S., British and French air and ground forces, again consistent with United Nations Security Council Resolution 688...all we are doing is motivated by humanitarian concerns” (Bush., 1991).

It should be noted that following the First Gulf War, the U.S. policy towards Iraq was initially that of containment. This policy was premised on the no-fly zones in both the north and south as well as sanctions with the purpose of preventing Saddam from producing chemical and nuclear weapons and launching any more attacks (Yildiz, 2004). Therefore, it has been argued that the No-fly zone was not really aimed at the Kurds, but at Saddam. The U.S. no longer trusted Saddam and so wanted to contain

him as a regional power. It certainly had a humanitarian element, to protect the Kurds. However, in reality, it was less about humanitarianism and more about pure politics. The U.S. now considered Iraq a nuisance; the objective was now to checkmate its excess. The No-fly zones were one way of weakening Saddam as part of the containment policy (Frank, 2008). After the violence against the Kurdish minority by the Iraqi government forces, the Kurdistan Front, consisting of the two main parties, PUK and KDP, decided to discuss with the Iraqi government about the possibility of improved autonomy (Charountaki, 2011). When the negotiations between Saddam's regime and the Kurdish leadership broke down in 1991, Baghdad withdrew its authority from the major Kurdish areas and imposed its sanctions (Woodward, 2002).

Therefore, when the central government in Baghdad reacted against the Kurds, the Kurdish leadership-initiated elections in the region, which were under the protection of the U.S, Britain and France to fill the administrative vacuum in the region. In fact, there were a number of factors that compelled the Kurds in Iraq to conduct the elections. First, the safe haven provided by the international coalition led by the U.S, Britain and France. Second, the withdrawal of Iraqi administrators from the province of Kurdistan. And finally, the failure of negotiations between the central government and the Kurds. Saddam Hussein argued that the Kurds were unable to manage these areas as such inability would lead to instability in the region. Subsequently, the coalition states urged the central government to extend its influence in the region again.

But Saddam Hussein's regime lost the region when the Kurdistan Front adopted the initiative proposed by Mr. *Masoud Barzani*, the leader of the KDP at the time, to hold general elections in Iraqi Kurdistan (Zubier, 2005). Kurdish elections were held in 1992 while they still enjoyed the limited security provided by the ongoing international

relief effort. The goal was to overcome the growing conflict between the two main parties, to delegate social and administrative tasks, and to create a democratic alternative to the central Iraqi government. From the outset, the allies demanded that they would not recognize the elected Kurdish regime as an independent entity (Backer & Ofteringer, 1996). The U.S. ideologically supportive of the democratic process, welcomed the 1992 parliamentary elections in the Kurdish region after Baghdad withdrew its administration, even though it was an unintended consequence. However, its longstanding commitment to the territorial integrity of Iraq also made it circumspect. On 15 May 1992, the U.S. government declared that the elections would 'help lead to a better life for all the people of northern Iraq ... the elections would deal only with local administrative issues and did not represent a move towards separatism (Yildiz, 2004).

Thus the de facto state was born. To say that its birth had occurred under traumatic circumstances is something of an understatement. Yet this anomalous entity survived and developed institutions of government that served the Kurds in an increasingly efficient manner...However, survive is what the fledgling entity did, although its early years were made as difficult as possible by the activities of turkey, Iran, and Iraq (Anderson & Stansfield, 2004). Anderson & Stansfield are of the view that the main purpose that led to the establishment of Kurdistan Regional Government in northern Iraq can be found in the geopolitical peculiarities of Iraq at the time. The weakness of Saddam, combined with the desperation of the Kurdish people and the attention of the international community, facilitated the emergence of a Kurdish-controlled Kurdistan. In effect, "the Kurds secured their traditional demands for self-government by

precipitous and dangerous accident, rather than by conscious and planned design” (Anderson & Stansfield, 2004).

The leaders of the Kurds were well aware of the U.S. fears of the loss of their allies in the region if it provided any kind of support that may lead to independence. This is especially true of Turkey, a strategic ally of America in the region. After the successful conduct of the elections and eventual formation of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), the parliament therefore promptly took a decision to adopt the Federal system in Iraq. And the central government said the Kurds have no intention of independence from Iraq. However, its own proclamation fell far short of the creation of a state,

“The Kurdish parliament declared a federal union with the rest of Iraq. The communiqué noted that statehood had been an ambition of Kurds since before the 1919 Treaty of Sèvres, which promised some form of state-like self-determination. However, its own proclamation fell far short of the creation of a state: the parliament, in exercising its duties and its right to decide the destiny of Iraqi Kurdistan in accordance with international commitments and conventions, has agreed unanimously to specify the legal relationship with the central government of Iraq as one of federal union within a parliamentary, democratic Iraq based on a multi-party system and respect for human rights” (Yildiz, 2004. p 47).

However, general elections in the Kurdish region in May 1992 saw *Barzani’s* KDP and *Jalal Talabani’s* PUK won an almost-equal share of the Kurdish vote, with no other parties winning seats. As part of equal power-sharing agreement, ministerial posts in the KRG were split evenly between the KDP and the PUK (Fumerton & Wilgenburg, 2015). A tragic development endangering the experiment of building new

organs and institutions was the outbreak of the internal war between the KDP and the PUK who were formally allies in the Kurdistan Front. This war lasted from 1994 until 1997. The immediate cause could be attributed to the disagreement about the customs income between both parties. Therefore, the war was cynically called customs' war (Gürbey, Hofmann & Seyder, 2017). The two main Kurdish political parties—the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)—formally concurred in 1992 to unify their *peshmerga* units and integrate them under the authority of a dedicated Ministry of *Peshmerga* Affairs (Fumerton & Wilgenburg, 2015). But political cooperation between the KDP and the PUK in the framework of a unity government proved difficult. In 1994, violent clashes erupted between the parties over sharing customs revenues, power, and territory (Fumerton & Wilgenburg, 2015). As a result of this internal Kurdish fighting, there were two separate camps of government in Iraqi Kurdistan after 1994; the KDP's in Irbil and the PUK's in *Sulaymaniya*. Inevitably, the resultant instability and power vacuum drew the attentions of neighboring Turkey and Iran as well as the U.S, Syria, and, of course, Iraq (Gottlieb, 2017).

The U.S. policy towards the Iraqi Kurds became more cumbersome when Barzani's KDP and Talabani's PUK began to fight each other in 1994. The U.S. found itself in a difficult position in protecting the Iraqi Kurds through the no-fly zone, when the Iraqi Kurds were battling each other (Gunter, 2004). The U.S, which had been trying to mediate in the conflict years before, was anxious to put an end to the senseless war. The U.S. Minister of foreign affairs, Albright, intervened and mediated personally. The successful mediation by the U.S. "normalized" the situation. In September 1998, the conflict finally came to end through the U.S.'s intensive mediation. *Masoud*

Barzani and *Jalal Talabani* eagerly signed the peace treaty in Washington (Gürbey, Hofmann & Seyder, 2017). With peace established, the parties resumed shared governance of Iraqi Kurdistan through the KRG, and they promised to unify their *peshmerga* forces under the Regional Guard Brigades. Despite this facade of unity, the KRG remained divided between two zones of control from 1996 to 2006. The PUK controlled a green zone encompassing *Sulaymaniyah* Province, while the KDP controlled a yellow zone spanning Erbil and *Dohuk* Provinces. But to ensure continued the U.S. supported, both parties expressed public assistance for unifying their *peshmerga* forces under one depoliticized body (Fumerton & Wilgenburg, 2015). Despite the KDP and PUK fighting, Iraqi Kurdistan became relatively prosperous through the 13 percent Iraqi oil money revenue allowed by the United Nations and the no-fly zone protection. The KDP and PUK political parties have provided Iraqi Kurdistan with functioning police, military, economic freedom, educational opportunities, stable electricity supplies, judicial reforms based on the rule of law, and a functioning communications network. Iraqi Kurds, though far from being a paradise, is the most stable area in post Saddam Iraq (Dewhurst, 2006).

Denise Natali argues,

“that no one would have imagined back then that the isolated and unstable Kurdistan Region would have become one of the most productive areas of the country.... Nor could it have been realistically envisioned that the once unrecognized KRG would have assumed a key role in keeping Iraq together and ensuring regional stability. Had the Kurdish north remained in the civil war that shook the region from 1994 to 1998, then the contemporary political and economic situation probably would have been easier to explain” (Natali, 2010).

David McDowall argues that for the greater part of the 1990s it could be said that the fate of Iraqi Kurds was largely determined by some interacting factors. These, according to him, were,

“First, the state of the Kurdish economy under UN and Iraqi embargo; second, the rivalry between the KDP and PUK which resulted in the de facto partition of the liberated area for much of the decade; third, the American determination to use the region it was protecting as a springboard for the overthrow of Saddam Husain, an objective with which it became increasingly obsessed, and as a lever in its policy of 'dual containment' (of Iraq and Iran); fourth, the PKK's use (or abuse) of Iraqi Kurdish territory to prosecute its war on Turkey; fifth, Baghdad's concern to bring the Kurdish region back within its orbit and its fear that the U.S., Turkey, Iran and Syria were all seeking to co-opt part or all of the Kurdish population against it; sixth, the various concerns of Iraq's northern regional neighbors’: Turkey, anxious to extirpate the PKK and to prevent the emergence of a vibrant Kurdish autonomous region on its south-eastern border; Iran and Syria anxious to thwart U.S. dual containment, including its gambit to encircle the Fertile Crescent by informal military alliance between Israel, Turkey and itself” (McDowall, 2007. p. 387).

The Washington agreement had a major impact on ending the fighting between the two major parties, KDP and PUK in the region. Both parties took the U.S. warning seriously as U.S. warned that the support given is depended on commitment to the cease-fire agreement. Thus, after the Washington Convention of 1998, the two major Kurdish parties began a new era of peaceful governance in Iraqi Kurdistan. The Kurdish leaderships realized that they cannot build institutions of state only through dialogue by excluding the other. Thus, a new phase began in Iraq's Kurdistan wherein

both parties participated in building the institutions of the state and endeavored to eliminate the effects of the civil war. This move had a significant impact on the progress of the Kurdish issue in the international community. In addition, they came to realize that the sole beneficiary of this war was the enemies of the Kurds from the region who had been working night and day to prolong the war to their own interest. The 21st century represented a remarkable development in the U.S. foreign policy towards the Kurds. The ties between the U.S. and the Kurds became more institutionalized especially after the events of 9/11 (Scharmann, Visholm & Svecova, 2013). The attacks of 9/11 were a milestone in the U.S. relations with both Iraq and its Kurds national elements. The event of 9/11 changed the prospects of Iraqi Kurdistan, giving it important political leverage in the making of the U.S foreign policy. The Kurdish leadership had already evolved close relationship with Bush Administration neoconservatives. They were aware that a U.S. invasion of Iraq was impending (O'Leary, 2005). The U.S. - Iraqi Kurds relations moved towards more cooperation and the U.S. advertised the credentials of Kurds as an ideological example of democracy in Iraq. However, the U.S. had again been aware of the Turkish reactions in this regard. This could be seen in a manner U.S. reacted to Kurds' independence struggle. The U.S. informed that the Kurds would benefit if supporting U.S. goals as long as the Kurds keep silent about national aspirations. However, the relations between the U.S. and Turkey became hostile as Turkey turn down the U.S. proposal in military invasion of Iraq. Eventually, the U.S. was left with only option of dependent on the Kurds (Scharmann, Visholm & Svecova, 2013). The Turkish parliament in his reaction and hostility to the U.S. policy towards Kurds in Iraq refused to allow U.S. troops to pass through its territory before the U.S invasion of Iraq began. In this case, the Kurds territory in the north of Iraq was utilized instead and such tightened the

relationship between Kurds and the U.S. Thus, the Iraqi Kurds gave all necessary supports to the U.S. forces in its invasion of Iraq.

5.5 U.S. Policy of Engagement towards Kurds, 2003-2014

Before the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Iraqi Kurds had form part of a neoconservative mission to overthrow Saddam Hussein regime under George W. Bush's administration and in such an instance Kurdish interests had greatly been enhanced. It needs to be stressed here that the support for the Kurds by neoconservative was multidimensional. According to Muhammad,

“the rationale behind neoconservative support for the Iraqi Kurds was not only to seek Kurdish support to remove Saddam Hussein, but also to maintain stability in a post-Saddam Iraq and since then, the U.S.-Iraqi Kurdish relationship has become stronger and more institutionalised, based on mutual interests” (Muhammed, 2012).

The Iraqi Kurds benefitted most in the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. Before the invasion in 2003, the U.S. was intending to invade northern Iraq from Turkey, along with 40,000 Turkish troops. The Kurds were not happy at this, contemplating that once the Turks were in northern Iraq it would be difficult to get them out. Once the Turkish parliament voted against such a move the Kurdish heaved a sigh of relief as such participation may endanger Kurds progress towards emancipation (Cockburn, 2013). The 2003 U.S.-led war on Iraq turned the regional balance of power upside down and deeply affected the attitudes and politics of the neighboring countries and the entire Arab world (Rogg & Rimscha, 2007).

The U.S policy towards Iraqi Kurds has changed totally since the invasion of Iraq in 2003, and a new phase of relations began between both parties. Iraqi Kurds became U.S. allies as they were the only ones in the region who welcomed the U.S. invasion and effectively participated in the fighting alongside U.S. forces (Abdullah, 2013). In addition, for the first time since the creation of Iraq, the Iraqi Kurdish has a powerful ally in the name of U.S. This sudden surge in Kurds diplomatic triumph could be rightly attributed to Turkey's refusal to allow the U.S. to launch military attack on Iraq. Such refusal made the Iraqi Kurds suddenly brought the Kurds to the fore to play the role of U.S. ally, a novel position they anxiously and successfully assumed (Gunter, 2004). This new diplomatic and political situation was clearly illustrated in July 2003, when the U.S. apprehended some 11 Turkish commandos in *Sulaymaniya* apparently seeking to carry out acts that would undermine the peaceful atmosphere of the de facto Kurdish government and state in northern Iraq. Hitherto, as the strategic ally of the U.S., Turkey had all what it took to do practically anything it wanted to in northern Iraq. The "*Sulaymaniya* incident" caused what a top Turkish general termed the "worst crisis of confidence" (Birch, 2003). The invasion therefore marked watershed in the U.S.-Kurdish relations. After the invasion, for the first time in recent history, the Iraqi Kurds were playing an ever-increasing role in Baghdad. The U.S. government was relying on the Kurds to serve their interests in Iraq, to be their advocates within domestic Iraqi deliberations and decisions as they related to Iraq 's relations with the U.S. (Shareef, 2010). The Kurds' desire to secure and consolidate the freedoms they enjoyed in the decade prior to the U.S. invasion of Iraq has reshaped U.S.-Iraqi Kurdish relations in many ways. In order to keep Iraq united with a strong central government, U.S. policy ensured that the Kurds did not seek independence, the ultimate foreign policy decision of the U.S. in Iraq (Rafaat, 2007).

However, on April 9, 2003 Iraq entered a new phase with the fall of the statue of Saddam Hussein in the courtyard of *Verdos* in central Baghdad. Such statue dismantling announced the end of the Baath regime in Iraq, which ruled Iraq for nearly 40 years with ruthlessness. The Kurds and Shiites were more affected by the regime. Therefore, both of them breathed a sigh of relief with the final demise of the regime. The first step embarked upon by the Americans in Iraq was the appointment of a civilian governor to Iraq to ensure and supervise the return of democracy. The Governor assumed office and announced himself as occupier, a declaration that subsequently embarrassed the Kurds. The Kurds considered the Americans to be liberators not occupiers as it freed them from the injustice of Saddam Hussein. The corollary of the occupation by the U.S. was the setting up of an occupation structure based on concerns that immediate sovereignty would favor established Islamist and pro-Iranian factions over nascent pro-Western secular parties (Katzman, 2015).

In April 2003, the civilian responsibility for post-war Iraq was assigned to the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA), administered by a retired general, Jay Garner, a close ally of the Kurds, under the authority of the Pentagon. Before the invasion, the planning focused on the developing a capacity for disaster management, the ability to cope with mass movements of displaced people, widespread food shortages and the consequences of Weapon of Mass Destruction (WMD) use of which none happened (Dodge, 2005). All these arrangements were quickly removed in favor of Paul Bremer, who disbanded Iraqi army and abolished Baath Party. The corollary of such arrangement was the kick start of virulent sectarian insurgency, of which but KRG region was not involved (Gunter, 2011).

In July 2003, Bremer put an end to Iraqi transition negotiations and appointed a non-sovereign Iraqi advisory body which comprised the 25-member Iraq Governing Council (IGC). U.S. and Iraqi negotiators, advised by a wide range of international officials and experts, drafted a Transitional Administrative Law, an interim constitutional document which became effective on March 4, 2004 (Katzman, 2015). It was founded by and served under the U.S.-led Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) (Gunter, 2011). The Transitional Administrative Law agreed in March 2004 set a clear timetable for progress towards democracy and stated clearly that national elections must be held no later than the end of January 2005. The election was expected to elect a 275-member assembly, which was scheduled to serve for a year. During that time, it will ratify the choice of a president and two deputies, who will in turn choose one of the assembly's members to serve as Prime Minister. The assembly's main responsibility, however, is to draft a constitution by the middle of August 2005. This constitution will be submitted to a referendum no later than October 2005, and subsequently employed in the conduct of elections for a complete constitutional government by the middle of December. This government will assume office by the end of 2005 (Dodge, 2005). A governing council was established in order to return Iraq to normalcy following Operation Iraqi Freedom. Willing to show Iraq as a success story in the Middle East, the Bush administration advisers arguably hand-picked the members who would lead Iraq until a more democratic government could be successfully entrenched. The governing council was totally in opposition to what obtained during the previous Ba'athist regime (Cyrus, 2012). The IGC consisted of approximately 25 members representing various Iraqi political, tribal leaders and religious who were appointed by the CPA (Gunter, 2011). The Iraqi Governing Council included: 13 Shiites, 5 Sunnis, 5 Kurds and among the 25 representatives, 3

were female (Cyrus, 2012). It needs to be said here that “an obvious reason for the diverse make-up of the council was due to the fact that the U.S. held de-facto power over Iraq during this time and the governing council was a symbol of inclusive politics in a new Iraq” (Cyrus, 2012).

The governing council soon became the Iraq Interim Government under The Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period (TAL) which served as Iraq’s first provisional constitution when it was passed on March 8, 2004. Under this new government, the Kurdish participation bolstered with the inclusion of Kurds in key cabinet positions (Cyrus, 2012). Thus, The Kurds extracted post-Saddam national politics on an equal footing with Iraq’s Arabs for the first time ever by participating in a U.S.-led occupation administration (Coalition Provisional Authority, CPA) (Katzman, 2009).

The Kurds were optimistic about the post-Saddam Hussein Iraq; they thought that the new Iraq would be for all Iraqis. Therefore, the Kurdish leaders in Baghdad, especially *Jalal Talabani* and *Hishyar Zebari*, worked with all sincerity in order to get Iraq out of occupation. It was later discovered to be a costly mistake to have done that.

In this regard, Borhanedin Yassin paid particular attention to this big strategic mistake of the Kurdish leaders, especially *Jalal Talabani*, and *Hoshyar Zebari* when they were working strenuously to liberate Iraq out of Chapter VII of the UN Security Council. In turn, that meant the end of the Security Council Resolutions 688 and 986. In addition, Chapter VII meant the return of full sovereignty to Iraq. In a sense, however, the Kurds, according to Resolution 986, were the biggest beneficiaries, having been allocated 13 percent of revenues for a Kurdistan Region under direct UN control (Ahmad, 2012).

Although prior to the 2003 Invasion, the Iraqi Kurds was considered an autonomous region especially with the UN protected no-fly zones. The interim government during this period formally recognized the provisional constitution that the Kurdistan Regional Government drafted in 1972 (Katzman, 2015). The Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) was signed by the Interim Governing Council of Iraq as a Supreme Law of Iraq during the transitional period. Its main aim was to evolve a tool to establish a representative and sovereign Iraqi government that would protect fundamental rights and provide a stable political structure (Ahmad, 2012).

An important issue in the debate on returning sovereignty to Iraq is that when sovereignty was officially returned to the new Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) on 30 June 2004, UNSCR 1546 deliberately did not refer to the TAL, or to the Kurdistan Region (Anderson & Stansfield, 2009). Therefore, Iraqi Kurdish saw this UN resolution as being biased against their interests because it did not specifically mention the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) that protected the newly-won Kurdish freedom and rights regarding federalism (Gunter, 2011). It is plausible to see this as a way of avoiding further political complications. However, the Kurds managed to obtain several powerful ministerial posts. These included Deputy Prime Minister for National Security, Barham Salih, PUK, one of the two vice-presidencies, Rowsch Shawais, KDP, and Foreign Minister, Hoshiyar Zebari, KDP, (Ahmad, 2012). The Kurdish leadership realized that America could not succeed in building a new Iraq without the Kurds' involvement in the political process. Thus, the Kurds tried to exploit this opportunity to achieve the greatest gains for their people. Therefore, Barazani and Talabani threatened to withdraw from involving in governmental administration and to refuse to take part in the proposed national elections. This step

was tantamount to secession attempt. It should be noted that the tactics of taking part in national politics while using the threat of secession as the most potent bargaining card, remains crucial to the KDP and PUK's post-election strategy (Dodge, 2005). Thus, both the KDP and PUK tried to secure the gains made by their parties over the 1990s by arguing for an ethnically based federalism. The federalism that will take care of interest of each group within the Iraq federation, this was opposed by the Shia parties, which have long favored a unitary state (Dodge, 2005).

