

THE US FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS THE IRAQI KURDS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AFTER EMERGENCE OF ISIS

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ABSTRACT

The Middle East is one of the significant areas in the US foreign policy and its strategic interests in this region. US foreign policy, adopts the principle of the US national security interest in drawing up foreign policy towards countries and this principle is one of the main goals of US foreign policy in the Middle East. The US has three interests: the free flow of Middle Eastern energy from the region, the continued security and well-being of Israel, and the reduction of terrorist and rogue actor threats. The objective of this research is to investigate the US foreign policy toward Iraqi Kurdistan in the Middle East after emergence of ISIS, especially the event in 2014, when ISIS attacked Kurdistan territory, and America did not allow it to enter Erbil. In addition, the research attempted to find out the reasons that made the US do not support the Kurdish referendum and do nothing when the popular crowd (*al-hashd alshaebiu*) loyal to Iran, Iranian Revolutionary Guards and Iraqi army attacked Kirkuk on October 16.

Neoclassical Realism will be used as a theoretical framework for this research. This research is trying to highlight Morgenthau's ideas from classical realism and Waltz and Mearsheimer's ideas from neo-



realism or structural realism. The study argues that The Kurds do not hold a considerable importance in the US foreign policy, because they inhabit a region which is very important to US foreign policy, and its interests with these states are more significant than the Kurds. Therefore, US foreign policy toward the Kurds was incoherent and ambivalent, due to its dependence on US interests in the region. The study found out that the US foreign policy goals in the Middle East have not changed, but foreign policy has changed to achieve these goals.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND

The relationships between the United States (US) and the Middle East are closely related to each other, this is due to the facts that US has many interests in the region. The American relations and interests in the Middle East go back to the sixties of the nineteenth century, when colonialism was ended and they decided to depart the Middle East region. The role of US in the region is comparatively new therewith, it is a vital role and the region has always been the object of the superpower from the past until the invasion of Iraq (Aziz, 2007).

However, when the WWII came to an end in 1945, it brought about significant changes to international community, breaking it up into two opposing blocks namely Capitalist and Socialist. The Capitalist block was led by the USA and still is; however, the Socialist block that was led by the Soviet Union lasted till 1989. In the Middle East, US foreign policy concentrated on three key targets: containment of the Soviet Union, the protection of its strategic ally Israel and safeguarding the flow of oil and gas in the region. The US 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 Middle East through reining the revolutions that were convened against corrupt regimes. Nonetheless, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the US faced a new enemy in the region, which was the emergence of a Islamist radicalism including terrorist groups.

However, The Kurds' relationship with the US as one of the original people that inhabited the Middle East is historically labeled as an ambivalent relationship,(Shareef, 2010) because this relationship ranged between engagement and estrangement through its history, and is based on US interests. Therefore, we often see that America abandoned the Kurds in critical moments, because US interest requires so. Such behavior happened to the Kurds several times during their close history. Consequently, the Kurdish leaders and people do not trust American policies (Noack, 2014a).

The Kurds do not hold a considerable importance in the US foreign policy, because they inhabit a region which is very important to US foreign policy, and its interests with these states are

more significant than the Kurds. Therefore, the Kurds' relations with the US causes problem for American relations with these states (Gunter, 2011). Thus, the European countries have always considered Kurdish unity as a threat to their interests in the Middle East. Therefore, even though the US post-Gulf War in 1991 called the Kurds in Iraq "good Kurds", it deliberately neglected them in other states where they live. The US remained only in the level of humanitarian attention, and it did not abide by the promise made to them (Meho & Nehme, 1991). Nevertheless, the situation became different after the collapse of Saddam's regime in 2003 when the Kurds became one of the main players in the Middle East. The regional states have always regarded the Kurds as a destabilizing force in the Middle East, because they struggle to achieve their own state and independence (Shifrinson, 2006).

However, the American deal in 2014 was quite different from what it was in the past, due to the serious changes that took place in the Middle East as a new player ISIS; posing a threat to US interests in the region. It occupied a large part of Syria and Iraq, and declared an Islamic caliphate. The Kurds were the one who pushed ISIS out of Kurdistan territory, distorted their reputations by fighting this fierce enemy intellectually and on the ground. ISIS emerged with possessing an arsenal of sophisticated weapons - which were gained from the areas that it occupied in Iraq and Syria. Rapidly becoming a threat to the whole world but not only to the USA interests in the region. This study attempts to shed light on the latter event and studies the reasons as well as factors that led the US to deal with the Kurds in this way. Was this because of the emergence of ISIS and the dangers it posed to US interests in the region or was it actually a change in US foreign policy toward the Iraqi Kurds?