After Saddam's fall, both Barazani and Talabani realized that the only way to defend their own interests and the status quo in the north was to involve in politics in Baghdad, and negotiate on the national issue. To this end, both leaders became country-wide political figures. The negotiations surrounding the Transitional Administrative Law in the first few months of 2004 exemplified their tactics and goals, as well as the tensions involved in their approach (Dodge, 2005). On the other hand, Sunni Arab Iraqis did not deal with the new reality of Iraq and did not assimilate the changes that took place in Iraq, boycotted the elections and the constitution drafting committee. Romano & Mehmet argues that,

“non-sectarian Iraqi groups had yet to manifest themselves in a powerful form, this left only the Kurds to stand up for these principles as the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) and then the Constitution were being negotiated. The Kurds were so successful in the constitutional drafting and negotiating process, in fact, that many of their critics began referring to the 2005 Constitution as the “Kurdish Constitution” (Romano & Mehmet, 2014).

The Kurds have achieved many of their goals and objectives in the Permanent Iraqi Constitution. One of such is the recognition given to the Iraqi Kurdistan Region where Article 117 states thus: “This Constitution, upon coming into force, shall recognize the region of Kurdistan, along with its existing authorities, as a federal region” (Iraqi Constitution, 2005). In addition, Article 140, which addresses the issue of the disputed areas (Kirkuk, Sinjar and Khankin ... etc.), goes thus:

“The executive authority shall undertake the necessary steps to complete the implementation of the requirements of all subparagraphs of Article 58 of the Transitional Administrative Law. Second: The responsibility placed upon the executive branch of the Iraqi Transitional Government stipulated in Article 58 of the Transitional Administrative Law shall extend and continue to the executive authority elected in accordance with this Constitution, provided that it accomplishes completely (normalization and census and concludes with a referendum in Kirkuk and other disputed territories to determine the will of their citizens), by a date not to exceed the 31st of December 2007” (Iraqi Constitution, 2005).

Indeed, the issue of Arab-Kurdish tensions, which are mainly over disputed territories and oil were adequately addressed by the constitution. (Muhammed, 2012). The issue of disputed territories in post-war Iraq is of great significance to the U.S. and is pivotal to Iraq's stability. Kirkuk, in particular, is a priority. Apart from given consideration to Turkey's concerns over an emerging Kurdish state, Kirkuk, the same problems of self-rule compounded by historical grievances and competing demands for resources exist there now just as they did across Iraq previously (Muhammed, 2012). Cengiz Candar, Chief Columnist for Referans Daily Newspaper and Turkish Daily News argue that,

“Any political development in Iraq which would lead to an independent Kurdish state will have an impact on Turkey. He warned that if Kirkuk is incorporated into Kurdistan, which is recognized by the Iraqi constitution, that it would be a formidable source of support for an independent Kurdistan. The economic element of Kirkuk, in that if it succeeded to Kurdistan, would provide the necessary economic infrastructure for Kurdistan to become sustainable” (Co-sponsors, 2007).

In effect, both Iraq and Turkey have grave concern about the future of Kurds within their territories and such concern has been exploited by would-be regional and international powers to manipulate the Kurds.

5.6 Conclusion

Chapter Five is concerned with the relationship between the United States and the Iraqi Kurds in the period 1961 - 2014. The researcher argues the relationship between the two parties passed through three stages during this period. The first stage was between 1961-1975 and the second stage was between 1990-2003. The last stage was between 2003-2014 when the ISIS emerged and threatened the Kurdistan Region of Iraq coming near to the capital of the Kurdistan Region, Erbil. The study in this chapter is focused on the reactions that occurred during these stages and the factors that led American to support the Kurds in the September 11, 1961 revolution and the reasons that led America to abandon their revolution.

However, when British influence in the Middle East declined, America gradually began to influence the region and began showing interest in the Kurds. According to the State Department documents published on April 4, 1954, the U.S. interest in Kurds dates back to the early 1950s during the Cold War, where diplomats from the U.S.

Embassy in Baghdad began to visit Kurdistan and distributed advertising and information as propaganda to influence the Kurds to keep them far away from the Soviet influence. This anxiety was present in America during the Cold War. "A central objective of our strategy was to reduce Soviet influence," Kissinger said in his memoirs. America was also afraid of the historical rapprochement between the Kurds and the Soviets, where the Soviet had held Mullah Mustafa Barzani for 12 years, when he came to escape from the oppression of Iran and Iraq after the collapse of the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad in Iran in 1946. He returned to Iraq after the revolution of AbdulKarim Qasim on July 14, 1958 when the latter gave him a call to return to Iraq to open a new page of relations between the Kurds and the Iraqi government. The U.S. diplomats began contact with the Kurds at the beginning of the sixties when America pressured its allies in the region, Iran and Israel to provide support for the Kurdish revolution, when it began on September 11th 1961. Iran used Kurdish card to put pressure on Baghdad to retrieve what it lost in the 1937 treaty when Iraq gave full sovereignty over the Shatt al-Arab.

Therefore, the study concluded on the basis of documents mentioned by the researcher, which was declassified that one of the main factors that led America to support the Kurds at that time was because of the containment of the Soviet and prevented the Kurds from entering into the Soviet influence. Especially after Iraq came out from Baghdad's alliance when the Communists came to power in Iraq in 1958. while Iran and Israel soon abandoned the Kurds and stopped its support to them after the Shah of Iran signed the Algiers Agreement on March 6, 1975, with Saddam Hussein, the Vice President of Iraq, according to this agreement Hussein relinquished part of Iraq's

sovereignty over the Shatt al-Arab for Iran, provided that it withdraws its support from the Kurdish revolution.

Thus, the Kurdish revolution collapsed in 1975 and America did nothing. Although Barzani wrote to Kissinger and asked for support but he did not respond. As a result, the Kurds became victims of the cold war between the great powers. It turned out that this support provided to the Kurds because it served U.S. interests when this support does not serve U.S. interests, they abandon the Kurds, where America saw that the growing of the Kurdish role in Iraq would disturb the major American allies in the region Iran and Turkey. These countries believed that the rise of the Kurds will destabilize their countries. Therefore, America was not ready to support the Kurds at the expense of its major allies in the region; consequently, America did not move and abandoned them.

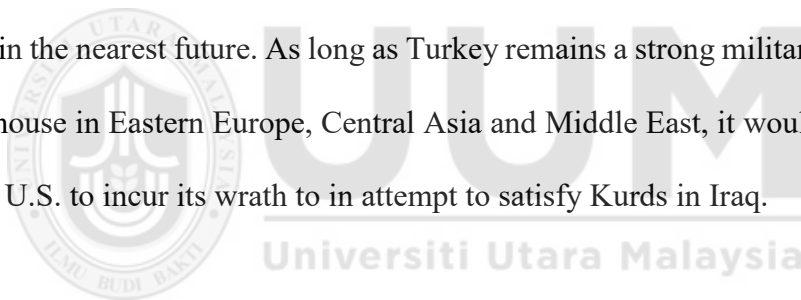
In 1991, after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, the Kurds had another chance when the U.S. encouraged the Kurds to rise up against Saddam Hussein's regime. Kurds rose up against the regime and took control of all Kurdish-majority provinces, including the oil-rich city of Kirkuk. But soon the U.S. gave the green light to the regime of Saddam and his army to regain control over all land and the Kurds displaced again to the mountains bordering the Iranian-Turkish border and many of them simply died in cold weather; after which came calls to the international community to intervene, especially France, Britain and America to impose no-fly zone. Subsequently Baghdad withdrew its administrative departments from Kurdish areas. It, then, helped the Kurds to hold elections and formatted the Kurdistan Regional Government, the KRG. The reasons behind the American abandonment of the Kurds this time were the same as the previous reasons; Where America feared that it would lose its allies in the region

including Turkey and the Arab states if it supports the Kurds. Therefore, it was in its interest not to support the Kurds except within the limits of humanitarian assistance.

However, after 2003, the American position changed with regard to the Kurds, and the Kurds became an indispensable ally, especially after the Turkish parliament rejected the passage of U.S. forces across Turkish territory to open the northern front to get rid of Saddam Hussein's regime. Turkey accused America of seeking to create a Kurdish state in Iraq. The Kurds exploited this gap in the relationship between the two countries and the Kurds received the American soldiers with flowers. The Kurds gained a lot during this period and after the fall of the Baathist regime where a permanent constitution was established for Iraq, the new constitution was recognized in the Kurdistan Region. The new constitution laid out the solution for the disputed areas in article 140. Despite the fact that the article is not applied as stipulated by the constitution, it remains the best solution to resolve this dispute. In addition, the Kurds put the Kurdish veto in the new constitution as the Arabs call it when the Constitution established an article that no constitutional amendment can be passed if it is rejected by three governorates.

The chapter finally concludes that, the maintenance of security and stability of Iraq is one of the priorities of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. The U.S. is also aware of the need to protect the security and territorial integrity of its strategic ally in the region, Turkey. The U.S. realized that it will be difficult to provide security and stability in Iraq and the entire region without Iraqi Kurdistan. Therefore, it became clear to American policymakers that Kurds have become an important player in the American policy in Iraq and the Middle East; therefore, they are indispensable to the U.S. in an attempt at maintaining security and stability in the region. Without doubt,

after the U.S. occupation of Iraq in 2003, Iraqi Kurds occupies an important position in the foreign policy direction of the U.S. in Iraq. This improvement was brought to the fore when in 2007 the President of Iraqi Kurdistan region *Massoud Barzani*, made a visit to Washington. He was warmly received by President George W. Bush. During the press conference which followed the meeting, President Bush referred to *Barzani* as Mr. President. This level of honor which was bestowed on Kurds by the U.S. President towards the *Barzani* angered Turkish officials. In an attempt at dousing the diplomatic tension, the U.S. clearly reminded Turkey of the importance of Kurds to the Turkish investment. More than 2000 Turkish companies invest in the Iraqi Kurdistan. Whatever the case, it needs to be said that the interests of the U.S., Turkey and Iraq unity will no doubt dictate the direction of the U.S. foreign policy towards the Kurds in the nearest future. As long as Turkey remains a strong military and economic powerhouse in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Middle East, it would be impossible for the U.S. to incur its wrath to in attempt to satisfy Kurds in Iraq.



CHAPTER SIX

EMERGENCE OF ISIS AND THE U.S. FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS THE IRAQI KURDS

6.1 Introduction

Upon the arrival of ISIS, the U.S. foreign policy regarding the Iraqi Kurds consist of two different phases. The first phase started with the attack on Kurdistan Regional by ISIS leading to the defeat of Mosul. This phase incidentally happened before the referendum of September 25, 2017. The attack on Mosul prompted the U.S. President Barak Obama to declare Erbil as a red line for the U.S. In this scenario, the U.S. government started defending the region by prohibiting the ISIS from advancing to Erbil and by supporting KGRI, in military and political terms. The second phase of the U.S. foreign policy regarding the Kurds started after the referendum that was held in Kurdistan. This phase is known as the post-referendum phase. The relationship totally changed from phase one as the U.S. withdrew its support for the Kurds, in particular, politically. The sudden change in policy shocked the Kurds as it was unexpected of the U.S. in view of the sacrifice by the *Peshmerga* while fighting ISIS. When the Popular Mobilisation Forces (*al-hashd alshaebi*) loyal to Iranian Revolutionary Guards and Iraqi army attacked the Kurds, the U.S. left the Kurds on their own leaving the Kurds to feel disappointed and despondent with the U.S. This chapter therefore attempts to shed light on these two stages briefly mentioned above. It seeks to explore reasons that led U.S. government to abandon the Kurds at that critical moment and

what is the U.S. perspective on the Kurdish independence and Referendum? These are the most important issues that will be discussed and explored in this chapter

6.2 The Islamic State organization (ISIS)

The Islamic State (IS, aka the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, ISIL/ISIS, or the Arabic acronym Daesh) is an intercontinental Sunni Islamist insurgent and terrorist group that controls large areas of Iraq and Syria, has adherents in several other countries, and disrupts regional and international security with violence and terrorism (Blanchard & Humud, 2015). IS emerged from previous iterations of what is typically called Al Qaida in Iraq (AQI) and now competes with Al Qaida for dominance of various regional and global radical Salafi-Jihadi networks. It is organized hierarchically in Iraq and Syria but with overlapping local and international networks of terrorist like cells (Connable, Lander & Jackson, 2017). In June 2014, ISIS officially announced the establishment of a "caliphate" - a country ruled in accordance with Islamic law, or Sharia, by God's deputy on Earth, or caliph. It has requested that Muslims across the world swear allegiance to its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi - and migrate to land under its driving. ISIS has called other jihadist groups worldwide to accept its supreme authority as well. (BBC news, 2015). The so-called caliphate is split into emirates, or princedoms, both within Iraq and Syria and in its affiliate locations in Nigeria, Libya, Afghanistan, and elsewhere (Connable, Lander & Jackson, 2017). ISIS applies Sharia Law, firmed in eighth-century Islam [as they believe], to found a society that mirrors the area's ancient past. ISIS is known for murder dozens of people at a time and carrying out public executions, crucifixions and other acts. the group employs modern materials such as social media to elevate reactionary politics and religious fundamentalism. combatants are ravaging holy sites and priceless antiquities even as their leaders propagate a return to the early days of Islam (CNN World, 2019).

However, ISIS was succeeded in imposing itself as a main player in the complex Syrian equation in a short time, which many rate a record time (Anjarini, 2013). ISIS protruded as a threat to the region and international community amid more than a decade of conflict in Iraq and Syria. As of late 2015, ISIS drove tens of thousands of fighters in Iraq and Syria, and was received commitments of upholding from affiliate groups in various states across the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia(Blanchard & Humud, 2015). In 2014, the group took control more than 34,000 square miles in Syria and Iraq, from the Mediterranean coast to south of Baghdad. In 2016, the U.S. calculated that the group had lost 40% of its 34,000 square miles of land. In 2015, the group was believed to be holding 3,500 people as slaves, according to a UN report. Most of the enslaved were women and children from the Yazidi community, but some were from other ethnic and religious minority communities(CNN World, 2019). the group's income derives from oil production and smuggling, taxes, ransoms from kidnappings, selling stolen artifacts, extortion and controlling crops(Ibid).

6.2.1 The Ideological Debate of ISIS and its Evolution

Drake argued ideologies are “the beliefs, values, principles, and objectives-however ill-defined or tenuous-by which a group defines its distinctive political identity and aims.”(Abedin, 2019. p 145) More to the point, ideologies are “links between thoughts, beliefs and myths on the one hand, and action on the other hand.”(Moghadam, 2008: P 14) Modern ideologies fulfill four fundamental functions: they raise awareness, diagnose the situation, form an identity, and formulate a remedy. All of them can be applied to the ideology of ISIS. The ideology of ISIS can be described as Salafi-Jihad(Abedin, 2019). Given the importance and impact of ideology, ISIS adopted Salafi-jihadist to invite people to join them. It is a term given since the end of the eighties in the last century to some groups of political Islam that adopt jihad as a

method of change. This trend declares that jihad is one of its pillars, and that the jihad that must be a concrete duty on Muslims is applied against the occupying enemy and against the ruling regime that replaces Islamic law, which governs positive laws, or the system that exaggerates injustice and oppression (Sadat, 2017). Salafi-jihadist based on two criteria. First, the group emphasizes the importance of returning to a “pure” Islam, that of the *Salaf*, the pious ancestors. Second, the group or individual believes that violent jihad is *Fard ‘ayn in-fard ‘ayn* (a personal religious duty) (Jones, 2014). *Fard ‘ayn* includes tasks every Muslim is required to perform, such as *zakat* (almsgiving), *hajj* (the pilgrimage to Mecca), *salat* (daily prayers), *sawm* (fasting during Ramada), and the *shahada* (accepting Muhammad as God’s messenger) (Jones et al., 2018). The imperative of jihad can be of two types. When it consists in a war of expansion out of the territory of Islam, it 'constitutes a duty of collective obligation (*fard kifaya*): some Muslims assure its execution, while the others are excused from it'. On the other hand, “when the Muslims are attacked, the war becomes a defensive conflict; it then constitutes a duty of individual obligation (*fard ‘ayn*) for all the faithful, even those who have not been personally attacked” (Kepel, 1988. P 202).

Salafists define Islam as anything that was explicitly condoned by Muhammad and that was upheld by his first three generations of Sunni followers (until the ninth century). This view is based on a hadith, a statement of Muhammad's, in which he allegedly said that "the best of my community is my generation, then those who follow them, then those who follow them." By extension, anything that appeared after that -- and anything Muhammad did not explicitly condone -- is considered un-Islamic, an extremely broad category (Olidort, 2015). Therefore, Salafists deem Western-style democracy and modernity not only fundamentally irreconcilable with Islam, but the

main pollutants of the Arab civilization, which after World War I stagnated under the illegitimate and “apostate” regimes in Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Iraq(Weiss, & Hassan, 2015). Of course, secular political ideologies, nation-states, political parties, and so on are all, by this definition, un-Islamic. In short, whereas the Muslim Brotherhood's Islamism accommodates the trappings of modern political life, the Salafists' does not(Olidort, 2015).

Salafi-jihadists employ religious rhetoric and symbols to advance their cause. Although they selectively pick from the Islamic tradition only those elements that advance their narrow agenda, they nevertheless draw from the same religious sources that inform the lives and practices of more than a billion other Muslims. It is for that reason that ordinary Muslims — not to speak of non-Muslims — find it particularly difficult and dangerous to challenge Salafi-jihadists without running the risk of being accused of targeting Islam as a whole(Moghadam, 2008). In addition, in its spirit, Salafi-Jihad contends that the Muslim world is suffering from a plot by the West, therefore, it advocates the return to the practices and beliefs of the first three-generation of Muslims, the Salaf al-Salih (pious ancestors), by means of violent jihad(Abedin, 2019). Therefore, you can say that jihadist Salafism, the combination of “respect for the sacred texts in their most literal form (with) an absolute commitment to jihad.” (Kepel, 1988).

However, the Islamic State’s direct ideological and organizational roots lie in the forces built and led by the late Abu Musab al Zarqawi in Iraq from 2002 through 2006—Tawhid wal Jihad (Monotheism and Jihad) and Al Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers (aka Al Qaeda in Iraq, or AQ-I). (Blanchard & Humud, 2015). In the spring of 1989, a hotheaded Jordanian street-tough-turned-jihadist, Abu Mus’ab al-

Zarqawi made his way from *Hayatabad* eastward into the city of Khost, Afghanistan, arriving just in time to see the Red Army defeated. Rather than return to Jordan as the man who had missed the holy war, he stayed on in the North-West Frontier region until 1993, establishing more useful contacts among those vying to determine the fate of a post-Soviet Afghanistan(Weiss, & Hassan, 2015). In 2004, a year after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, Zarqawi pledged allegiance to Osama Bin Laden and formed al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), which became a major force in the insurgency(BBC news, 2015). Zarqawi especially disliked the Shi'a, one of the two major sects in Islam. Zarqawi, a Sunni, disagreed with the Shi'i doctrine that Muhammad's son-in-law and some of his male descendants were infallible and the only legitimate political and religious leaders of the early Muslim community. He also believed the modern Shi'i state of Iran colluded with the West to oppress Sunnis(Mccants, 2015).