1.2. KURDISTAN REGION: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The term "Kurdistan" means the land of the Kurds and 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 (Koozad, 2015), with over 22 millions in Turkey, over 8 millions in Iran, over 6 millions in Iraq and nearly 2 millions 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 World War I, the Kurdish dreams of statehood were robbed becoming the victim of imperialist ambitions. They missed an opportunity to establish their own state while other people gained their independence. Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Kurdistan was divided among five countries: Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria and Armenia thus, becoming homeless. Sykes-Picot agreement will mark a century in 2016 from the year it was signed, after which 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 in the region. The Kurds were deprived of even the most basic rights advocated by human rights organizations. According to the Sykes-Picot agreement 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-Barazinji* 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 but it was soon disclaimed by the King; and the suffering of the Kurds continued until the July 14 1958 revolution that was carried out by General *Abdul Kareem Qasim* that toppled the monarchy in Iraq and declared the republic in 1958; it 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. Most of the Kurdish rights were recognized, but the Iraqi Government recoiled, for it signed 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, following Iraq's invasion of 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 led to a mass exodus of the Kurds. Eventually, the international community responded by preventing Saddam's troops from crossing Kurdistan's borders by establishing a no-fly zone in northern Iraq along the 36th parallel. 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 were formed. Despite the internal fighting and its consequences, the process continued up until 2003 (Zubier, 2005).

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

However, in 2011 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, *Muammar al-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 the regime of *Bashar al-Assad*, 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, in which the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) emerged an organization 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 appealed to the United States to support them and to stop ISIS creeping toward Erbil, but the US response this time was quite distinct from previous times; its response took only 72 hours. The US 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-US 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 US.

1.3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

US foreign policy toward the Kurds, as noted previously was incoherent and ambivalent, due to its dependence on US interests in the region (Marantzidis, 2013; Fawcett & Fawcett, 2001) However, after the emergence of ISIS, its attack on the Kurdistan region and America's rapid response to the Kurds, America dealt with the Kurds in a completely different way than what it was in the past as they became main allies of America in the region; contrary to what it was before this event. However, the research problem lies in the great mutation that has taken place in US foreign policy in the Middle East in terms of objectives and policies pursued after the events of September 11, the Arab Spring and finally the emergence of ISIS in the heart of the Middle Eastern region, where it had openly shown its hostility towards America and its interests in the region. However, the coming of ISIS paved the way for a positive effect on the US relationship with the Kurds, in particular, when the Islamic State tried to occupy the city of Erbil, the capital of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) of Iraq. Thus, US reaction was swift when ISIS began to attack the Kurdistan region of Iraq. This reaction has surprised many specialists in the US-Kurdish relations, because the history of the relationship between them was described as volatile and sometimes, America abandoned the Kurds as noted previously. 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, as 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. Therefore, the United States policy-makers were reluctant to upset their key strategic allies such as Turkey and the Arabs 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? Therefore, American dealings with the Kurds were all but in best circumstances more than the humanitarian assistance.

The problem lies in the tragedy, murder and displacement that the Kurds faced and suffered during its contemporary history. Their history shows that whenever America abandoned them, they have been subjected to tragedy, and when it approached them, they lived in security and safety. 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 US that 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 had been recognized as the second component in Iraq. Such support would serve US interests and its allies in the Middle East. But in 1975, the United States and its ally Iran abandoned the Kurdish revolution and Iran signed the Algiers Accord with Iraq on 6th 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 US 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 US and the international community were silent and did nothing, because at the time, Saddam Hussein was serving US 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 were 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 US supported Iraqi Kurdistan against ISIS.

This study attempts to investigate the transformations and fluctuations that occurred in US-Kurdish relations after emergence of ISIS and reveal the factors and reasons that made America approach the Kurds. It became clear during this illustration that America approached the Kurds when the approach served American national interests and US allies in the Middle East and abandoned them when this support hurt US interests and US allies in the region. Therefore, the study attempts to examine US foreign policy towards the Middle East, and US 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 that can be exploited properly to make it on US foreign policy agenda and attract US interests, such as an important geographic location and ownership of natural resources, for example oil and gas, which recently show to be in large reserves come on a global energy map. Furthermore, Kurdistan has proven these years, that it is a factor of stability in the Middle East, and a place of peaceful coexistence among all components of nationalities and denominations. The study is trying to investigate US interests in Iraqi Kurdistan and the exploitation of all these ingredients to bring US investments to Kurdistan, to help the Kurdish build a sustainable relationship with the US; and thus, be a reason to provide security and 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 find out the causes and factors of the United States' engagement with the Iraqi Kurds in 2014 and see if it was a just one-off occurrence or a change in US policy toward them. Besides, what are US interests in the Middle East in general and Iraqi Kurdistan in particular?