Zarqawi took advantage of Sunni animosity toward U.S. forces and feelings of disenfranchisement at the hands of Iraq's Shiites and Kurds to advance a uniquely sectarian agenda that differed from Al Qaeda's in important ways. Some experts attribute Sunni resentment to the use by some Shiites' of the democratic political process to monopolize political power in Iraq(Blanchard & Humud, 2015). After Zarqawi's death in 2006, AQI created an umbrella organization, Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) (BBC news, 2015), but it is too simplistic to say that ISIS was Zarqawi's brainchild. Experts who closely tracked Zarqawi's early activism agree that the Jordanian had no clear sectarian vision before he arrived in Iraq, and his ideas before that did not depart from mainstream jihadist worldviews(Hassan, 2018). al-Zarqawi was charismatic but an intellectual lightweight. "He never struck me as intelligent," Mohammed al-Dweik, al- Zarqawi's future lawyer, said years later.(Weiss, & Hassan,

2015). Nada Bakos, a former CIA analyst and the author of the forthcoming *The Targeter: My Life in the CIA, on the Hunt for the Godfather of ISIS*, argues that Zarqawi “was a good tactician, not a strategic thinker, and he was responding to the circumstances around him. People near him built the strategy of what he wanted to achieve.”(Bakos, 2019)

After the United States killed Zarqawi on June 7, 2006, al-Qaeda in Iraq carried out its leader’s dying wish. Rather than wait to establish the Islamic state until after the Americans withdrew and the Sunni masses backed the project, as Bin Laden and Zawahiri wanted, the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) was proclaimed on October 15, 2006. The al- Qaeda front group that made the announcement insisted that Muslims in Iraq pledge allegiance to a certain Abu Umar al-Baghdadi and acknowledge him as “commander of the faithful.” No one had ever heard of him, not even other jihadists(Mccants, 2015). While Abu Umar al-Baghdadi, the new emir of the Islamic State of Iraq(ISI) with Masri’s, who was killed in the Masri’s hut mud in a joint raid American and Iraqi forces in April 2010(Mccants, 2015). The Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) announced the appointment of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as a new leader of the faithful in May 2010(*“Bayan min Majlis Shura Dawlat al-’Iraq al-Islamiyya,” Markaz*, 2010) Born in 1971 near the city of Samarra, al-Baghdadi became a scholar of Islamic studies, obtaining both a master’s degree as well as a doctorate in the subject from the University of Islamic Sciences in Baghdad’s Adhamiya suburb. He’s said to have lived in modest quarters attached to a local mosque in Tobchi, a western district of Baghdad that was fairly mixed between Sunni and Shiite residents(Bin et al., 2019). Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi heralded the end of ISIS and the birth of the Islamic State on June 28, 2014, the first day of Ramadan. He preached from the pulpit of the Great

Mosque of al-Nuri in Mosul, a city his forces had taken control of days earlier. Although a native-born Iraqi, al-Baghdadi was abolishing his and all forms of citizenship. As he saw it, the nations of the Fertile Crescent and indeed the world no longer existed. Only the Islamic state did (Weiss, & Hassan, 2015). Although ISIS' territorial expansion and attacks on the West will continue to captivate observers, local populations, and adherents, those are not the reasons for its successes. Rather, it is the group's doctrinally consistent bypassing of Western political culture that has allowed it to pick up so many recruits. No measure of rhetorical "countering" of ISIS' narrative can be successful without physical intervention (Olidort, 2015).

However, the researcher believes that ISIS is an American creation in coordination with Iran, Donald Trump made the remarks during his 2016 campaign in Florida told a raucous and rowdy crowd when he said: "He's [Barack Obama] the founder of ISIS. He's the founder of ISIS. He's the founder. He founded ISIS." (Corasaniti, 2016). Hillary Clinton on its testimony before Congress stated that: "Let's remember here... the people we are fighting today we funded them twenty years ago... and we did it because we were locked in a struggle with the Soviet Union..." (Clinton, 2008). This is clear to anyone who follows Islamic extremist groups. The evidence to what the researcher statement to is what the study mentioned above of the common interests between America and Iran of weakening Sunnis in the region.

As well as, ISIS, according to the ideology it holds and claims, is a Salafi-jihadi who see Shiites as a disbelieve. ISIS claims that they came to triumph over the injustice inflicted on Sunnis after the fall of the regime in 2003, when Shiites ruled Iraq in the name of the democratic majority. Thus, the group portrayed itself as a defender of Sunnis, who for many years had been systematically mistreated by the Shiite-majority

government. Ironically, ISIS only killed a Sunni, destroyed only Sunni cities, the woe was not tasted by ISIS except the Sunni, his house was destroyed, his religious heritage was demolished when they stole the city's museums, blew up the Prophet Yunus Mosque (peace be upon him), blast *AlHadba* Lighthouse in the Great Nuri Mosque in which Al-Baghdadi declared his Islamic caliphate on its pulpit. On the other hand, the Shiites and their cities that were supposed to attack by ISIS and destroy especially the cities where the shrines of the infallible imams of the Shiites, which according to ISIS ideology that polytheism is practiced against the God there did not affect any bad or action by ISIS did not enter the length of its expansion even a Shiite village, while it was on the gate of the city of Samarra In which there are two infallible Shiites imams, however, ISIS retreated and did not enter the city. There are many eyewitnesses and videos that show how America and Iran were providing support to ISIS to kill Sunnis in Iraq. Indeed, they did what they wanted. ISIS destroyed all the Sunni cities in Iraq, Mosul, Ramadi and Fallujah... etc.

As for the ideology adopted by ISIS, the researcher believes that it is an ideology that does not represent Islam in any way, because Islam has never ordered to destruct the mosques, killing of innocents, displacing people from their homes, and killing the People of the Book (*ahl alkitab*), both Jews and Christians, the best example about that the Age Trust (*aleuhdat aleamriah*) is a book written by Caliph Omar bin Al-Khattab to the people of Elia (Jerusalem) when Muslims opened it in 638 AD, insuring them on their churches and their properties. The Age Custody was considered one of the most important documents in the history of (Jerusalem).

ISIS has picked from the Qur'an the verses that serve its project, such as the verses that call for the killing of polytheists and verses of Loyalty and innocence (*alwala'*

walbara') to fight Sunni and Kurdish Muslims. Whereas the Prophet (may God's prayers and peace be upon him) and his companions after him, if they wanted to invade a village, were waiting around the village for three days, then if they heard the call to prayer (*alazan*) they did not enter it. Where is ISIS from this behavior, where is ISIS from these verses of al-Qur'an

"Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes - from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly (8). Allah only forbids you from those who fight you because of religion and expel you from your homes and aid in your expulsion - [forbids] that you make allies of them. And whoever makes allies of them, then it is those who are the wrongdoers. (9)" (Surat Al-Mumtahinah 8-9). Or this verse: "And if any one of the polytheists seeks your protection, then grant him protection so that he may hear the words of Allah. Then deliver him to his place of safety. That is because they are a people who do not know." (Al-Tawbah verse 9)

However, maybe someone asks, how ISIS was able to expand in this way and so quickly? In fact, there are several reasons for this First: ISIS took advantage of the injustice and marginalization suffered by the Sunnis by the Shiites in Iraq, they suffered a lot, and many of them stated that they were accepting even the devil from the woe and suffering they were subjected to, so they received ISIS warmly, and they were hitting the Iraqi army, which was defeated by stones in the streets of the city of Mosul. Second: The weak presence of the Iraqi army due to corruption, despite the huge budget spent on it. Third: It controls the heavy and advanced equipment, machinery, and weapons that the Iraqi army left after leaving its positions. Fourth,

Iranian interference and influence in Iraq have made ISIS take advantage of all of these things to control a third of Iraqi territory.

6.3 The Fall of Mosul and Emergence of ISIS in Iraq

The ISIS is a transnational Sunni Islamist insurgent and terrorist group that has seized swathes of land in Iraq and Syria since 2013 (Blanchard et.al., 2015). The emergence of ISIS is rooted in Sunni rebellion against the U.S.-led occupation of Iraq after the 2003 invasion and has remained independent from the clutches of al-Qaeda, seeing itself as a rival *jihadi* franchise (Smith, 2015).

In April 30, 2014, national (COR) elections were held and the ISIS-led insurrection in *Anbar* appeared to have been curtailed. Such situation report collapsed on June 10, 2014, when ISIS fighters seemingly helped by large numbers of its fighters moving into Iraq from the Syria Theater captured the large city of Mosul which culminated in the withdrawal, surrender and desertion by the ISF (Katzman, 2015). Mosul and northern Iraq in general is replete with complex human and physical terrain. In Demographical terms, Mosul is a diverse city, harboring many ethnic and religious groups. As long as ISIS had local support in Mosul, it was almost sure it would be easier to overrun the city (EXUM, 2017). In terms of physical and social geography, western Mosul is a dense urban terrain emptying out into the western deserts of northern Iraq. In 2014, the terrorist organization managed to gain control over the city's population of 1.8 million. They attained this evidently impossible task in six days (Templeton, 2016). The Islamist extremists eventually seized control of much of Iraq's second biggest city, Mosul, and the surrounding province and thus set free more than 1,000 prisoners as well as sending troops and residents fleeing which crippled Baghdad's efforts to put an end to a fast-spreading insurgency (Chulov, 2014).

The fallout out of the invasion of Mosul by ISIS is the effective control of a huge swath of territory across the Iraqi-Syrian border. Such possession of huge landmass that borders two states by ISIS is historical as such had never occurred before. And such milestone achievement represents a difference between ISIS and al-Qaeda. Such occupation thus made the group to have access to considerable resources, including oil and other minerals as well as antiquities. This allowed ISIS to make money by controlling smuggling routes to sell their products to would-be customers. It needs to be stressed here that the ISIS also controlled and governed the inhabitants of the occupied territory which represented crucial asset as well as liability (Smith, 2015). The ISIS apparently received the support of many Iraqi Sunni residents and that assisted the ISIS to move down the Tigris River valley as far as *Tikrit* as well as east into *Diyala* Province. The offensive led to the occupation of the Mosul Dam and made ISIS to loot banks (Katzman, 2015). One at this point may wonder what the Iraqi army's efforts were in the process of ISIS onslaught. The million-strong Iraqi army, trained by Washington at a cost of more than \$20 billion, has been in shamble by low morale and corruption that impeded supply lines. Its effectiveness is affected by a perception among Sunni Muslims that it promotes the hostile interests of the Shi'ites, a majority in Iraq (Rasheed & Kalin, 2015).

Kurdish leaders had been warning both Maliki and western powers for several weeks of the danger that was brewing in Mosul. Maliki seems to have dismissed the fears and western powers simply took apathetic stance. Such attitude made the Kurds to revert to its usual strategy- attempt to work against a cohesive Iraqi political project. But even the Kurds, with their intelligence assets watching Mosul carefully could not have predicted the swiftness with which ISIS and their allies would take Mosul (Stansfield,

2014). The Iraqi parliament formed a committee to investigate the fall of Mosul thereafter. In an interview with Shakhawan Abdullah, a member of the Iraqi Parliament and the Deputy Chairman of the Investigation Committee, said that the Committee accused 35 people in the government but no one has been brought to court for this charge (Abdullah Shakhwan, Personal Interview, 2018).

The detail account of the fall of Mosul as well as how the battle was lost is scanty. Maliki has accused unnamed countries, commanders and rival politicians of plotting the city's fall (Rasheed & Kalin, 2015). An Iraqi parliamentary panel called former Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and dozens of other top officials to stand trial over the fall of the northern city of Mosul to Islamic State in 2014 (Rasheed & Kalin, 2015). The panel's findings alleged that Maliki, who remains a powerful figure despite having his Vice President position revoked last week in Abadi's Reforms, had a wrong picture of the threat to Mosul because he selected commanders who participated in corruption and failed to hold them accountable (Rasheed & Kalin, 2015). An investigation by Reuters in October 2014 revealed how troop shortages in Mosul and infighting among top officers and Iraqi political leaders played into ISIS's hands and contributed to the fear that led to the city's abandonment (Rasheed & Kalin, 2015).

However, when ISIS captured U.S. supplied military equipment such as Humvees, tanks, and armored personnel carriers from positions around *Abu Ghraib*, it led its forces moved to within striking distance of Baghdad International Airport, which is southwest of the city. The ISIS, along with its partners, also expanded previous gains in *Anbar* Province, including encroaching on the *Haditha* Dam (Katzman, 2015). The reason for ISIS military breakthrough in both Iraq and Syria is that ISIS represents a useful cover for former high-ranking elements of Saddam Hussein's dissolved Sunni-

dominated security forces and as such determined to regain their former position, at least in Sunni-majority areas of Iraq. There was limited support for official Iraqi forces among Iraqi Sunnis after what they see as relentless persecution by the Shia-dominated government in Baghdad (Smith, 2015). Thus, by July 2014, Iraq's map had become dramatically unstable. The central government had lost control over much of the country, save the capital and the south. ISIS ruled Sunni Arab-populated areas in central and north-western Iraq while the Kurdish regional guard force (*peshmergas*) capitalized on the army's disintegration to seize some of the disputed territories, including the city of Kirkuk (Group, 2015).

It needs to be stated here that Kirkuk is an oil-rich province disputed by both the Kurds and the Iraq central government. It is thought to have a Kurdish majority, but its provincial capital has large Arab and Turkmen populations. Kurdish *Peshmerga* forces took control of much of the province in 2014, when ISIS militants radiated across northern Iraq and the army eventually helpless (BBC News, 2017). In this way, the Kurds exploited the situation to their own advantage and expanded their boundary into areas of *Diyala* governorate, bringing *Khanaqin* into Kurdistan, and pushing as far south as the town of *Jalawla*. In a very short time, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq had expanded by 40 percent as the Kurds had secured the control of the one city that they had been struggle over for decades – Kirkuk. Faced with no opposition whatsoever, they had taken control of the largest oil field in the north of Iraq, as well as extending their control into the strategic areas of Nineveh to the north and west of Mosul (Stansfield, 2014). The political and social foundations of these territories changed immediately following the Kurds' incursion. The Kurds are in full control of all the territories they demanded before the invasion of Mosul, and they are clearly satisfied

to see this de facto reality recognized legally by implementing the final stage of the Constitution's Article 140 process – a referendum that will give the inhabitants the opportunity to decide whether they wish to remain governed from Baghdad, or be part of the Kurdistan Region (al-Ansary & Razzouk, 2014.).

On the other hand, the onslaught of ISIS over Mosul should have been a warning for the Kurdistan Region authorities. Meanwhile, in early August 2014 *Peshmerga* forces forcefully yielded a large part of the Nineveh Province to ISIS (Bochenska, 2014). Thus, less than two months later, it has become clear that the jihadist group planned to extend its caliphate to include the Kurdistan Region. ISIS fighters have been able to wrest control of some territories from Kurdish troops in *Sinjar* and *Zummar* near the Syrian border in western *Ninevah* province (Salih, 2014). While the Kurdish forces of PYD/YPG were joyous to have entered from the side of the Syrian side and attacking the ISIS, both of them ensured the protection of Yazidis and Lalesh and created a branch of the armed Yazidis as a result of disappointment by the lack of assistance from the *Peshmerga* forces (Bochenska, 2014). The KRG came under major threat by August 2014 when ISIS-led forces forcefully moved into territory controlled by the *peshmerga*. The relatively armed Kurdish forces retreated under pressure from numerous towns (*Sinjar*, *Zumar*, *Wana*, and *Qaraqosh*) inhabited mostly by Christians and other Iraqi minorities, particularly the *Yazidis*—a Kurdish-speaking people who practice a mix of ancient religions, including Zoroastrianism (Tharoor, 2014). In 2014, 40,000 remain stranded and homeless on "the craggy peaks of Mount Sinjar," dying of hunger and thirst and devoid of much support from a faltering Iraqi government (Tharoor, 2014).

However, the withdrawal of the *Peshmerga* from *Sinjar* and surrounding areas received serious condemnation from the people of the region, accusing the *Peshmerga* forces of abandonment and failure to respond to nationhood call responsibly. Such accusation was refuted by Peshmerga officials claiming they resisted but was forced to withdraw for lack of adequate ammunitions to face the ISIS. In a military strategy, the soldiers are allowed to retreat if the enemy army have the military wherewithal to dislodge them. Such military strategy might have been responsible for Peshmarga retreat from the war. ISIS relied on the location for moving between the Iraqi and Syrian borders (Salih, 2014). Joanna Bochenska argues that,

In contrast to the propaganda of PYD, it should be said that support for the Yazidis Kurds came soon also from the Peshmerga forces. Many Muslim residents of Kurdistan took many of them in their homes; the KRG authorities also offered financial assistance. In his statement President Barzani promised to punish all those who showed reluctance. However, the “slowness” of Kurdish Peshmerga forces should be looked at the broader context. Firstly, the army for a long time has not fought on a larger scale (this cannot be said about YPG, which for many months have successfully defended Kurdish cantons in Syria against the pursuits of the Islamic State) (Bochenska, 2014).

He reiterates further,

...due to conflicts with the central government in Baghdad, the soldiers were not paid on time. Ignored by many the Islamic State proved to be a well- armed force, trained and financed, and its goal is to conquer and fight in the name of Islam. It is the destruction based on the power of ideology. In contrast to the ISIS militia, many out of *Peshmerga* forces in recent years might have fallen for the weakening magic of

prosperity and stability enjoyed by Kurdistan. Although the motivation to defend its borders is undoubtedly still strong, defeating ISIS may prove to be not so easy (Bochenska, 2014).

The mass influx of residents of the Gwer and Makhmour areas into Erbil worsened the overall anxiety. Some people left for nearby mountainous towns to the east and long queues predominated gas stations. It should be stressed here that many civilians took to the streets to boost the morale of soldiers and some engaged in a campaign of shaming those who were leaving the city. Many volunteers, especially men from Gwer and Makhmour, also joined the front lines in the area and the *peshmerga* ranks reinforced. Senior Kurdish officials also went to Makhmour, less than an hour's drive from Erbil, and appeared on TV to calm and reassure the population that the *peshmerga* forces were in control (Salih, 2014).

In fact, the attack of ISIS on Kurdistan was not expected to happen as swiftly as it did. It should be noted that ISIS claimed to fight the Shiite regime in Baghdad and defending the rights of the Sunni in Iraq at a time when most Sunni internally displaced persons were taken refuge with KRG. When Mosul was about to fall, KRG also informed Ankara of the need to evacuate Turkish diplomats and bring them to safety. Ankara always reassures that it acts carefully and will stand by KRG at all times. When ISIS attacked Kurdistan, the expectations from Ankara was that they would move immediately to help *peshmergas* and provide assistance (Ahmed, 2015). It was a surprise to see Turkey as on-lookers. Turkey offered only was a small amount of aid, which did not meet the expectation of the KRG. Thus, the forces of the Islamic state began to move towards Erbil and fear spread among the civilian population. They were just 30 kilometres from Erbil.

In a swift move to reclaim the lost glory, KRG President, Massoud Barzani, declared war on the extremist group. He said: “We decided to go beyond the defensive position and fight terrorists to the last breath.... We have ordered the peshmerga forces to attack the terrorists and the enemies of the people and the land of Kurdistan with all their power” (Salih, 2014). Following Barzani’s Declaration, peshmerga forces changed strategy and launched offensives on several fronts, from areas around Rabia, Sinjar and Zummar to the northern and eastern outskirts of Mosul all the way down to Makhmour, southwest of Erbil (Salih, 2014). The ISIS advance toward Erbil was halted after the Obama Administration ordered airstrikes to aid Peshmerga fighters in the rescue of Iraqi Kurdistan., the stable part of an unsteady Iraq. So far, so good, but the recent hard-fought success in Sinjar is just an incremental step. There is still more fighting ahead. Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city is still under ISIS control, dangerously close to the Kurdish capital. "You cannot sleep if ISIS is your neighbour. You will have many nightmares," says *Fuad Hussein*, the chief of staff to the Kurdish regional presidency, speaking at his office in Irbil. "The reality is now different. We are facing a threat (Amos, 2014)."

The ISIS’s capture of Mosul in June and August 2014 with subsequent beheadings of two captured U.S. citizens led to significant U.S. response. President Obama offered a multifaceted strategy to overrun and subjugate the extremist group. With Abbadi’s accession in September 10, 2014 after and the formation of the relatively inclusive government, U.S. conditions for additional assistance against the ISIS was met (Katzman, 2015). President Obama subsequently announced limited airstrikes against ISIS in Iraq, struggling to prevent the fall of the Kurdish capital, Erbil, and returning the U.S. to a crucial battlefield role in Iraq for the first time since the last American

soldier left the country at the end of 2011 (Cooper, 2014). The U.S assured it would directly arm Kurdish troops (Newton-Small, 2014). But the U.S. reneged to equip the Kurds, and Baghdad's refused to share U.S. arms with the peshmerga. Such inaction left Kurdish forces weakened, low on ammunition and unable to defend a 600-mile border (Newton-Small, 2014). Nevertheless, it was reported that the U.S. administration official later confirmed the U.S. would expedite the delivery of weapons to the Kurds to wage war against the ISIS (Cooper, 2014).

Various motives impelled Western military intervention in Iraq. Washington was of the view that protection of its Erbil Consulate remained a compelling factor. Besides, western investments in the Kurdish region, much more significant than those in other parts of Iraq, were no doubt part of the calculation. It also needs to be reiterated that, in some quarters, the KRG was perceived a more reliable partner than Baghdad and worthy of support (Group, 2015). Such reinforcement from the U.S. is rooted in a position that its apathy, until that moment, was no longer sustainable and that the potential threat ISIS posed to Western interests brought about military intervention. In this manner, the protection of minorities resonated strongly with Western governments. It certainly was a trigger for the U.S., which after years of apathy to the complex challenges of escalating violence in the region could frame confronting ISIS and rescuing the Yazidis (Group, 2015).

Steve Coll, a staff writer in the New Yorker and the Dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University argues that,

Obama's defence of Erbil is effectively the defence of an undeclared Kurdish oil state whose sources of geopolitical appeal as a long term, non-Russian supplier of oil and

gas to Europe, for example are best not spoken of in polite or Naïve Company, as Al Swearengen would well understand Life, Swearengen once pointed out, is often made up of “one vile task after another.” So is American policy in Iraq...this was the main cause that drew President Obama back to combat in Iraq last week, two and a half years after he fulfilled a campaign pledge and pulled the last troops out (Col, 2014).

The ISIS’s irredentist attitude to take Mosul shifted thinking in Washington and the U.S. strategic thinkers and policy analysts wondered whether Syria should be given the same treatment (Smith, 2015). Kille argues,

There is substantial U.S. political and material investment in Iraq to protect. While the Iraqi government may not have turned out to be the strategic ally that the U.S. hoped for when it led the invasion in 2003. Nevertheless, it to fall would be a massive blow to U.S. prestige and end any claims for success of the invasion and occupation. The Iraqi government, too, is regarded as legitimate by most powers. This means that military intervention, after a request from Baghdad, is easy to justify legally without a UN Security Council resolution.

He argues further,

The rise of ISIS brings echoes of the establishment of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and of terrorist attacks on U.S. territory. The murder of U.S. hostages such as the journalist Steven Sotloff, in September 2014, exacerbates those fears. These factors may make it easier to sell intervention to a war-weary U.S. public, and there is some polling evidence that public opinion did become more favourable to intervention after the events of summer 2014. Intervention in Iraq has a relatively clear objective: to support the existing government (Kille, 2014).

The U.S thus provided direct support to the *Peshmerga* forces and a new phase of relations between the Kurds and the U.S. started apace. Peshmarga thus represented an important military mouthpiece of the U.S. in the fight and struggle against the rampaging ISIS in the Middle East. Such intermediary role being performed by Peshmarga has improved the credentials of the Iraqi Kurds as a reliable party in the fight against terrorism.

6.4 The U.S. Foreign policy toward the Iraqi Kurds (2014-2017)

ISIS, the terrorist group that operate across Northern Syria and Iraq since 2014, attracted tens of thousands of foreign fighters who wanted to help build an entirely new nation in the heart of the Middle East. Such is premised on the need to establish the so-called caliphate that would be governed by their own interpretation of Sunni Islam. But not all of those willing to kill and die for ISIS were from abroad. Instead, many of those who supported the group — or tolerated its fighters — were native-born Iraqi Sunnis (Knutsen, 2017).

The strength of ISIS operation in Iraq that began in June 2014 compelled the Obama Administration to reoccupy Iraq with active military participation in order to disable and eventually overpower ISIS as emphasized by President Obama on September 10, 2014 (Katzman, 2015). The decision by Obama is necessary to avoid the possible killings of tens of thousands of Yazidis stranded on Mount Sinjar. Besides humanitarian reasons, the real reasons were the wealth of oil resources in the Iraqi Kurdistan that accommodates thousands of foreign workers including the U.S. consulate in Irbil (Noack, 2014). While the U.S. and its allies constantly pursue strategies to defeat ISIS, an achievable method was used to provide the Kurds in Iraq with arms (Project, 2016). The prominent contribution of the Kurds as an organization

in defeating ISIS is irrefutable. The Kurds blocked, arrested and forced the ISIS to retreat and later paused for two years while the Iraqi Army was restored after fleeing in 2014. Mosul was then isolated by the Kurdish forces which is an extremely critical strategy for its latest release by a revived Iraqi Army, which was recharged with Iranian forces (Audino, 2017).

As the tense nature of the ISIS challenge became evident in the late 2013, the U.S. intensified its effort to assist the Iraqi government militarily (Katzman, 2015). In July, 2014, the ISIS KRG positions in Kurdish-populated areas of *Tel Kaif*, between Erbil and Mosul. The onslaught saw ISIS fighters advanced in tracked and wheeled armored vehicles captured from the Iraqi army and Federal Police. Such attack was the latest sign that the fragile truce between the two sides was rapidly breaking down, with dozens of Kurds murdered in confrontations along the entire frontier. Maintaining more than four hundred miles of frontline positions facing areas held by forces loyal to ISIS, the Kurds are in need of U.S. military support (Knights & Metz, 2014).

It is worth noting that in the past the U.S. had fought together with the peshmerga and can give them a formidable support again. One such effort could be the delivery of weapons and the simplest way to ensure U.S. logistical support is for the peshmerga to accept and make use of weapons and vehicles from the U.S. (Knights, 2014). American officials attempted to speed up the delivery of weapons from the government in Baghdad to Kurdish fighters in the north. However, it was time consuming, thus compelling Washington to open a direct pipeline to the Kurds via the CIA (Whitlock & Jaffe, 2014). Moreover, a few European countries, such as Britain, Germany, and France, have been supplying arms to the peshmerga (Katzman, 2015). The strength of ISIS operation this summer and the group's tenacity in various sections of northern and

central Iraq caused the Kurdish to change plans, which affected the push for Kurdish independence. Top Kurdish officials and regional analysts claimed that to the Kurds, that was a major obstacle to the Kurd's political ambition (Amos, 2014).

However, the central government in Baghdad and the KRG had major dispute over the territory, oil export, and Kurdish aspiration for independence, among others. Hence, the threat from ISIS caused both parties to follow a mutual cause (Katzman, 2015), a position necessary to stop their mutual enemy, ISIS, from encroaching. Preceding August 1, 2014, the Iraqi Kurds had not fully affected by the ISIS attacks That feeling of political peace changed after a sequence of vicious ISIS attacks on Kurdish peshmerga units between the border of Mosul and Syrian. Later, it causes a reaction from the Kurdistan Regional Government's forces. KRG President Masoud Barzani decalred on August 5, 2014, "We have decided to go on the offensive and fight the terrorists to the last breath" (Knights, 2014). The 2014 events strengthen the U.S. relationship with Iraq's KRG headed by President Masoud Barzani. The ISIS attacks led to the fall of the Iraqi Army. Only the Kurdish armed forces, identified as peshmerga, were the reliable Iraqi fighters connected to the U.S. in 2014. The peshmerga shifted to Kirkuk, an oil-rich city and other contested regions to fight and defeat the ISIS forces (Erlich, 2017).

These 'disputed territories' were controlled by the Peshmerga after the Iraqi army fled them, so as not to fall by the ISIS. this action of military necessity then revoked the need, from the Kurdish officials' perspective, to continue to push for the implementation of Article 140 of the Iraq Constitution – the article that would have formally resolved the issue of authority in these territories (Stansfield, 2017).

That kind of move was a political advantage for the Kurds since the region continued to be an area of dispute for the central government and Kurdistan region. Hence, the Kurdish Region expanded by 40% which received the U.S. express approval. Fuad Hussein who was Barzani's Chief of Staff, stated: "We now genuinely know the United States supports us" (Erlich, 2017). The Kurds took advantage of this opportunity and they exported oil from their 'own' fields, which is allowed in the Iraqi Constitution, and they exported from the oil cluster of Kirkuk, which included the huge Bai Hassan field and Jambur, Avana, and Baba Gurgur, of them founded prior to 2003. Thus, in accordance to Article 109 of the Constitution of Iraq, all these oil fields were still under the jurisdiction of the Iraqi government (Zedalis, 2010).

However, the Kurdish leadership seems to have realised that the period covered by the existence of ISIS between 2014 and 2017 was something of an anomaly, when their interests were, perhaps for the first time, aligned with those of Western powers, most importantly the U.S. This alignment gave ample chance to develop initiatives in ways that would have been otherwise difficult before ISIS's emergence. The Kurds took control of vast areas of northern Iraq they claimed as historically Kurdish, but it was not within Erbil's authority (Stansfield, 2017). It should be noted that "the sectarian politics of the leadership in Baghdad, which is mostly Shiite, is partly to blame for the chaos gripping the region" (Noack, 2014).

For a few hours, Erbil was in a state of panic., the ISIS became far from Erbil the Kurdish capital just 30 minutes, then American war planes swooped in and began bombing and President Obama undertaken to defend Erbil. Kurds breathed a sigh of relief. "The most important development was the decision by the United States to save lives," says Hoshiyar Zebari, a former Iraqi foreign minister (Newton-Small, 2014).

This decision ran counter to his presidential campaign in 2007, when he pledged that if elected, he would withdraw U.S. troops and disengage from Iraq. It also contradicted his policy of not directly intervening in Iraq or Syria without the approval of the U.S. Congress or a UN Security Council mandate to use force (Mansour, 2017).

However, on September 10, 2014, President Barack Obama mapped out the inchoate U.S. strategy to “degrade and ultimately destroy the terrorist group. The fight against ISIS has transformed Western behaviour concerning the status of (Iraqi) Kurdistan. Providing military assistance directly to the Kurds has become acceptable even among the wariest European nations. Even Sweden has sent an armed unit to Erbil. Washington has now officially agreed to help establish a full Kurdish army that, which include heavily armoured ground forces, the air force, and (surprisingly) a navy force (KROSS, 2017). The Obama Administration supplied arms to Kurdish forces who extensively supported in destabilizing the ISIS backed up by U.S. airstrikes (Press, 2017). The appearance of military support for Iraq’s Kurds and airstrikes in northern Iraq was a sign of a critical change in U.S. foreign policy. Even though there are limited military assistance given to the KRG, supplying arms to the Kurds indicates a crucial shift in U.S.-Kurdish relations and seems to be a different path from the earlier U.S. policy in Iraq. In particular, open military and political support provided to the KRG will reinforce the position of Irbil in relation to the central government in Baghdad, which may prolong the process of political separation to unravel in Iraq (Kaplan, 2014). That said, many Kurds still carry lingering doubts that the U.S. will betray them once again. “There’s a history of contact and betrayal with the U.S. and the Kurds where the U.S. made contact and helped, but never jumped in with both feet,” (Lawrence, 2008).

The authorization of airstrikes by President Barack Obama must be accepted as an attempt to protect U.S. interests and personnel in the region, which include the facilities in Irbil and the *Yazidi* refugees who were escaping from military attack (Press, 2017). The U.S. was reported by Carnegie Middle East Centre to have some interests in Kurdistan, which was wholly to strengthen Obama's withdrawal of the no-engagement policy. For example, the Kurdistan region is a loyal and reliable pro-U.S. ally needed by Washington in a progressively volatile unruly Middle East. It is worth noting that many U.S. policymakers consider the region as a new democratic, secular, and pro-Western friend that is resolute in helping to battle against the *Salafi jihadists*. The Kurdistan region is geographically strategic area neighbouring Iran and Syria. It also has a great oil-exporting potential and has granted contracts to a few U.S. companies, such as ExxonMobil and Chevron. The Kurdistan region's capital, Erbil hosts many Americans (Mansour, 2017). Recently, Erbil has converted into an oil-boom town, the center for various multi-national energy corporations that included the big American companies Chevron and Exxon Mobil, all now drilling for oil and gas.

However, since June 10, 2014, the day that the ISIS had been trying to invade Erbil, the history of the relationship between the Kurds of Iraq and the U.S. could be deemed as the golden age. The U.S. had an excellent record of providing genuine support to rescue Kurdistan region from being overpowered by ISIS forces. From this endeavour, the U.S. forces and Peshmerga attempted to collaborate and remove ISIS. The American support caused the Kurds to feel secure, and thus the relationship between the American and the Kurds was formalized via the signing of a memorandum of understanding between them. The Kurds were heavily involved in the struggle against the ISIS while they received the military and moral backing from the U.S. The

Peshmerga was the first to remove the ISIS upon the fall of Iraqi army. The speed at which Iraq's territory fell to ISIS was astounding astonishing and the reasons are still unknown to observers and policy makers. In a matter of days, about a third of the Iraq territory was lost. The Kurds took such opportunity to conquer a large number of contested areas. If the Peshmerga had not conquered these areas the resources of Kirkuk, an oil-rich city, would have been conquered by ISIS. The merge infuriated Iran, Turkey, and Iraq. The relationship, unfortunately, did not last and the scenario shifted after September 25, 2017, the day the Kurdistan Region separately arranged a referendum on independence and neglected to inform Baghdad. The Kurds again felt disheartened by the U.S. stance on the matter, thus revert to the previous maxim of "the Kurds have no friends but the mountains". The U.S. apathy to the unilateral declaration of independence corresponds to the U.S. Middle East policy of preserving the status quo. If the U.S. were to support ambition of the Kurds in Iraq to be independent may cause the U.S. to be criticized in the regional political and social setting.

6.5 The U.S. Foreign Policy toward the Iraqi Kurds in the post-Referendum Era

The U.S. foreign policy on the Iraqi Kurds deteriorated after a referendum was held by the Kurdish Leaders in Kurdistan on September 25, 2017. The U.S. had earlier warned Kurdish leaders against a referendum as it was not a suitable time for it. The U.S. believed the main priorities were to exterminate ISIS. The U.S. had been warning the Kurds and Kurdish President against proceeding with the referendum since last spring as it would create a disaster for both Kurdistan and Iraq (Calamur, 2017). Eomid Sabah, a spokesman for the President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, said: "So far America stands against the referendum of Kurdistan and I hope that America

understands the status of the Kurds and change their attitude towards the referendum of Kurdistan” (Personal Interview, Sabah, 2017). Yet the Kurds took the U.S. warnings lightly. The Kurdish leadership assumed that after the referendum the international situation would change and that the global community will treat the Kurds as a de facto like what had transpired in 1992 when the Kurds proceeded to hold elections in the face of protests by the international community and became de facto. This was what the Kurdish leaders perceived when they adamantly proceeded with the referendum. Therefore, on September 25, 2017 Iraqi Kurds went to the polls to hold a referendum to determine their fate with almost three million involved in the referendum; above 92% voted for independence from Iraq. Masoud Barzani did not respond to all internal, regional, and international appeals. He said: "We are ready to accept any offer or alternative that guarantees our rights to live in Iraq safely" (Barzani, 2017).

The referendum of September 2017 which was on independence received overwhelming support from Iraqi Kurdish voters which caused hostility between Erbil and Baghdad. Although the Kurdish government has evoked the support as approval for it to negotiate with Baghdad concerning the conditions for independence, Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi had, however, commanded that the referendum to be cancelled and warned that they would isolate the inland region. The change toward freedom would risk tension with Shia armed forces backed by Iran, which could trigger a factional rivalry between Iraq's Sunni and Shia Arabs (Relations, 2017).

Through the State Department, the Secretary of State Tillerson issued a press release refusing to recognize the legality of the Kurdistan Region (KR) independence referendum. The Trump Administration asserted that:

The United States does not recognize the Kurdistan Regional Government's unilateral referendum held on Monday. The vote and the results lack legitimacy and we continue to support a united, federal, democratic and prosperous Iraq. We remain concerned about the potential negative consequences of this unilateral step. Prior to the vote, we worked with both the KRG and the central government in Baghdad to pursue a more productive framework and to promote stability and prosperity for the people of the Kurdistan region. These aspirations, ultimately, cannot be advanced through unilateral measures such as this referendum. We urge calm and an end to vocal recriminations and threats of reciprocal actions. We urge Iraqi Kurdish authorities to respect the constitutionally- mandated role of the central government and we call upon the central government to reject threats or even allusion to possible use of force. The United States asks all parties, including Iraq's neighbors, to reject unilateral actions and the use of force... (Bernard, 2017).

However, a war is ongoing between the central government, which was supported by Iran, and Iraqi Kurds to gain control of Kirkuk city in Iraq. On October 15th at 2:00 a.m., the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), Federal Police, and Iranian-backed popular mobilization forces (PMF) and Counterterrorism Services (CTS), launched a joint attack with the goal to capture the K1 military base, Kirkuk's oilfields, and the Kirkuk airport from Kurdish Peshmerga forces. The attack comes after two days of unsuccessful negotiations following the demand to withdraw by the central government in Iraq that was supported by Iran (Cafarella, Kassim & Malik, 2018). U.S. attempts to de-escalate flopped. Iran's role in the offensive further strengthens its leverage within Iraq, and increased Arab Shiite popular support for Iranian- backed candidates in the last Iraq elections (Cafarella, Kassim & Malik, 2018).

It appears that the Iranians saw a chance to exert its influence in Iraq. Gen. Using bribes and threats, *Soleimani* convinced fighters aligned with the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), a non-governing Kurdish political party, to abandon Kirkuk, which the Kurds had captured from ISIS in 2014 (Dahl, 2017). This allowed Iran-backed Iraqi forces to take Kirkuk largely unopposed. The seizure of Kirkuk is an important element of Iran's plan for regional hegemony. A representative of the governing Kurdistan Democratic Party said, "The Iraqi forces are actually Iranian forces realizing the control of the 'Shia Crescent' from Iran through Iraq and Syria to Lebanon and the Golan Heights. In the end, they will get to Israel (Dahl, 2017).

Hence, assisted by the Popular Mobilization Units, an ally of Iran, the Iraqi government forces recaptured the contested city of Kirkuk. They benefited from this covert cooperation with the Kurdish military forces, known as peshmerga, devoted to the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). The PUK is the historic enemy of the Kurdistan Democratic Party under the leadership of Masoud Barzani, who is also the president of the Kurdistan Regional Government (Cook, 2017). It needs to be noted that,

Iran's influence is worrying to the U.S. and its Sunni Arab allies in the region. The Islamic Republic supports Shia populations across the Middle East, most especially in Iraq, which is majority Shia. Mansour said the Kurds were an early and important U.S. ally in the Iraq war calculus because they ensured an anti-Iranian movement. "But what's happened recently is the U.S. has decided that they want to play with [Iraqi Prime Minister] Haider al-Abadi instead—and that he is their number-one guy—because he presents himself as ... being willing or wanting to minimize Iranian influence, as well as to build up the Iraqi state," he said. With its major backer, the

United States, now working closely with Iraq, the Kurds are faced with a familiar historical reality.... They have few allies (Calamur, 2017).

According to a report from Washington Times, Iran now strives to control Kurdish soil between Mosul and the Syrian border to maintain a physical connection between Tehran and Syria's Mediterranean shoreline as well as to link up with Hezbollah allies in Lebanon (Audino, 2017). This roadmap strategy of Iran alerted White House which impelled President Trump to announce a new strategy on Iran and outlined a number of steps the U.S. is taking to combat and confront the Iranian regime's hostile outward behaviour in the region. It needs to be stressed that this new strategy became expedient after a complete review of U.S. policy toward Iran and its allies in the Middle East. The President said, "Our policy is based on a clear-eyed assessment of the Iranian dictatorship, its sponsorship of terrorism, and its continuing aggression in the Middle East and all around the world" (White House, 2017).

Nonetheless, the Kurds were once more confounded by the U.S. position concerning the handling of the referendum. The Kurds have unpleasant memories of the past U.S. betrayal when together with the Shah, the U.S. supported a Kurdish insurgency that opposed Iraq as a way of forcing Saddam to retreat. However, Kissinger chose to settle the issue in 1975 by giving Saddam an implicit approval to fight the Kurds causing 200,000 Kurds to escape to Iran and 40,000 were forced to be deported. Such international level of blatant acts has been shown by the U.S. in various ways, whether to serve its national interest or to threaten the potentially hostile ally. Kissinger had famously stated, "America has no permanent friends or enemies, only interests" (Erlich, 2017).

It must be emphasized that although the U.S. did not approve the referendum of Kurdistan, the U.S. State Department released two key announcements that purportedly hinted they endorse the move. The first declaration was regarding the areas under dispute when the Department Spokesperson, Heather Nauert stated that,

The reassertion of federal authority over disputed areas in no way changes their status – they remain disputed until their status is resolved in accordance with the Iraqi constitution. Until parties reach a resolution, we urge them to fully coordinate security and administration of these areas. To that end, all parties should engage in dialogue now on the basis of the Iraqi constitution, as Prime Minister Abadi offered and the Kurdistan Regional Government accepted publicly (Nauert, 2017).

The second critical hint cum announcement was the U.S willingness to give assistance to the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq headed by Nechirvan Barzani and his deputy Qubad Talabani. Heather Nauert Department Spokesperson announced in Washington, DC on October 30, 2017 that,

The United States now looks forward to engaging actively with the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Nechirvan Barzani, and the Deputy Prime Minister, Qubad Talabani. A strong KRG within a unified and federal Iraq is essential to its long-term stability and to the enduring defeat of ISIS. We call on all Kurdish parties to support the KRG as it works to resolve pending issues over the remainder of its term and prepare for elections in 2018 (Nauert, 2017).

The two announcements greatly affected the stability of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The first announcement ended Iraq's aspirations to conquer each disputed area since

the Iraqi armed forces, with soldiers devoted to Iran, equipped to move into Erbil city. This announcement and the *Peshmerga*'s persistence in the region of *perdi*, *Suhaila* and *Mahmudiya*, where the *Peshmerga* armies struggled against fierce opposition forced the Iraqi armies to withdraw. The second announcement was crucial for the stability within Kurdistan. After October 16, the government of the opposition parties declared that it failed to negotiate with Baghdad after it was defeated and insisted to form National Salvation Government to lead Kurdistan until the elections. However, all their attempts regarding the matter failed after making this statement. Accordingly, the regional government could stand on their own and steered the region to surmount all the struggles and the government was able to determine that September 30, 2018 as date for the parliamentary elections.

Therefore, it can be concluded that America did not approve the referendum of the Iraq's Kurds as they regarded it was the wrong time because the danger from ISIS still exists. Such conclusion represents the American reasoning for not giving their support at that important moment. It must be emphasized that the actual reason was because it conflicted with the U.S. interests in the countries that were fighting with the Kurds. and another reason was internal Kurdish disintegration. The lack of unity among the Kurds, particularly after the event of October 16 in Kirkuk, prompted the risk of U.S. support for the Kurds. Hence, the Kurds need to unite and ensure that their home state is in order from within first before getting the U.S. to support its mission in Iraq.

6.6 The U.S Perspective on the independence of Iraqi Kurds and its Referendum

In spite of the fact that the U.S role in the Middle East grew in importance throughout the nineteenth century, its position as the preeminent Western power there did not gain

foothold until after the influence of the former colonial powers, Britain and France, had declined. That happened during the late 1960s (Pelletiere, 1996). Since then, the U.S. has been deeply involved in attempting to exert its influence on events, leaders and regimes in the Middle East to reflect its overall national interests (Lieber, 2005). Thus, the U.S. maintains that regional stability has a bearing on its security and, therefore, forms a major reason for maintaining a powerful position in the region (Muhammed, 2012). In this connection, therefore, the U.S. was of the view the referendum of the Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan will destabilize the relative peaceful political atmosphere in the region which will not serve U.S. interests in the Middle East.

The consequence of the referendum and then the conquest of Kirkuk played out an expected manner. The referendum revealed certain crucial political issues as the U.S. pulled out its assistance, determined action by Iran and intimidations from the Iraqi state. The U.S. indifference towards the referendum of Kurds in Iraq provide power to the Iraq national government to ponder on how to finally treat the Kurds. At this point, an important question is raised: Why couldn't the U.S. convince one of its most trusted partners in the region to defer the referendum and extend its backing for Kurdish independence explicitly? (Calamur, 2017). It is worth noting that as long as national interest determines the U.S. foreign policy, similar approach applied by other global major powers, it is expected that the U.S. continue to exploit the Kurds in Iraq as a pawn to achieve political agenda in the region. At this time, the U.S. might hardly consider seriously the Kurds ambition for independence without weighing the pros and cons of such drastic decision.

Kurds are one of the world's largest peoples without a state, making up sizable minorities in Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. Their history is marked by marginalization and persecution. Despite the glooming condition of Kurds in the Middle East politics, the ongoing structural social and political downturn in the region may affect the aspiration of Kurds positively. The ongoing destabilization in the regional can be a blessing in disguise to the Kurds but such is premised on the reaction and position of the U.S. on the matter. (CFR, 2017). After the successful conclusion of the After-World War I on the part of the U.S. and its allies and the fall of the Ottoman Empire the Kurds came close to getting an independent state (Calamur, 2017). At the time, going by his famous 14-point programmes cum declarations, President Woodrow Wilson supported the idea of autonomy for non-Turks in the Ottoman Empire (Noack, 2014). Therefore, nearly a hundred years ago the Kurdish leader Sheikh Mahmoud Barzanji carried around in his pocket a copy of Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points and was inspired by American forceful progress towards self-determination. It thus ironical to realize the same U.S. is reluctantly supporting the quest for Kurds statehood. Two years after Wilson delivered that speech, the Allies agreed to an independent Kurdistan in the 1920 Treaty of Sevres (Newton-Small, 2014). And in another speech, the president refuted the content of the Sykes-Picot agreement, stating that "Every territorial settlement involved in this war must be made in the interest and for the benefit of the populations concerned, and not as a part of any mere adjustment or compromise of claims amongst rival states" (Wilson, 1918). The Iraqi Kurds was finally given a hope of releasing themselves from colonial arrangements and celebrated the idea of self-determination (Gailan, 2017). But the Kurds were to be disappointed in a political drama led to their lands partitioned among Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria (Noack, 2014). By 1923, in the Treaty of Lausanne that recognized

Kemal Attaturk's Turkey, the international community ignored the Kurds and the referendum promised in the Treaty of Sevres was never actualised and thus began the Kurdish struggle for independence (Newton-Small, 2014). According to Phillips (2015),

The Kurds political and historical narrative is one of tragedy, victims of genocide, routinely abandoned by allies, who are still fighting for a state of their own. But as recent history has shown, independence movements, wherever they are, face a complicated journey. And even if there is a moral obligation to grant statehood, the right to self-determination is a complex process (Phillips, 2015).

However, in the 1970s, after several abandoned fights for independence, the Iraqi Kurds eventually received their first indirect support from the U.S., more thanks to the Shah of Iran. As Iraq was an ally of the Soviet Union in 1972, the Shah urged the U.S. to sell to the Kurds Soviet weapons that were seized in Egypt. By 1974, the Iraqi Kurds, headed by Mullah Mustafa Barzani, from Barzanji's tribe, were obviously in a revolution. However, by 1975, Iran and Iraq ended the war under the Algiers Accords. Iranian abruptly halted their support for the Kurdish revolution and the revolution collapsed prematurely without gaining any political achievement (Newton-Small, 2014). David Phillips, scholar of Kurdish and Director of the Program on Peace-building and Rights at Columbia University's Institute for the Study of Human Rights argues that,

The twentieth century was a period of false promises, betrayal, and abuse for Kurds. The Kurds had national aspirations as the Ottoman Empire started to wane. They sought political support and protection from the Great Powers. Promises were made,

but Kurds were ultimately abandoned. Hopes dashed, Kurds rebelled and were suppressed, their political rights and cultural identity brutally denied (Phillips, 2015, p. 3).

Nonetheless, over the years, the Kurds have had cordial relations with the U.S. granting favours through the government and on Capitol Hill (Tamkin, 2017).

The geopolitics of the Middle East is a very complicated one and the Kurds remain and appear to be the only group that are secular, pro-Western, and pro-American as well as tacitly pro-Israel. The KRG has long been one of the United States' most reliable allies in the Middle East (Boot, 2017). The U.S. and the Kurds of Iraq have shared values and have shed blood together such that it's virtually difficult not to have a deep and abiding empathy for the cause of Kurdish independence (Bernard, 2017). "There's a kind of instinctual support for the Kurds within parts of the government," said Dennis Ross, a former special assistant on the Middle East to President Obama (Dubin & Tamkin, 2017). Frantzman argues that During the Obama administration, Washington made a series of strange decisions to reform fences with regimes, such as Iran, that palpably hate America. In Pakistan, outwardly an American ally, voting show more than two-thirds consider the U.S. an "enemy." Jordanians (85 percent) and Turks (73 percent) view the U.S. unfavourably, while anyone who has travelled in the Kurdish region will see openly the affection that the people there have for the U.S. nationals. The Kurdistan region in Iraq is the region in which the U.S. nationals feel safest and most welcome (Frantzman, 2017). In this connection it is expected that the U.S. should take steps to consolidate friendly relations with the Iraqi Kurds. U.S.-Kurdish Convergence would serve as a counter-weight to political demagoguery and Islamist extremism. It can also influence reforms in countries where Kurds inhabit

(Phillips, 2015). It needs to be pointed out that the U.S. approaching to the Kurds when the need arises as it played in the containment of ISIS threat. In Iraq, Peshmargah have cut ISIS supply lines in the country's north, laying the groundwork for Iraqi forces assault on ISIS-held Mosul (Beauchamp, 2016). Boot thus believes that,

There is a strong historical, moral, and strategic case for supporting the Kurds. They are the largest ethnic group in the world without their own state ... and they have long been persecuted minorities. Since the establishment of the KRG in 1992, Iraqi Kurds have shown themselves to be staunch friends of Washington. Indeed, with U.S. relations with Turkey breaking down, the KRG could offer an alternative to *Incirlik* Air Base, which the United States uses to support military operations in Syria. The KRG is eager to host as many troops as the United States is willing to send, and it is unlikely to impose restrictions on U.S. operations. Erbil's airport is already home to a major command centre coordinating operations for the U.S.-led coalition against the Islamic State (Boot, 2017).

The Kurds attained their most international fame at the start of the twenty-first century, especially in Iraq. Iraqi Kurds were an important ally of the U.S.-led coalition that toppled Saddam's government in 2003. After over ten years of acting as the force that keeps the country together despite the sectarian tension between Sunni and Shia Arabs, the Kurds progressively asserted their independence and paving the way to self-determination (CFR, 2017). Kurds were key partner of the U.S. against Saddam Hussein in the 1990s and against the Iraqi insurgency and ISIS. Kurds have been trying to convince Washington to apply the same approach to their region (Frantzman, 2017). Therefore, the Kurds are openly pro-American. Not a single American has died in Iraqi Kurdistan since Saddam's dropping in 2003. Iraqi Kurds has functioning democratic

institutions, a vibrant civil society and an independent media and while corruption is still an issue, Iraqi Kurds is less corrupt than most neighbors (Phillips, 2015).

Following the September 11 terrorist attacks, the U.S. divided the world conceptually into good and evil blocs, with most of the evil blocs existed in the Middle East. Pushing al-Qaeda out, toppling the Taliban in Afghanistan, and overthrowing the Sadum's regime in Iraq further inspired the White House to seek to depose the Syrian and Iranian governments as well (Sherko, 2017). Hence a “New Middle East” project was launched, which involved dividing most of the regional states into several smaller ethnically- and religiously- determined states. This step would have led to the creation of a large Kurdish state for the first time in history, extending from west of Iran to north of Iraq, north of Syria, and east of Turkey (Sherko, 2017). In 2003, when the U.S. launched the second Gulf War, the Kurds in Iraq emerged as the expected allies of U.S. coalition. The northern border of the war was extensively fought by the Kurds. They fought valiantly and as before. Their desire to be recognized as a state re-emerged. Once again, the Kurds were regarded by the west as a critical ally to maintain regional balance and Western influence in the new Iraq, and not as an autonomous political body (Kross, 2017). The U.S. has helped ensure Iraqi Kurdish autonomy, while insisting that Iraq’s territorial integrity should not be compromised by an Iraqi Kurdish move toward independence. Iraq’s Kurds have tried to preserve a “special relationship” with the U.S. and use it to their advantage (Katzman, 2015). In the new Iraq constitution, the Kurds has achieved recognition of their independence. They again accede to still be a part of Iraq, but forbid the Iraqi forces from entering their territory or have their Peshmerga forces join the Iraqi forces. The constitutional

agreement of 2005 granted them to hold a referendum on the future Kirkuk city in 2007 at the latest (KROSS, 2017).

The Iraqi Kurds often referred to as the Middle East's once-forgotten people, have obtained full recognition in the international arena since the overthrow of Baathist's regime in Iraq. The discoveries of major gas and oil fields in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, their increasing involvement in the Syrian Civil War, and their fight against ISIS have advertise more the importance of their role as a crucial political, social, and economic factor, especially in relation to U.S. foreign policy (Phillips & Myers, 2015). Iraqi Kurdistan has a booming economy and huge energy reserves, including 45 billion barrels of oil. In this connection the U.S. energy companies should be encouraged to to develop Iraqi Kurdistan's oil and natural gas fields notwithstanding the central government in Baghdad's objections (Phillips, 2015).

In Iraq's system of resource distribution, Kurdistan Region is assumed to receive 17 percent of government revenues. According to officials in the Kurdish capital, Erbil, Baghdad has constantly marginalised the Kurds of this constitutionally mandated share of government revenues (Cook, 2017). This accounting spat has enraged both Kurds and Arabs and has obliged Kurds themselves to ignore agreements with the Iraqi government as they see fit. The best example of this is Erbil decision to sell oil independent of Baghdad. At one point in 2014, the fight over the KRG's proposed oil trade required the then U.S. Vice President Joe Biden to intercede. American officials helped negotiate an agreement in December 2015, but that failed, leading Erbil to sell oil without the consent of Baghdad in 2015 (Cook, 2017).

Hence, the relations of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq with the U.S. blossomed considerably, particularly following the latest exploration of energy. Numerous companies arrived at the region to invest in energy, including big American companies like ExxonMobil, Chevron and others. The Kurds significance in the U.S foreign policy had increased in the Middle East after the arrival of the ISIS, where the Kurds portrayed themselves as a steadfast reliable force in the fights against the ISIS. The U.S. supposed defeating the ISIS would be complicated without the Kurds and consequently, proffered every kind of assistance to the *Peshmerga* to combat the terrorist group and the *Peshmerga* offered the finest strategy in defeating the ISIS. Michael Knights, a Boston-based senior fellow of The Washington Institute, lamented that,

The early May visit to Washington DC might have become just another battle in the deepening struggle between Washington and Erbil,..The Kurdish performance in Washington was that of the team player. Barzani's patient approach was possible in part because he is the most senior Iraqi Kurdish decision-maker, not a subordinate responsible to a higher authority elsewhere. Barzani laid out the real objective of the visit when he stated, "Right now the priority is fighting [ISIL], but the process of self-determination will continue." In the Kurdish view, the visit provided what Iraqi ambassador to Washington, Lukman Faily, calls an "independence health check," a chance to check in with the Americans regarding their mid-term view of the Kurds' right to self-determination. The Kurds seem to have received a neutral response from the Americans regarding the "process of self-determination," which they will view as a green light to continue to move incrementally and peacefully towards economic independence and later de jure statehood (Knights, 2015).

In addition, Knights believes that, The KRG has authoritative U.S. Congressional backing and they are unlikely to lose it as long as they do not overstrain their influence and wear out their supporters' enthusiasm at too early a stage. The Iraqi Kurds also have firm and growing support from the Pentagon, their partner in the fight against ISIS and the operator of a new U.S. mid-term base at Bashir airfield in Harir, The KRG. By making the U.S. administration's burden in Iraq easier in the near term, the Kurds appear to be starting to make a play for these remaining allies in the push for autonomy and international recognition (Knights, 2015). Thus, for the Americans, the Kurds were obvious allies. Unlike, say, the Iraqi army, the Kurds are strong and reliable fighters. This alliance has worked well. It's helped Syrian and Iraqi Kurds protect their territory from ISIS. And it has assisted the U.S. lead an anti-ISIS effort that has seen the group lost most of its territory since August 2014 (Beauchamp, 2016). Whereas the U.S. wants to defeat ISIS as part of a larger effort to return stability to the Middle East, Iraqi and Syrian Kurds are mostly focused on protecting their own populations and territory. Those two objectives overlap today, but as ISIS threats subside, so does the reason for the U.S.-Kurdish alliance.

The contribution of the Kurdish forces in fighting the ISIS especially has elevated their international reputation. Certain countries, Germany included, have openly provided arms and training to the Kurdish forces to stay formidable when encountering the threats from terrorists. Meanwhile, the Trump administration has begun arming Syrian Kurds over Turkey's objections, expanding the U.S. involvement after years of providing air cover for Kurdish ground operations against the ISIS (CFR, 2017) Thus, the peshmerga gains prompted renewed discussion among Kurdish leaders about seeking outright independence from Iraq. In early July, the President of the Kurdistan

Region of Iraq Masoud Barzani asked the parliament to plan a referendum on independence (Katzman, Blanchard, Humud, Margesson, & Weed, 2015). Kurdish leaders subsequently reiterated that the crisis the KRG faces from the ISIS has caused KRG leaders to jettison the independence effort, at least temporarily. KRG leaders probably view the independence issue primarily as leverage in disputes with Iraqi government, such as those over KRG oil exports and revenue-sharing (Katzman, 2015).

Rampage in the Middle East presents both challenges and opportunities for more than 30 million Kurds living in the region (Meltio, 2015). Thus, the Kurds took advantage of the turmoil in the Middle East to achieve their dream of gaining statehood, particularly following the independence of Mosul city from the ISIS. They believed holding a referendum in the region was the first step to attain this aspiration. In a Washington Post article, Massoud Barzani, the President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq announced that,

On Sept. 25, the people of Iraqi Kurdistan will decide in a binding referendum if they want independence or to remain part of Iraq. The vote will resolve a conflict as old as the Iraqi state itself between the aspirations of the Kurdish people and a government in Baghdad that has long treated Kurds as less than full citizens of the country. Iraqi Kurdistan's exercise of its right to self-determination threatens no one and may make a volatile region more stable. It will not alter the borders of any neighboring state and, if done right, will make for a much stronger relationship between Iraq's Arabs and Kurds. We are determined to do everything possible to accommodate Iraqi concerns in the likely event that the vote is for independence (Barzani, 2017).

Question arose as to the reasons for the Kurds of Iraq to decide on the referendum. Several reasons prompted the Kurds to conduct the referendum although they know of the complicated character of the exercise. In 2007, when the U.S. troops started to retreat from Iraq, the Kurds were worried about the future of Iraq. The Kurds urged the Americans to remain and build bases in Kurdistan. The Americans disregarded the appeal and withdrew their troops in 2011. This was one of the initial determinants that created a sequence of events that caused the Kurds to declare autonomy and consider being an independent state as the ‘ultimate goal’ (Gailan, 2017). The moment the Americans ordered for a withdrawal, things became a mess and a serious series of events unravelled. Iraq was politically fragmented with sectarianism becoming the feature that define the political setting. In terms of economy, the PM Nouri AL-Maliki slashed the 17% constitutional share of KRI’s allocation of oil revenues which cost the KRG almost \$1 billion a month (Stansfield, 2017). The question on state border was among the problems that ruined the Kurds’ relationship with the Iraqi government since 2003; its non-resolution had disappointed Barzani that eventually led them to organize a referendum (Hiltermann, 2017). Furthermore, Baghdad started to enforce a sequence of sanctions against the KRG, which included the reduction of salaries of Kurdish public servants, Kurdistan’s portion of the Iraqi budget, medical supplies etc. It should be asserted that when ISIS announced war against the Kurds, the Iraqi state did not intervene and left the Kurds on their own. Since then, the Kurds have found themselves facing security issue and in a hostile environment that was threatens their survival (Gailan, 2017). The Kurds held that the only way to resolve Iraq's dilemma was to refer to the referendum in their negotiation with Iraq so that they could leave Iraq peacefully without bloodshed. However, the Kurdish politicians seemed not to

understand the political reality and seemed to exaggerate their view of U.S. backing for its autonomy.

Hence, it has been emphasized previously that the referendum put an end to the friendly relationship between the Kurds and the U.S. The U.S. publicly opposed the referendum from being held by Mr. Massoud Barzani and hence, had advised him not to proceed with the referendum. It was thus a political suicide on the part of Barzani when he proceeded anyway even though the U.S. believed it was not the right time for such declaration. Therefore, America rejected the Kurds dream and consequently, incurred great misfortune when they lost almost 40% of the territory, they previously controlled, which included the oil-rich Kirkuk city.

It must be noted that the U.S. forces have been working closely with Kurds in the war against the ISIS for two years which began in northern Iraq with the peshmerga. Such military alliance against a common foe, ISIS, collapsed as soon as Kurdistan region conducted the much-criticised referendum. the U.S. has been wary to avoid appearing committed to Kurdish ambitions for independence, as it balances relations with Iraq and Turkey (Frantzman, 2017). At the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 2008, Lieutenant General Simon Mayall, the deputy commander of the multi-national corps in Iraq, spoke about jihad versus the surge. The Kurdish region was “a totally safe area,” he said. Coalition forces “never had a single casualty or security incident since 2003.” After giving details on some of the hundreds of attacks by Arab insurgents on coalition and Iraqi forces, Mayall added that one of the “concerns” in Iraq was “Kurdish intransigence.” He went on to assert that “they’ve got to have pressure on them to feel they are part of Iraq” (Frantzman, 2017). There are several reasons for this: regional instability; suppression of the Kurds, most dramatically in Turkey and Saddam

Hussein's Iraq; violent opposition to a Kurdish state; civil war in Kurdistan; and, regardless of certain renowned Western backers, promoting Kurdish autonomy was not feasible. These factors were shown this week as Iraqi army conquered Kirkuk, the oil-rich city in dispute, which the Kurds regarded as their Jerusalem. Kurdish troops had conquered the city since 2014, when Iraqi army escaped the area when they were attacked by ISIS (Calamur, 2017). Those areas were included in the Sept. 25 referendum in which the Kurds voted overwhelmingly for Self-determination. The vote outraged not only Baghdad and the United States, but also neighbours Ankara and Tehran, which have sizable Kurdish populations (Zucchini, 2017). Therefore, Bernard believes that, it's not the fault of the Iraqi Kurds that the U.S. cannot warranty their independence from Iraq; it's the fault of their neighbours. There is much that the United States can and should do to advance the cause Kurdish independence. But the present threats to Kurdistan region following this referendum are massive. The best thing that the U.S. can offer is to help each side back away from the precipice (Bernard, 2017).

Additionally, U.S. officials were afraid that the referendum vote would further destabilize the PM of Iraq, Haider al Abadi. He is already somewhat disliked in the country and has been tackling the struggle against ISIS on one hand and Iranian leverage on the other (Dubin & Tamkin, 2017). U.S. officials are also worried that the referendum and mounting political pressure between Iraqi government and Kurdistan Region could disrupt the anti-ISIS alliance, although Kurdish peshmerga troops have been among the extremely successful battalions in fighting the group (Dubin & Tamkin, 2017). Hence, the Iraqi Kurdish leaders were told that the time is not yet suitable for in taking such action. However, according to Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman,

the KRG's representative in Washington that Kurds are constantly told it's not a suitable time for independence. "From our perspective, it's always a bad time," she said. "If you're looking for a moment when Iraq is stable and you have somebody reasonable to negotiate with, that's never been the case in Iraq." the best U.S. offer to defer the referendum arrived far too late and the vote could not be delayed. "We didn't have confidence that Baghdad would have stood by it anyway," she said (Calamur, 2017).

This feeling of distrust is not immediate, but over an extended time of over a hundred years. Thus, the Kurds lost trust in the successive governments of Iraq, but after 2003, considered Iraq as the chance for them to rectify the political course in Iraq. However, it appeared that the Kurds were no longer peacemakers this time. In Iraq political scenario, the Kurds noted that after the collapse of Saddam's government nothing changed in Iraq, save for the individual government; the Iraqi policy regarding the Kurds was still as before. The latest incidents were evidence that the central government in Baghdad were not hesitant to use military force to fight the Kurds when they chose for a referendum on September 25, 2017. In this respect, the Iraqi authorities have breached Article IX A of the Constitution, prohibiting the use of the Iraqi army to resolve internal conflicts. The Article goes thus:

The Iraqi armed forces and security services will be composed of the components of the Iraqi people... They shall be subject to the control of the civilian authority, shall defend Iraq, shall not be used as an instrument to oppress the Iraqi people, shall not interfere in the political affairs, and shall have no role in the transfer of authority (Iraqi constitution, 2005).

The violation, it needs to be stressed did not receive any protest from the U.S., who regularly courts Kurds friendship whenever the need arises. This thus indicates that the Iraqi Kurdistan needs to evolve alternative strategy to drive home their demands.

6.7 Kurdish independence between realism and liberalism

In this section, the study aims to illuminate both realists and liberal's views of American politicians and academics that are influential in the decision-making of U.S. foreign policy on Kurdistan's independence from Iraq and how far would they support this move. Where they divided the U.S. position according to Realism and Idealism theory in international relations, taking into consideration the geopolitical considerations of the American national security, into two camps: realism and idealism. For its part the Idealist Camp supports the independence of Iraqi Kurdistan according to the following considerations:

First: matchmaking with the historical American values in support the peoples to independence, upon which the U.S. supported the self-determination of Latin America from the Spanish Empire in the nineteenth century, Central and Eastern European independence from the Austrian, Hungarian, German and Russian empires after WWI (Salah, 2017), Most notably, the administration of Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt made this value central to their afterward efforts. The UN set in stone the principle of "equal rights and self-determination of peoples" in its charter. the U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson asserted these values in an address to a meeting of the Community of Democracies in Washington. "We must support emerging democracies in the struggle to become nations that respect human rights regardless of ethnicity," he said (Calamur, 2017). This camp believes that Kurdish independence will be a strategic asset for the U.S. and a paradigm of democracy for the Middle East (Torell, 2016).

Second: Ending the historical oppression of Kurds in Iraq, in addition to the fact that the Iraqi Kurds did not enjoy the right to independence and did not establish their state after the breakdown of the Ottoman Empire, they have lived scattered among four countries (Iraq, Syria, Iran and Turkey) as marginalized ethnic, vulnerable to oppression (Salah, 2017). During Saddam Hussein's regime, under whom the Kurdish suffered several waves of suppression (Torell, 2016). The flashpoint of the last three decades of the twentieth century was the notorious Anfal campaign in the waning months of the Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988) during which — according to Human Rights Watch — Saddam Hussein's army killed about 100,000 Kurds. Among those who perished were 5,000 civilians who died terrible deaths after Iraqi army dropped mustard gas and the nerve agent Sarin on the town of Halabja (Cook, 2017). Moreover, the humanitarian and refugee crisis in 1991 that led to a mass exodus was another juvenile that took place where the Iraqi forces revenge for uprisings that had taken place the same year, where more than 1.5 million Kurds run away to the borders of Iran and Turkey (Gailan, 2017). Thus, the proponents of this current of thought view the Kurdistan Independence as an endeavour to remedy the historical injustice to which the Iraqi Kurds have been subjected for over a century (Salah, 2017).

Third: Protection of minorities in Kurdistan region, including tens of thousands of Christians, who escaped the country in post-Saddam's regime era for fear of oppression or arrest or murder by ISIS, after they took control of vast areas in Iraq. in addition to other minorities, such as Shabak and Yazidis, which have also run away to Kurdistan for similar fears, where the region and its government were more tolerant towards minorities compared to Iraq or countries in the Arab region (Salah, 2017). Therefore, President Obama made clear what his model for the country's future was "The Kurdish

region is functional in the way we would like to see," he said in a speech. "It is tolerant of other sects and other religions in a way that we would like to see elsewhere. So, we do think it is important to make sure that that space is protected (Noack, 2014)." fourth: remuneration the Kurds who were nearer to the Western countries and collaborated with various American administrations since invasion of Kuwait in 1991. This cooperation has increased after the occupation of ISIS to the city of Mosul, where Peshmerga proved to be the most effective in the war on ISIS, achieving the objective of the U.S. in extirpating the organization without forcing Washington to plunge its forces into a new war quagmire. Thus, Peshmerga helped the U.S. avoid incurring more heavy losses similar to those sustained during the Iraqi occupation (Salah, 2017).

Due to these considerations, there are many politicians and American academics supporting the independence of Kurdistan, Senator Conrad Burns is one of them, he argue in an article published in CNN Under the title "Why U.S. should support independence for Kurds" that "yes, it is True, Kurdistan's location and natural resources make it a very attractive strategic partner of the United States and our allies, but such political and strategic considerations should not be at the forefront of our decision-making process. Instead, we should support independence for Kurdistan because it is the right thing to do, and because America should – and must – remain the guiding light for those in pursuit freedom (Burns, 2017)." The senator criticized those who say that America should not interfere in the affairs of other countries except in the interests of the U.S. in the region, when he said "Undoubtedly, there will be those that believes that the U.S. should not intervene with the internal politics of foreign states. They will argue that the U.S. interest in the region is based only on the great reserves of natural resources that Kurdistan possesses. Such doubters fail to

understand the true importance of supporting freedom and are disregarding the Kurdish aspirations towards independence (Burns, 2017)." The Senator appreciates the sacrifices of the Kurdish people for independence, and believes that the Iraqi Kurds have been struggling for independence for generations. They have been neglected several times by outside world powers. The Kurds tolerated atrocities and have paid the price for freedom. And it is therefore time that the U.S. took heed of these sacrifices and fulfilled its moral obligation to support the Kurdistan and their aspirations for freedom and national sovereignty (Burns, 2017).

Peter Galbraith, a former U.S. diplomat who has been a vocal advocate for Kurdish independence, says "it's baffling" why the U.S. doesn't recognize a Kurdish state. Galbraith, who was in the Kurdistan region for the recent referendum as an unpaid adviser to the Kurds, argues that the area has long been a stronghold of stability in Iraq. "Could a place of 5 million people be a viable place?" he asked. "I would think so. It's larger and more viable than half the states in the United Nations" (Calamur, 2017).

Ziva Dahl published an article in the Washington Times under the title "Smashing a critical American ally... Why the betrayal of the Kurds is a victory for Iran?" he argues that "This current U.S. position plays right into Gen. Soleimani's hands, giving tacit legitimacy to Iran's actions. If Iran and its proxy in Baghdad achieve their goal regarding the Iraqi Kurds, it will be both a major victory for Iran in extending its Shia Crescent and a profound defeat for America and the West" (Dahl, 2017). Then he mentioned The Iraqi Kurds' future is at stake, together with the broader balance of power in the Middle East. Iraqi Kurds is a pro- American castle against both Iran and ISIS in a region rife with repressive Islamism. therefore, The U.S. should use the Kurds

as strategic leverage against Iran (something we lost with Mr. Obama's Iran deal) and with Iraq (something we lost with Mr. Obama's 2011 pullout) (Dahl, 2017). Dick Cheney's national security adviser stated on Kurdistan TV interview;

"The U.S. needs to understand that this is no longer a matter of Kurds and Arabs. This is now the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps against America; Qassem Soleimani against Donald Trump. Whatever the administration thought about the wisdom of the [Kurds'] peaceful referendum on independence, it would be a terrible blow to U.S. interests to allow an Iranian terrorist group and its Iraqi proxies to respond by smashing a critical American ally with impunity (Dahl, 2017)."

David Pollock is the Kaufman Fellow at The Washington Institute argues that the Iraqi Kurds aim for an independent and self-governing state "do so" for moral and practical reasons. The quest is likewise firm in historical events and unfulfilled promises from successive Iraqi governments. From a moral perspective, the Iraqi Kurds argument have three premises: First, the right to self-determination; Second, a history of persecution such as genocide, meted out by Iraqi governments; and Third, over the past twenty-five years, the Kurds have created a stable, peaceful, relatively democratic, and tolerant region that does not threaten neighbouring countries (Knights, Pollock, Wahab, & Pollock, 2017).

On the other hand, the second camp is the realistic. The arguments of this camp are grounded on the American geopolitical interests in the region. It is more influential among the new U.S. administration; its proponents reject Kurdistan's referendum and consider it ill-timed, for several reasons as follows:

First: the U.S. Priority is war on ISIS: They believe that supporting the Kurdish independence at the present time could adversely influence the course the U.S. war against ISIS, a priority for the U.S. national security strategy issued in 2015 (Salah, 2017). The U.S. had always made clear to the president of Kurdistan Region Mr. Masoud Al-Barzani that it opposed the referendum, saying it would excite ethnic conflict, destabilize the region and undermine the fight against the ISIS. the Iraqi government took steps to isolate the landlocked Kurds after the referendum, with the assistance of Tehran and Angara (Zucchini, 2017). The U.S. Special Presidential Envoy to Counter ISIS Brett McGurk stated in a press conference in Erbil, asserting: “There is no international support for the referendum, really, from anybody.” He described the referendum as “ill-timed and ill-advised” and “risky” (Mylroie, 2017). furthermore, the U.S. has pressing priorities agenda more important than Kurdish referendum, such as, the Iranian nuclear agreement, North Korea and Gulf conflict, meaning that the Iraqi Kurdistan crisis could wait or be postponed, at least from the U.S. perspective (Salah, 2017). Because the referendum in such circumstances and in an area such like the Middle East which is very important in the U.S. strategy will cause disturbances in the region and this does not serve the national interest of the U.S., the Kurds therefore should not continue to held the referendum at the present time.

Second: Antagonize the central government in Baghdad. Supporting the independence of Kurdistan could jeopardize the relations between U.S. and Iraq, which rejects the Kurdistan independence because of oil wealth, and for fear it courage sectarian separatism in Iraq (Salah, 2017). Therefore, U.S. relations with the Iraqi Kurds have been predicated on encouraging Kurds cooperation with the Iraqi forces during the

Mosul aggression. Brett McGurk, appointed in October 2015 as the special presidential envoy for the global coalition to counter ISIS, has played a significant role in this relationship (Frantzman, 2017). U.S. officials are also concerned that the Kurdish independence, and raise political tensions between the Iraqi government and Kurdistan region, could derail the anti-ISIS coalition, even though peshmerga fighters have been among the most effective in battling the group (Tamkin, 2017). Stressed U.S. Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan "Unity, is Iraq's best weapon against ISIS and other extremist groups." He emphasized the need for a continued dialogue between Baghdad and Erbil. The U.S. supports a federal, unified, prosperous, , and democratic Iraq, one that meets the aspirations of all Iraqis (Sullivan, 2018). For these reasons, the U.S. administration is conscious that antagonizing the central government in Baghdad would mean a possible loss of a prominent ally in the war against ISIS, and may led Baghdad away from Washington and push it towards further rapprochement with Tehran. This comes amid U.S. tries to contain the Iranian leverage in the region (Salah, 2017).

However, the U.S. is unlikely to take the Kurdish side. U.S. administration often argues that a unified, strong, stable Iraq is the region's best bet to fight terrorism and prevent the return of ISIS or similar extremists (Allen-Ebrahimian, 2017). The U.S. long-standing policy has been to seek to bridge the Arab-Kurdish divide, pressuring the Kurdistan region not to declare self-determination and the Iraqis not to use army against the Kurds. That policy seems to be breaking down, leaving the U.S. with a choice of seeking to maintain a neutral posture or adopting an outright pro- or anti-Kurdish policy (Boot, 2017). While, Ryan Crocker, who was U.S. ambassador to Iraq from 2007 to 2009, criticized this policy when he said the U.S. has weakened its

position by appearing to take Baghdad's side in the dispute with the Kurds. "I do not think we should have taken a position one way or the other on a Kurdish state in northern Iraq: It's for the Kurds and Iraqis to work out," he said. "But by injecting ourselves on one side of this ... [the] concern is that we will no longer be seen as an honest broker as we move ahead" (Calamur, 2017). Therefore, Ranj Alaaldin the researcher in the Brookings Institution in Washington DC. Believes the U.S. should assess and re-defining the relationship between the central government in Baghdad and the Kurdistan region that serve the interests of the region and the international community. Otherwise, ambitions for the Kurds will continue to deactivate and divide an Iraqi state that has a plethora of other challenges ahead, some existential and generational (Alaaldin, 2018).

Third: Could boost Iranian leverage, The U.S. is keenly afraid that supporting Kurdish independence could cause an antagonistic reaction from Iran, which views the independence as a threat to its territorial integrity and stimulate for separatism for around 10 million Kurds (Salah, 2017). In addition, its formation would cement a similar vassalage relations between Teheran and rump-Baghdad, ending once and for ever all American leverage over a country into which the U.S. has spent enormous blood and treasure since 2003 (Bernard, 2017), and stokes antipathy against the U.S., as a great power to be blamed for fragmentising Iraq into statelets. Such discourse might acquisition popularity, not only in Iraq, but also across the Arab world (Salah, 2017).

Fourth: Fuel tensions with Ankara and influence NATO, The U.S. did not back the Kurdistan independence lest this aggravates the already existing tension between U.S. and Turkey, a staunch NATO ally (Salah, 2017). The orthodox view of the positions

taken by the neighbours of the Iraqi Kurds is straightforward: that the Kurds would never be allowed their independence. Angara, in particular, was viewed as being wary of the threat posed by Kurdish independence in Iraq, lest any successes there served as an example for the far greater Kurdish population of southeast Anatolia (Stansfield, 2017). The Turks are opposed to Kurdish independence because it could make Syrian Kurds restive about independence as they are currently engaged in a fight with the Kurdistan Workers' Party, a terrorist group (Cook, 2017). On the other hand, yet Turkey is also the KRG's largest investor, and Masuud Barzani's KDP has developed strong relationship to Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party. The Iraqi Kurds are hoping that President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's takeover of the anti-Kurdish nationalist right will not impact their ambitions to statehood (Cook, 2017). Therefore, Dubin & Tamkin argued that "There's recognition that they [the Iraqi Kurds] struggled for a long time, paid a terrible price, and were oftentimes put in a position where they were treated as pawns in a larger game." But those intimate feelings have interfered with a host of factors that led U.S., like Iraq, Turkey, and many other countries, to dishearten Kurdish dreams of independence at this moment (Dubin & Tamkin, 2017). However, since the mid-twentieth century, few matters have managed to unify Iraq, turkey, Iran, and Syria as the Kurdish question or, more pointedly, how to prevent a Kurdish answer to that question. This has seen them aligned strategically to prevent a Kurdistan independent from emerging, even while they would each use the others' Kurds to undermine their regional competitor for tactical usefulness, as Teheran did to Baghdad very effectively in the war of 1980–88 (Stansfield, 2017).

It can be said that there are challenges facing the Iraqi Kurds that prevented America from providing any support for Kurdish independence from Iraq, one of the significant

challenges is the lack of unity among the Kurdish ranks internally. The internal challenge, the problems between the political parties as all the political parties even disagree on the independence of Kurdistan. Moreover, the Kurdistan independence from Iraq faces other challenges. The first and most exciting challenge is the position of Iraq and the neighbouring countries, especially Iran and Turkey, where these countries believe that the independence of Iraqi Kurds is encouraging the Kurds in these countries to demand the same thing. The other challenge is the international concern that the international situation does not allow for the establishment of a state under these complexes' conditions in the international arena.

Hassan Mneimneh is a contributing editor with Fikra Forum and a principal at Middle East Alternatives in Washington, outlined these challenges that facing the Kurdish state in an article in The Washington Institute for Near East Policy; he mentioned that the challenges of this rosy scenario are at multiple levels. The first is internal, with the inherent challenges of fulfilling the promise of a representative system, the realization of the independence of civil society, and the completion of unified security agencies (Mneimneh, 2017).. The second level is clarity relating the relation with Baghdad, taking into account historical rights and social realities. The questions at stake are thorny, with Kirkuk, oil, and water the most distinguished issues. A swift resolution of these issues is in the mutual interest (Mneimneh, 2017). The third level is about the hostility of the regional countries. The question is, however, tempered by realities. In Turkey, despite consternation and back-peddalling, it can be surmised that Turkey realizes that the Kurdish issue is in need of resolution, and that delaying it only exacerbates the issue. An independent Iraqi Kurds can serve as a mediator towards arrangements for a soft landing of the recurring conflict. Only Iran may harbour the

illusion of firm and permanent control on its portion of Kurdistan, and a Kurdish independent state to its west may cause the emergence of a internal threat. The Iranian grip on its Kurdistan is loosening, the most prominent evidence of which is being jihadi mobilization. Counter-intuitively, the emergence of Iraqi Kurdistan, as an alternative reference, may thus shape a retardant to radicalization in Iranian Kurdistan (Mneimneh, 2017). The fourth level is that of the international implications for the emergence of a Kurdish state as a model for independence. It is incumbent on the U.S. and the European Union to help usher this new experience away from characterizations of separatism, while also providing support to avoid a repeat of the “new state as a failed state” trope that has afflicted recently independent states (South Sudan, Eritrea, and Timor Leste). U.S. leadership on this question would be in keeping with promises, stated and implied (Mneimneh, 2017).

Considering the U.S. and its allies’ strategic interests, the new U.S. president needs to deal with the Middle East carefully and effectively. For the first time since WWII, the U.S. officials have the opportunity to use the “Kurdish card” in Iraq and Syria at the same time; this is to strengthen its leverage on four significant states in the Middle East at once (Sherko, 2017). Playing the "Kurdish Card" in Islamic Middle East nations by the New U.S. administration could have unique political implications towards Kurds by looking at the whole Kurds in Middle East region as a specific strategic policy package. During the next four years, the new U.S. president’s policy toward Kurdistan should focus on securing a confederate system based on the historical, geographic, and administrative aspects of Kurdistan (Sherko, 2017). Therefore, the new administration should **adopt** a direct action to preserve international confidence and make connections to the Iraqi Kurds (Knights, 2017). Likewise, it is remarkable

that the U.S. press pay attention to international protection of the Kurdish areas liberated by the Kurds from ISIS (comprising 49% of Kurdistan) until the implementation of Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution and the boundaries of Kurdistan region are marked; this will settle the argument over the fate of disputed territories outside the Kurdish control (Sherko, 2017).

As for Kurdish officials it appears to have overrated their strategic importance in the U.S. eyes, an error commonly made by local Middle Eastern powers. supposedly the Iraqi Kurds thought that Israel and the UAE could secure them American approval (Abdul-Hussain, 2017). Falah Mustafa Bakir, the head of the Kurdistan Regional Government's Department of Foreign Relations, told Foreign Policy during a visit to Washington that "The people of Kurdistan do hope that the United States would stand by the values, the principles, and also the friendship that we have developed," Bakir said (Allen-Ebrahimian, 2017). But it seems that U.S. policy does not believe in values and principles. All these are gadgets to achieve U.S. national interests in the region, therefore, the Kurds must know that, the game of nations is a complicated. In addition, the Iraqi Kurds appear be unaware that they still need more cards that they can play if they ever seek self-determination. The U.S. might send its love to Kurds, but love is never enough to secure statehood (Abdul-Hussain, 2017).

6.8 Conclusion

The study in this chapter has attempted to shed light on the American foreign policy after the emergence of the ISIS. The researcher divided this chapter into two phases: the emergence of the ISIS or what we call the pre-referendum phase and the post-referendum phase of September 25, 2017. The U.S. support for the Kurds continued until 2014 when the ISIS emerged and occupied the city of Mosul and came close to

the city of Erbil. President Obama said "Erbil is a red line for us" and an alliance was formed against the Islamic state and America provided arms and money to the Kurds despite Baghdad's objections to the step. After the emergence of the ISIS, a new and important phase of the relationship began between the two parties, we can say that this is the only period we can call it the relationship, but before this period there was nothing called a relationship but it could be named a coordination or cooperation. However, after the emergence of the ISIS a treaty was signed between the Peshmerga Ministry in the province and U.S. Defense Department, the Pentagon. This stage is considered the golden stage in the relationship between America and the Kurds.

The study concluded that the American reaction, which shocked many people interested in the American Kurdish issue, has several reasons, first: after the emergence of the Islamic state, America saw it was difficult to defeat the Islamic state without Kurdish cooperation. Second: Kurdistan has become important in U.S. foreign policy after the exploration of oil and gas where major U.S. companies such as Exxon Mobil and Chevron, came to Kurdistan to invest in the energy sector. America argues that this oil and gas can relieve the Russian pressure on Europe and its strategic ally in the region Turkey, even Turkey, after it was against the Kurdish entity in Iraq, also saw it is in its interest to revive this region and its wealth. Therefore, Kurdistan has become a place for more than 2000 Turkish companies. Thirdly, the Kurds proved that they are a stabilizing factor in the region and not vice versa. Finally, Kurdistan has proved to be the best place for peaceful coexistence in the region, where all denominations enjoy free nationalities and practice their religious rituals safely. All these reasons made America reluctant to support the Kurds when they were attacked by the Islamic state.

In the post-referendum phase, the U.S. attitude towards the Kurds has changed completely, and U.S. officials even before the referendum said they were not with the referendum, their argument was that the threat of the Islamic state is still in place and the time was not right for this step. The U.S. believed that such a step would lead to instability in the region and this is not in the interests of America and its allies in the region.

On the other hand, the Kurds imagined that the United States and the European countries will appreciate the sacrifices made by the Peshmerga forces in their fight against the organization of the state when it was fighting the Islamic state on behalf of the world. Moreover, the Kurdish conflicts and the Kurdish suffering from internal conflicts had a significant impact on the abandonment of America from them as the Iraqi forces would not be able to enter the city of Kirkuk without the help of a wing of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, who agreed with Qassem Soleimani. As well as U.S. interests with Turkey and Iraq made the U.S. to stand in such a position. For all these reasons, America did not support the Kurdistan independence referendum.

As for the question of Chapter Six, which states, what is the American perspective on the independence of Kurdistan?

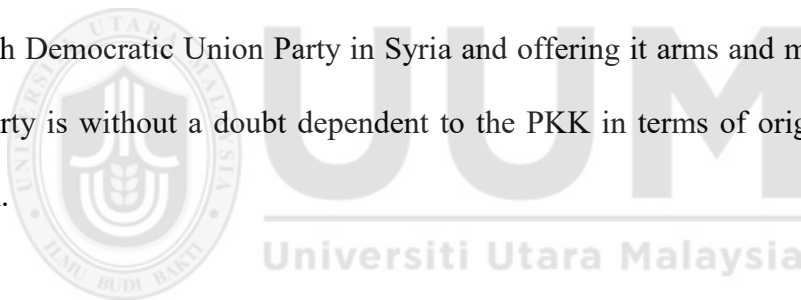
The study answered that there are several reasons behind that, which prompted the realists of American academics and politicians not to support the independence of Kurdistan. Firstly, the priority of the war on terror which represented by the Islamic state, where U.S. officials have repeatedly stated that one of their priorities is to eliminate the Islamic state. Secondly, supporting the independence of Kurdistan raises the hostility of Iraq. Iraq is one of the countries with its weight in OPEC; consequently,

America saw it difficult to stand beside the Kurds in such circumstances. Thirdly, supporting the Kurds in this way poses a danger to American interests with a strategic ally, Turkey, the second largest army in NATO. Furthermore, U.S. support for the independence of Kurdistan threatens the unity and territorial integrity of Iran and Turkey, which does not guarantee the silence of these countries on such a step if carried out by America. Therefore, these countries considered that the establishment of an independent Kurdish entity would encourage the Kurds in their countries to do the same thing, which jeopardizes their national security and territorial integrity. Thus, these countries have done all they can to discourage America from providing any support for the Kurdistan independence from Iraq. All these challenges have made America unable to support Kurdistan's independence.

On the other hand, it seems that the Kurds exaggerated their importance in the U.S. strategy and they could not read the reality as it was. The Kurds must realize one thing is that no one can give them independence on a plate, but they must rely on themselves and unite their ranks first and foremost. History has proved that every time when the Kurds get close to gain their independence then this dream usually gets destroyed by betrayal of Kurdish to the Kurds. What happened on 16 October 2017 is the best proof of this.

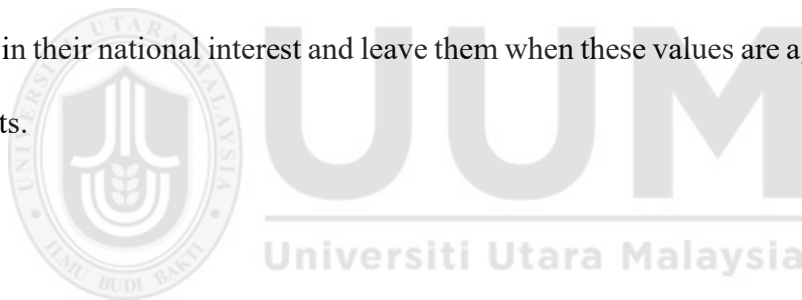
The study found that U.S. policymakers are driven by national interests only and that U.S. interests with these Kurdish-populated countries far outweigh America's interests with Kurds. The study also found that the principles that America believes in human rights, democracy and peace are all mechanisms that work for American interests when they serve these values in their national interest and leave them when these values are against American interests.

Likewise, the study concluded that U.S. foreign policy is a realistic policy and America uses the two main principles in the realistic theory to deal with the Kurds, namely, national interests and balance of power. As we mentioned that American politicians consider the American national interest above all considerations. Therefore, we found America and through the history of their relationship with the Kurds that they supported them sometimes and have given them away at other times according to U.S. interests in the region. U.S. policymakers also use the Kurdish card to preserve the balance of power in the region without paying attention to the values and principles that they believe in it and spending the billions of dollars in order to spread them in the world. Their dealings with Syrian Kurds are the best evidence, where the U.S. classifies Turkey's PKK as a terrorist organization, at the same time support the Kurdish Democratic Union Party in Syria and offering it arms and money. Note that this party is without a doubt dependent to the PKK in terms of origin, thought and system.



In addition, The Kurds in Iraq has been variously affected by the pros and cons of international politics since the aftermath of First World War. The various promises that had hitherto made to Kurds in the Middle East - the hope of having their own separate state did not coincide with the interests of major powers, most importantly the U.S. Such regular disappointment of the statehood has rendered the aspiration of Kurds in Iraq meaningless and unrewarded. In this manner, the overall debate of the U.S, foreign policy towards Iraqi Kurds points to some important realistic political inclinations. One, as long as the national interest of the U.S. is not served by the Kurds political process in Iraq, it needs to be noted that the U.S. will not totally incline to lend any support. Two, The U.S. foreign policy towards the Kurds is dictated by the

realist prescription of “survival of the fittest”. The U.S will normally rise to assist and respond to the demand of Iraqi Kurds if such demand is to reinforce the survival of the U.S. in the Middle East and other parts of the world. Lastly, it needs to be reiterated that there has never been any seriousness on the part of the U.S. and other global powers to lend meaningful support to the Iraqi Kurds’ political aspiration in Iraq and as long as global powers remain to be directed and guided by their national interest, the Iraqi Kurds will remain pawn in the hand of the U.S. Thus, the study found that U.S. policymakers are driven by national interests only and that U.S. interests with these Kurdish-populated countries far outweigh America's interests with Kurds. The study also found that the principles that America believes in human rights, democracy and peace are all mechanisms that work for American interests when they serve these values in their national interest and leave them when these values are against American interests.



CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

This study examined the U.S. foreign policy towards the Iraqi Kurds. In conducting the research, the thesis is divided into seven chapters, Chapter One discussed Background to the Study while Chapter Two looked at Literature Review. Chapter Three of the thesis delved into Theoretical Framework and Methodology while Chapter Four looked at the U.S Foreign Policy towards the Kurds in the Middle East. Chapter Five of the thesis examined U.S. Foreign Policy towards Iraq Kurdistan between 1961 and 2003 while Chapter Six elucidated the Emergence of ISIS and the U.S. Foreign Policy towards the Iraqi Kurds. The final chapter, conclusion, concluded the research and made recommendations. Thus, this research has been able to highlight the U.S. foreign policy towards the Iraq Kurds. It sought to examine in detail the stresses and strains in the U.S. foreign policy towards the Kurdistan region of Iraq. Such relationship between state and sub-national entity is termed Para diplomacy. In this way, the research has highlighted those factors that governed the relationship between the two entities and as well pointed out some findings from the study. The Kurds in the Middle East have been important elements that occasionally dictate the direction of the U.S. foreign policy towards the region. In this section attempt will be made to discuss the findings of the study, make recommendations, observations and conclude the research.

7.2 Summary of the Findings

Following are the findings of the research:

Security and U.S. Kurdish Relationship: the research has shown that one of the cardinal factors that dictated the foreign policy of the U.S. towards Iraqi Kurds is its national security. Security is the pivotal focus of the U.S. interest in its relations with any part of the world. Like most states in the international system, security is the primary national interest pursued by any nation and as long as that security is guaranteed others interest can be pursued and attained. In the atmosphere of insecurity, it is very difficult for other interest to be pursued. In this way, the U.S. has seen the Middle East as a volatile area where its security and that of its allies can be undermined. This is because the Middle East region is historically a troublesome region where terrorism is fully established. From the time beginning from 1940s, shortly after Second World War, the Middle East has become the center focus of the U.S. foreign policy. And to maximize the most opportunity in achieving its lofty set goals and objectives, the U.S. has been able to align itself with principal elements in the region. Kurds, because of its circumstance in the region has become a pawn in the hand of the U.S. for decades. This does not only apply to Iraqi Kurds but also all Kurds in the Middle East. It has always been a case of employing the tactic of “use and dump” by the U.S. to deal with Kurds in Iraq. Any time there are issues of insecurity in the Middle East what readily comes to the mind of the U.S. is how to manipulate the minority elements against the Arabs and Turks to achieve the end of a policy. The issue of insurgency, terrorism, and authoritarianism are the most prominent among the insecurity issues in the Middle East and anytime such arises, the U.S. in its characteristic style would try to use Kurds in Iraq to achieve such means. This situation was found to be true in the case of Operation Desert Storm in 1992, the capturing of

Saddam Hussein, Syrian conflict and ISIS terror attack. For all cases, it has always been the issue of promise and fail. As soon as issue is settled Kurds are usually abandoned to their fate. This has been a recurrent issue in the U.S. foreign policy towards the Iraq Kurds. It needs to be reiterated here that the 9/11 attack greatly added to the stimulation of the U.S. to Middle East issue as it declared war on terror. The aftermath of the attack brought to the fore the vulnerability of the U.S. security to the outside world. Hitherto, the U.S. had been complacent about its security and immunity from security threats outside the Western hemisphere. The attack of 9/11 greatly dismantled such assertion and the U.S. was no more save from terror attack. Such sense of vulnerability greatly influenced the role of the U.S. in the Middle East by playing one power against the other in order to dismantle the terror regimes in the Middle East. The U.S. administration in Washington was of the view that democracy needs to be instituted in the region in order to disband the terror attack. And that explains the reason the U.S. government maintains close contact and relationship with Kurds in Iraq in order to upstage the regime of Saddam Hussein. One needs to recognize that the removal of Saddam Hussein did not eventually remove the security threats to the U.S. from the region as Iran and the emergence of ISIS later brought to the fore the constant need of the U.S. to maintain friendly ties with Kurds and Turkey. Another aspect of the U.S. security policy in the Middle East, most importantly in the Gulf region is the maintenance of good relations and rapports with all monarchs who are heads of governments in the region. This explains the close rapport of the U.S. with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman. The security of all these states are guaranteed and provided by the U.S. and other European Union (EU) members. Such strategic assistance is embraced by all the monarchs in the Gulf region in order to shield them from rogue states like Iraq, Iran, and Yemen. In the

case of Iraq, the Kurds has always been a pawn to be used to contain the threat from Iraq.

Oil: this has always been an important element dictating the direction of U.S. foreign policy towards the Kurds in Iraq. It has been estimated that the oil deposit in the Kirkuk in Northern Iraq will sustain Iraq finances for decades. Such oil deposit has always been the focus of U.S. in Iraq, most especially before the discovery of shale oil. It needs to be reiterated here that the discovery of shale oil in no way diminishes the role being played by the U.S. in the region. It has been discovered that oil is still one of the most significant issues in U.S. foreign policy towards the Kurds. And that might explain why the U.S. does not want the Kurdistan region to enter into any international oil contract with any state. The interest of the U.S. is to ensure that the Kurds in Iraq should be financially amputated in order to maintain the unity of Iraq. The idea behind such policy standing is that if Kurdistan region is allowed to have total control over the oil, with attendant losing of revenue by Iraqi state, such might empower Kurdistan region to the detriment of Iraq unity. In this case, the U.S. national interest has been to ensure the national Iraq government has the monopoly of accessing the oil so as to ensure the unity and stability of Iraq. Despite the U.S. making use of Kurds anytime any security issue arises, The U.S. government does not have interest in the disintegration of Iraq. In fact, the recent construction of pipeline from Kurdistan region to Turkey for the sale of oil in the international market did not receive the blessing of the U.S. as that can empower the Kurdistan region to declare its autonomy from Iraq state. The main rationale behind the insistence of the U.S. in the maintenance of Iraq Unity is to maintain the balance of power in the Middle East. The Iraqi Kurds' independence is constantly a matter of debate in the media and the final dictator of the

direction of the independent movement is the U.S. and its western collaborators. Although the U.S. has declared its intention severally on the independent movement of Iraq Kurds that Washington does not have interest in the Kurds becoming an independent state. Despite, the Kurds in Iraq have been trying to influence the decision of the U.S. in their favour. The Kurds insistence on the need to have a separate state outside Iraq, with attendant romantic relationship with the U.S., led to unwarranted surrender to the requests of U.S. all the time. The requests, as it has been discovered by the research, were always to benefit the U.S. to the detriment of the Kurds. Kurds have always been preoccupied with the belief that yielding to the U.S. request might as well motivate the U.S. in helping them in their independent movement. Various attempts by the Kurds have failed and yielded no result. In that wise, one would expect the Kurds to have known that the U.S. cannot be trusted as far as the independent movement is concerned. The only political calculation that can change U.S. position is if there is a serious and constant humanitarian crisis like refugee, war, and genocide. And these calamities must have been caused by the Iraqi regime before U.S. may consider the option of independence. Oil and allies' interest would continue to determine the direction of U.S. policy towards Middle East region.

Balance of Power: The Kurds in many occasions have been served as an agent of balance of power by the U.S. and other western powers; such occurred in the heyday of the Cold war to contain the threat of the Soviet Union. In the Middle East region where Kurds represent important minority group, they have been subjected to manipulation several times to prevent the rise of Iraq as a threat to other states in the region. This is especially true of the post-1991 after the destruction of military apparatuses of Saddam Hussein. The Kurds in Iraq were enjoined by the U.S. to

participate in the coalition campaign against the Saddam regime. As soon as the Saddam Hussein was eventually defeated the Kurds were abandoned to their fate as Saddam heavily descended on Kurds militarily with attendant refugee crisis. The Kurds contacted the U.S. government for assistance but such was not forthcoming as the U.S. declared it internal affairs of Iraq. Such declaration was a euphemism for U.S. apathy to the military onslaught on the Kurds in Iraq. This has always been the recurrent issues with the U.S. anytime there is any state to be dealt with in the Middle East, the Kurds, as pawn will be readily come to the mind of the U.S. policy maker. And that explains the ongoing abandonment of Kurds in Iraq by the U.S. The Peshmarga forces were used completely to contain the advancement of ISIS in the Middle East with hope that the Kurds issue will be attended to afterwards. The threats of ISIS and that of Syria are gradually and relatively surmounted with little hope of U.S. supporting the political aspirations of the Kurds in Iraq. This is the political strategy of the U.S. towards the Iraqi Kurds. Such manipulations also explain the rationale behind the disunity between the KDP and PUK. The rivalry between both factions in Kurdistan region is to perpetually ensure disunity among the Kurds in the Middle East. This position has been promoted by both the U.S. and Turkey. The U.S. and Turkey are of the standing that as long as there is disharmony among the various factions in the Kurdistan Iraq it could be easier to manipulate the groups. And the unity among the Kurds may spell doom for the political calculations in the Middle East. In a way therefore, the Kurds political marginalization in the state of Iraq is a clear western design. Such political style by the U.S. as well explains why Kurds of Syria and Iran have been abandoned for decades knowing well that the Iran and Syrian regimes have been maltreating them. While the U.S. posture towards the Turkish Kurds has always been dictated by the response of Turkey, in most cases, the Turkish Kurds have been branded terrorists by

the U.S. government severally and this must be understood from the angle of friendship with Turkey. Thus, the research has shown that the Kurds in Iraq is an important instrument of the U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East and such instrument is invoked anytime there are issues at stake where the Kurds can serve a purpose.

Accident of Geography and History: the research has also shown that the political travails of the Kurds in Iraq in relation to the U.S. foreign policy are an accident of history. The Kurds in general in the Middle East are unlucky to have been part of the political geography where there is intense competition among international power brokers. The Middle East region has always been a vocal point where global powers jostle for political and economic influence for decades. The Ottoman Empire was the last political empire that glued the area together for centuries. With the collapse of the empire, the international political actors began to show interest in having their own share of Turkish collapse. If the Kurds were not located in such a geographical entity, the situation possibly would have ended differently. Most groups within the international system during the colonial era in Africa and other parts of Asia enjoyed the blessing of statehood from the colonial master. The case Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana in Southern parts of Africa is readily come to mind. These countries would have been part of Republic of South Africa today but for the fact that the region during the colonial era was singlehandedly dominated and occupied by the British wherein there was no competition as such between and among global powers. The region was not as competitive as the Middle East where many international political actors were trying to assert their influence. The recent independence of Timor Leste and South Sudan are also cases in point. Because they are not located in a politically volatile environment like the Middle East, it was possible for the U.S. to

pursue their independence with relative ease. It also needs to be pointed out that the creation of Israel is a factor. As the Balfour Declaration blessed the creation of Israel in 1948, it would be very difficult to create another Kurdish state within the same geographical location given the Arabs' resentment. In that manner it would be politically unwise for both the U.S. and Britain to pursue the creation of Kurdish state. And so far, that could not be done at that point; it has been difficult to do subsequently. In fact, the case of Palestine is also readily come to mind here. When Israel was portioned out of Palestine in 1948, the preoccupation of Palestine would have been to maintain its statehood alongside the Israel state. But the refusal of Palestine to acknowledge the state of Israel led to it recklessly losing its sovereign status. And since then it has been difficult for Palestine to reverse the case. All efforts made by Palestine to attain statehood have always been frustrated by western powers, most importantly the U.S. As the saying goes: "justice delay is justice denied". Whatever one needs to accomplish has to be done timely and promptly. The political terrain in the Middle East today has been very complex and diverse and the issue of yesterday may become something else today and tomorrow. This analogy explains the political travail of the Kurds in Iraq and other parts of the Middle East. The Kurds in Iraq, in essence, have been used as bargaining chips among the would-be international power brokers; most importantly the U.S. In a way, therefore, accident of geographical location is a condition in the U.S.-Kurdish relationship.

Realist precept and U.S.-Kurdish Relationship: the history of U.S.-Kurdish relationship in Iraq has been validated by political realism of Hans Morgenthau and Henry Kissinger. The relationship between and among states within the international system in most cases does not conform to moral precept. From the days of Thucydides

to Mearsheimer's the international political atmosphere has been of the same resemblance. Such resemblance has one constant denominator in the guise of national interest. The relationship between the U.S. and Kurds in Iraq has been guided by power relation. In other words, the most powerful of the entities dictates the direction and the result of the relationship. Because of the vague precept of national interest, the U.S. has been conditioned to play Kurds against other would-be powers in the Middle East. When it was convenient for the U.S. to dance to the tune of Kurds to achieve the end of a policy, it would do the Kurdish bidding. In addition, the U.S. did reject the Kurdish demands in Iraq when it wanted to please and satisfy Iraq or Turkey within the Middle East political space. The dangling foreign policy position of the U.S. towards the Kurds in Iraq is a product of maximizing national interest which is quite supported by realist position. The realist political position in relations to foreign policy has always been in the form of predator as opposed to mutually-beneficial position of liberal ideology. The realist precept has always been the guidepost of the U.S. foreign policy towards Iraq Kurds from the earliest time and this applies to other states within the global system as well. The U.S. foreign policy towards all states within the global political terrain has always been guided by its national interest depending on the capability and response of the state in question. The relationship between the U.S. and Germany, for example will be very different as both seem to be relatively operating the same political system based on liberal democracy. Both may relate to mutually benefit from each other as opposed to what exist between a state of Iraq and the U.S. It also needs to be stated here that the relationship between Iraq Kurds and the U.S. is between unequal partners. First, the Iraq Kurdistan region is not a state but sub-national entity. Two, the sub-national entity of Kurdistan region is bound to be a political pawn of the U.S. as such is not recognized by international law. The two issues raised above rendered the

Kurds of Iraq powerless in the face of U.S. manipulation and unending fruitless promises. Thus, apart from the Kurdistan being in an unequal relationship with the U.S., the U.S. relationship is strictly, in most cases, tied to the precept of political realism and any sub-national or national government that wants to enter into relationship with the U.S. must be adequately informed of such position in order to get prepared for future policy mishap.

The U.S-Kurds Relationship and U.S. allies in the Middle East: The action and reaction of the U.S. policy towards the Kurds in Iraq and the whole of Middle East has been a product of the need to placate the allies in the region. The research findings show that Israeli, Egypt and Turkey are the principal U.S. allies in the region. As long as U.S. needs all these allies, the Kurds' trump card is usually played. It needs to be stated here that of the three allies mentioned above only turkey and Israel are related to the U.S. policy towards the Kurds in Iraq. The need to ensure the security and comfort of the Israel in the region has been dictating the policy direction of the U.S. in the Middle East, most especially towards the Kurds. The need to make Middle East a safe haven for the existence of Israel might explain some policy inconsistencies of the U.S. towards the state of Iraq. Although the U.S. wants a united Iraq, but not a strong Iraq that will threaten the state of Israel. The politics of the Middle East has been intense and given the animosity that exists between Israel and many regimes in the region, it has been the policy direction of the U.S. to weaken the state of Iraq to ensure that relative safety of Israel is guaranteed. The strong and united Iraq would no doubt threaten the security of Israel given the constant enmity of Iran regime. This explains at times the reason U.S. will give aids and assistance to Kurds to render Iraq regime unstable and powerless. And as soon as that was achieved the U.S. would turn its back

to Iraqi Kurds and propagate the unity of Iraq. It is an act of divide and rule. The same goes to Turkey. The issue of Kurds has always been a problem between Turkey and the U.S. The Turkish government does not want the U.S. to assist Kurds in Iraq in order to prevent Iraqi Kurds from assisting the Turkish Kurds. But the policy guiding post of both Turkey and the U.S. has been national interest. The recent signing and construction of oil pipeline from Kurdistan region to Turkey is a case point. The U.S. does not want that to happen but Turkey stands to benefit much in the contract. In this manner, the direction of U.S. foreign policy towards the Kurds in Iraq has been dictated by both allies. In addition, some scholars, according to the research findings are of the view that the U.S. interest in the region is dwindling given the discovery of the shale oil. Such discovery does not in any way affect the policy of the U.S towards the region. As long as Israeli security needs to be cater for, as long as the strategic location of the region is needed for military and strategic action, as long as the U.S. is not immune to terrorism from the region; and as long as the U.S. allies namely Japan, European Union and South Korea, still need Middle East oil, the region is bound to occupy a crucial place in the U.S. foreign policy. Moreover, as long as U.S. remains glued to the region, Kurds are bound to be used continuously as policy leverage towards regimes in the region.

Kurds Political Aspiration and U.S. policy: the research has shown that the desperation of the Kurds to attain the status of statehood has opened it to the intricacies of global politics. Kurds have shown for decades sense desperation to achieve statehood at all cost. In the bid to do that both regional and international political gladiators have exploited that to their own advantage as the Kurds became political pawn in the hands of them. In this manner, anytime the U.S. policy makers in

Washington wanted to pursue certain goal and objective in the Middle East, Kurds are always an object of manipulation to achieve such set goal and objective. And this in most cases did involve military and economic aids.

7.3 Observations

Kurds in the Middle East are been repressed by their various national governments since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The collapse of such mighty empire opened Kurds to the intricacies of the global politics they do not have power to control. The aftermath of the Second World War clearly open the vulnerability of the Kurds to the intricacies of international politics as the world looked intransigence to the yearnings and aspirations of the ethnic group. The eventual creation of the state of Israel in 1948 by Balfour Declaration clearly signifies that the global powers could make and unmake the world based on what they think. With the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 and the attendant granting of independence and recognition by most western states and their allies across the globe, it implies that such political gesture could be extended to address the Kurds plight in the Middle East. Kurds are significant minority group in four countries in the Middle East and their total population is about 35 million (CIA Factbook, 2018). With such significant demography, the West should have considered extending the warm hand of statehood to Kurds in order to protect them from the political machinations of the Arabs, Turks and Persians. The reason behind such neglect could be seen from different angles. The creation of Israel itself might be a factor. How do I mean? With the creation of Israel as a state from the Palestinian entity and with the eventual subjugation of Palestine, Arabs were not contented with the whole process. Such discontentment led to Arabs' hostile relations with the West and the state of Israel. The west, most especially the U.S., might have foreseen such resentment from the Arabs and creating another state from such geographical confine

would complicate the whole political and social atmosphere in the region. In this manner, facing the boomerang effect of the creation of Israel was the utmost political priority of the West and it could be politically unwise at the time to propose the creation of another state for the Kurds in the same region. One needs to recognize that the Jews after the Second World War began to direct their investment towards the U.S. and such huge investment awarded them recognition in the scheme of things in the U.S. politics. Such recognition of Jews within the U.S. might well explain the insistence of the West in the eventual partition of the Palestine to create Israel state. Another explanation advanced by most scholars was the holocaust committed against the Jews in the Second World War by Nazi Germany.

The aftermath of the Second World War led to a group of people from the West sympathizing with the helpless nature in which the Jews were subjected. Such emotional attachment from the west might as well explain the forceful creation of Israel in the Middle East. The Kurds might as well qualify for this political gesture but the stake was too high. The aftermath of the Second World War was the time most of the countries in the Middle East began to stabilize themselves as state and most were just trying to gain independence. For example, Syria got its independence in 1946 and Iraq subsequently attained statehood. The states of Turkey and Iran were also trying to consolidate their hold on internal socio-political terrain. In such kind of political atmosphere, it could be anathema to propose the creation of Kurds state. Such proposition could be seen by the Arabs, Turkish and Persians as further attempt on the part of the west to partition and destabilize the region again. The U.S. and other western allies were just trying to establish cordial relations with the region as well as gaining the region's trust after the demise of colonialism.

Thus, the proposal to establish the state of Kurds would be seen as a deliberate attempt on the part of the west to dismember some of the states where Kurds reside in the region. In essence, Kurds' plight for statehood in Iran, Syria, Iraq and Turkey are affected by twin-factor of global politics and issues within each state where Kurds reside. It needs to be stated here that only Iraqi Kurds are forcefully moving in the direction of gaining self-governing status in the Middle East. The Kurds in other states are politically impotent to act the same way as Iraq Kurds. It needs to be reiterated here that Kurds, most especially the Iraqi Kurds were unlucky to have resided in a region where oil deposit is located. The main reason behind the merger of Kurdistan region of Iraq with Iraq nationhood was the discovery of large deposit of oil in Kirkuk which made the British to extend Iraq statehood to the region as a whole. It should also be noted that Turkey and Iran strategic location in the region as well as being an ally of the U.S. played a significant role in the direction of U.S. policy towards the Kurds. The west in general would not like to forfeit maintaining cordial relationship with some of these states. It is on record that Iran was a good ally of U.S. during the heyday of Cold War against the Soviet Union. In this sense, how would one expect the issue of Kurds to become paramount to the U.S.? The same strategy repeats itself in Turkey to date.

The issue of Kurds' statehood anywhere in the Middle East goes beyond the political calculation of the ethnic Kurds. What will dictate the direction of their political independence is the geo-politics of the region as a whole and this is true especially of Iraqi Kurds. The idea of securing statehood by Syrian, Iranian and Turkish Kurds is very remote unless the present political calculations in the region change. Given Washington's efforts to work with Ankara since the start of the Arab Awakening, the

U.S. too would find itself less capable of managing Kurdish aspirations while ensuring the territorial integrity of both Syria and Iraq. The challenge for both Turkey and the U.S. lies in maintaining coordination as the regional context rapidly evolves, and in balancing approaches to the Kurdish issue with the wide range of other issues in the multifaceted U.S.-Turkish partnership.

7.4 Conclusion

The research has been able to dissect the intricacies in the U.S. Kurdish relationship in the Middle East. The Middle East region occupies a significant place in the U.S. strategy and policy. This importance lies in the geographic location occupied by the region, which lies in the heart of the world, connecting three continents of Asia, Europe and Africa. The region is considered rich in natural resources of oil and gas, with more than 60 percent of the world's reserves. Kurds in the Middle East from the foregoing have been affected by the direction of global politics and foreign policies of major powers. The U.S. foreign policy towards the Kurds is essentially attuned towards achieving its personal goals and objectives in the region. As long as projecting the interest of Kurds in the region would sour the relationship with Turkey and other principal allies in the region, the U.S. cannot afford such costly venture. It is of the interest of U.S. as a state to incur the wrath of Kurds in the region in order to maintain friendly ties with its allies in the region. In addition, the U.S. is ready to compromise its stance in order to satisfy and maintain its interests in the region. When it was time to employ Peshmerga and the PYD to contain the threat of ISIS, it did. In other words, there is greater flexibility in the way and manner the U.S. conducts its foreign policy towards the Kurds in the Middle East. But as long as national interest supersedes allies' interest, the U.S. would continue to need the assistance of Kurds in maintaining and pursuing some of its interests in the Middle East.

However, the maintenance of security and stability of Iraq is one of the priorities of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. The U.S. is also aware of the need to protect the security and territorial integrity of its strategic ally in the region, Turkey. The U.S. realized that it will be difficult to provide security and stability in Iraq and the entire region without Iraqi Kurdistan. Therefore, it became clear to American policymakers that Kurds have become an important player in the American policy in Iraq and the Middle East. And they are therefore indispensable to the U.S. in an attempt at maintaining security and stability in the region. Without doubt, after the U.S. occupation of Iraq in 2003, Iraqi Kurds occupies an important position in the foreign policy direction of the U.S. in Iraq. This improvement was brought to the fore when in 2007 the President of Iraqi Kurdistan region *Massoud Barzani*, made a visit to Washington. He was warmly received by President George W. Bush. During the press conference which followed the meeting, President Bush referred to *Barzani* as Mr. President. This level of honour which was bestowed on Kurds by the U.S. President towards the *Barzani* angered Turkish officials. In an attempt at dousing the diplomatic tension, the U.S. clearly reminded Turkey of the importance of Kurds to the Turkish investment. More than 2000 Turkish companies invest in the Iraqi Kurdistan. Whatever the case, it needs to be said that the interests of the U.S., Turkey and Iraq unity will no doubt dictate the direction of the U.S. foreign policy towards the Kurds in the nearest future. As long as Turkey remains a strong military and economic powerhouse in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Middle East, it would be impossible for the U.S. to incur its wrath to in attempt to satisfy Kurds in Iraq.

In relations to Kurds elsewhere, most especially in war-torn Syria, the Kurds in Syria should exploit this opportunity in Favour of their cause and leave the internal

differences and work on the unity of the Kurdish parties in Syria. This is because if these parties cannot unify their positions, it is going to be difficult for them to achieve their aspirations and demands. Presently, Syria is passing through the most difficult stage of its existence as a state and the Democratic Union Party bears the responsibility more than any other parties because it is a strong party and it governs the Kurds in Syria. It has been stated that numbers of international reports argued that the party monopoly of power and the suppression of freedoms and multi-party in the areas controlled by Syria has become an arena for settling internal, regional and international accounts.

It is thus difficult in the midst of all these conflicts to be able to get any political demands through. The most crucial issue confronting the Kurds now is the unity of purpose. Therefore, everyone has to work for the benefit of the Kurdish people and leave the partisan politics as the prevailing opportunity may not be repeated. It also needs to be reiterated here that the Kurds should align with the political dynamics of the Middle East, most especially in relation to international actors in the region. In this case, the Kurds should try and maintain healthy political relations with the would-be external powers (like Russia, the U.S., Israel, and Britain) in the region, doing this will provide Kurds with political leverage to drive home their demands and aspirations when the occasion arises.

However, since the aftershock of the First World War the Kurds in Iraq, have been differently affected by the positive and negative effects of global politics. The numerous promises given to the Kurds in the Middle East raised their hopes to have an independent state which however is in conflict with the interests of major powers, particularly the U.S. The frequent failure for independence left the ambition of the

Kurds in Iraq to be futile and unfulfilled. Accordingly, the whole argument about the U.S foreign policy on Iraqi Kurds suggested some significant realist political partiality. One, only if when the national interest of the U.S. is served by the Kurds political process in Iraq, then the U.S. will completely give their support. Two, the U.S. foreign policy regarding the Kurds is influenced by the realist ruling of “survival of the fittest”. The U.S will typically start to help and take action upon the request of the Iraqi Kurds if the request means reinforcing the U.S. survival in the Middle East and the rest of the world. Last, it must be emphasized that the U.S. and other world powers has never been serious about lending any sincere support to the Iraqi Kurds’ political ambition in Iraq and the Iraqi Kurds will remain pawn in the hand of the U.S as long as global powers are only interested to serve their own national interest.. For Kurds in Iraq political space to attain certain level of political maturity, there is need to adopt useful strategy to deal with both regional and international political gladiators.

As for the U.S.-Kurdish relationship after the rise of ISIS, what prompted America not to support the Kurds in their recent referendum on independence. The study found that several reasons which prevented America from providing support for Kurdistan's independence. Firstly, the priority of the war on terror which represented by the Islamic state, where U.S. officials have repeatedly stated that one of their priorities is to eliminate the Islamic state. Secondly, supporting the independence of Kurdistan raises the hostility of Iraq. Iraq is one of the countries with its weight in OPEC; consequently, America saw it difficult to stand beside the Kurds in such circumstances. Thirdly, supporting the Kurds in this way poses a danger to American interests with a strategic ally, Turkey, the second largest army in NATO. Furthermore, U.S. support for the independence of Kurdistan threatens the unity and territorial integrity of Iran

and Turkey, which does not guarantee the silence of these countries on such a step if carried out by America. Therefore, these countries considered that the establishment of an independent Kurdish entity would encourage the Kurds in their countries to do the same thing, which jeopardizes their national security and territorial integrity. Thus, these countries have done all they can to discourage America from providing any support for the Kurdistan independence from Iraq. All these challenges have made America not to support Kurdistan's independence.

finally, because of the investigation is contemporary, it has suffered greatly due to the lack of non-confidential documents, especially after the emergence of the Islamic state allowed the researcher to make a larger and detailed assessment of U.S. foreign policy towards the Iraqi Kurds after the emergence of the Islamic state. In addition, the researcher was hindered by the lack of non-confidential documents from previous administrations. Executive Order 12958 requires passage of more than 25 years from the issuance of secret documents related to U.S. national security. This requirement applies even to documents older than twenty-five years if these documents affect America's current national security.

On the other hand, the documents that were declassified, especially those relating to the September 11, 1961, revolution and the support provided by America and its ally at the time, Iran, to the leader of the revolution, Mullah Mustafa Barzani. The researcher benefited greatly from these documents in analyzing the data. As well as several primary and secondary sources used in this study. The study also benefits from a wide range of sources that enrich their academic content. The vast number of primary sources used in this study provides a vital understanding of U.S. foreign policy towards the Iraqi Kurds after the emergence of the Islamic state. Moreover, this study provides

a rich understanding of American interests in the Middle East and understanding of the compromises and possible linkages to promote U.S.-Kurdish relations, especially after the emergence of the Islamic state.

Given the nature of this study, focusing on the U.S. foreign policy aspect towards the Iraqi Kurds and at an important period for the Kurds makes them highly applicable to decision makers in U.S. foreign policy. It provides a clear understanding of the coherence of America's interests in the Middle East region in general and with Kurds in particular. This study provides decision-makers in America, specialists in this regard and researchers to establish a framework for understanding, through which they can form a platform to assess U.S. policy towards Iraq. This study is invaluable for the decision-makers in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq because it illustrates the complexities of U.S. goals and interests in the Middle East and countries inhabited by Kurds such as Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Syria. This study is also especially important for researchers and students of international relations specialized in the Middle East, because it sets serious academic solutions to the relationship of Kurds with the U.S., it further helps the Kurdish leaders to understand the nature and objectives of U.S. policy in the region and how to deal with these goals and how to attract U.S. interests to Iraqi Kurds and to interact with U.S. interests to support them in the future so as not to abandon them as in the future.

7.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings and observations noted above, the research recommends the following:

1. The Kurdistan Regional Government should work to strengthen democratic values by building institutions, peaceful transfer of power, promote the freedom of the press in the region and working to unite the Peshmerga forces, which will be under the command of the general commander of the armed forces away from partisan loyalties, forming a strong parliament capable of carrying out its oversight and legislative role away from narrow partisan agendas. Such legislative role should take into consideration the need to allow the state institutions to respond to the need of the current situation within the region.
2. The promotion of peaceful co-existence in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq should be embraced. The harmonious and friendly atmosphere should be embraced between and among Kurds in Iraq. The disunity and suspicion between and among various tribes, parties, and clans needs to be disbanded in order to allow peaceful atmosphere to prevail. Peaceful atmosphere is a sine qua non to development and progress. In this way, various groups within the nationhood of Kurds should learn to come together to present a common force to drive home their demands. Embracing peace is an antidote to achieving development in economic and political spheres. It needs to be stated here that if the sense of unity was not displayed in combating the menace of ISIS, the Kurdistan region might have been taken over by the terror group. Living in unity can assist in presenting common position in any issues affecting the Kurds in Iraq. It also needs to be stated here that the U.S. should not be seen as a messiah that can guarantee the happiness of the Kurds. The Kurds in Iraq should design a mechanism through which such happiness can be attained.
3. The idea of over-reliance on the external assistance, most especially the U.S., should be, as a matter of principle, reduced. The Kurds for many decades have been of the view that their progress and emancipation could be guaranteed by the U.S.

previous and current experience has shown that the destiny of the Kurds is in their own hands. The only way through which Kurds can live in peace and progress is to shun, at least for now, the idea of statehood. As long as the U.S. does not have interest in pursuing that for the Kurds, there is no way that can be guaranteed. Therefore, the Kurds in Iraq should not allow themselves to be used as pawn anymore so far it has been established that the global power brokers do not have interest in the Kurdistan independence. By living with this reality, it is hope that will disentangle Kurdistan region from becoming regional political toy. And as long as global and regional powers realize this standing it would be very difficult to push Kurds to do things against their wish. Kurds as well should learn from Israel. Israel is a state though but the fact that it can take care of itself in the midst of tense political atmosphere in the region accord it respect within the global politics. Israel by all standards is the most developed and modernised country in Middle East. Such rapid development and progress allow Israel to ward off any form aggression and external attack. Kurds can also toe the path of progress and development to alleviate poverty and other social malaise within the region. If Kurdistan region toe the path of progress the clamour for independence may come naturally without necessarily going to war. As long as Kurds live in harmony and prosperity the issue of independence may later be secondary. Most Kurds that call for autonomous Kurdish state are doing so in order to move the region toward the path of progress. But such progress can be achieved without necessarily call for separation.

4. Kurds must also recognise the need to fit in well to the geo-political reality of the Middle East. Middle East is region of tense political and social atmosphere where the grave concern for terror attack is high. The main concern of the Kurds in this kind of political climate is to evolve a strategy to contain most of these antisocial

and anti-development behaviours. One of such strategies is to make peace with the state of Iraq and participate fully in all the processes of state enhancement. If Iraq as a state is very strong it is very possible for Kurds to move towards the path of progress. Two wrongs can never make a right. Kurds should learn to be strategic in the manner they respond to national and regional issues. And as long as national interest dictates the direction of the U.S. policy the Kurds should be on guard at all times. Making peace neighbours like Turkey can be of blessing in disguise. This does not necessarily mean surrender of one's political standing. Not at all. But it is politically expedient to have friendly neighbour in case there is an issue area where such can be exploited.

5. Kurdish leaders should work to put pressure on the United Nations and the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad to implement Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution of 2005 on the disputed areas under the direct supervision of the United Nations and the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. The research has found that the U.S. foreign policy is more driven by the national interest. Therefore, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) must work to build American interests in Kurdistan by encouraging American companies to invest in Kurdistan. This can be established via investment laws encouraging American companies to come to Kurdistan and invest. As a result, the region will be safe from any internal or regional threat, because America at the time does not allow its interests to be exposed to danger. In addition, the Kurdistan will benefit economically as well.
6. The lobbies are one of the main paraphernalia of decision-making in America. It has the power of influence in the decision-making process in America. This effect is clear and evident through the Jewish lobby in America. It is very rare to find any decision issued by any American or international founder against Israel. Therefore,

the Kurds must work to establish a strong and influential Kurdish lobby in America to serve and present upholding its issue.

Finally, as aforementioned about the importance of American support for the Kurds during the study, the Kurdish politicians should do a review to read the situation in the international arena and take a hard look at the situation on the international scene is no longer the same as before. Nowadays new powers are emerging in the international arena competing with American polarity – such as China, Russia, Brazil and India. Therefore, Kurdish politicians should work to study developments in the international arena, review the policy that relies on America only, take advantage of past experiences, at the same time study return of the Russians to the Middle East and compete with the American influence there, especially after the Arab Spring. Finally, to work out a balance in its future relations, and open new horizons with these countries, especially China and Russia.

The recommendations above are not absolute and should be subjected to the prevailing political atmosphere at the time of application. Policy recommendation is not a mathematical calculation where rigidity reigns. In this way, the policy recommendations enumerated thereof are subject to prevailing national and international political climate.

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