1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to provide specific answers to the above-discussed issues, the researcher will try to address the following questions through a survey:

- 1- What are the United States' policy and national interests in the Middle Eastern region?
- 2- Why has the relationship between the U.S. and Iraqi Kurdistan fluctuated between engagement and estrangement throughout its history?
- 3- Why US support the Kurds in 2014? Is this a change in US policy toward the Kurds? Or it is just an event
- 4- Why did not America support the referendum of Kurdistan? What should the Kurds do to win the support of US policymakers?

1.5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In light of the questions stated above, the objectives of the study are:

1. To shed light on the US foreign policy toward the Middle East and US interests after September 11 and the Arab Spring. In addition, to investigate to the extent to which US policy has changed in terms of objectives and strategies in the Middle East.
2. The aim of this study is to understand the changes and analyze the vicissitudes in the United States' foreign policy toward Iraqi Kurdistan in the past as well as to investigate the causes that led the US administration to abandon the Kurds in 1975 and 1991. In addition, this study is a contemporary historical narrative of the foreign policy of America in the Middle East in general and Iraqi Kurdistan in particular and an examination of historical analyses of several U.S. administrations' foreign policy approaches toward the Iraqi Kurds. Thus, the study of the history of this relationship would help the research to find out the reasons and factors that led the United States' policy to be ambivalent throughout this period in the Middle Eastern region.
3. To investigate the US foreign policy toward Iraqi Kurdistan in the second term of the Obama Administration, especially the event in 2014, when ISIS attacked Kurdistan territory, but America did not allow it to enter Erbil. The research aims to study this event, is this just an event or is it a change in US policy toward the Kurds?
4. The research attempted to find out the reasons that made the US do not support the Kurdish referendum and do nothing when the popular crowd (*al-hashd alshaebiu*) loyal to Iran, Iranian Revolutionary Guards and Iraqi army attacked Kirkuk on October 16.

1.6. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The importance of this study theoretically lies in that the study applies realism in terms of interests and the balance of power, which 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 entities such as 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 is 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 plays a vital and key role in the international 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 investigate US foreign policy toward the Kurds (1975-2017) and focuses on causes and factors that affected the recent rapprochement between the US and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). In addition, the research aims to study US 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 US interests in the Middle East and Iraqi Kurdistan would avoid the Kurds woes and misfortunes. Furthermore, the researcher at the end of his research will provide some recommendations to the KRG to use in the development of its relationship with America and maintain this new shift in the relationship so as to make it a real change in US policy towards the Kurds, not just an event that will go as soon as ISIS is gone.

1.7. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Neoclassical Realism will be used as a theoretical framework for this research. "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 Theory has dominated international relations after the end of World War II, when the idealism theory failed to maintain peace and security in the international arena. The idealists believe that the dictatorial regimes are causing wars and the establishment of democratic regimes will prevent the occurrence of war, because the monarchies fight for self-interest not for national interests (Hity 1985). This research is trying to highlight Morgenthau's ideas from classical realism and Waltz and Mearsheimer's ideas from neo-realism or structural realism.

1.8. METHODOLOGY

The methods for the analysis of this study are a blend of descriptive and historical analytical approaches. The research, as the nature and field of this study, is of a qualitative nature, mostly dealing with accounts of contemporary historical incidents. Given the empirical nature of this study, the research will focus primarily on how, what and why these policies and decisions were made by the policy-makers.



CHAPTER TOW

THE US FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD THE KURDS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND ITS INTERESTS

2.1. INTRODUCTION

The Middle East is a modern English term for the most ancient region of human civilization. Before and during the First World War, the Near East, which comprised Turkey and the Balkans, the Levant and Egypt, was the term in more common use (Mansfield, Fourth Edition 2013). Therefore, the Middle East is one of the significant areas in the US foreign policy and its strategic interests in this region. US foreign policy, adopts the principle of the US national security interest in drawing up foreign policy towards countries and this principle is one of the main goals of US foreign policy in the Middle East. Thus, the study in this chapter aims to identify the US interests in this region in general, and examines the US policy toward countries that inhabited by the Kurds in the region, namely Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria with the US interests. In addition, the priority for this chapter is the US policy towards the Kurds in these countries. In order to better understanding of these issues this chapter attempts to answer the following questions: What is the US interest in the Middle East region? Does the Middle East is still important to the United States? What are the US interests with the countries inhabited by the Kurds, such as Turkey, Iran, and Syria? What are the policies pursued by the United States to access its goals in the Middle East? Are these methods have changed or not?

2.2. THE UNITED STATES' INTEREST IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

The Middle East, as we know it today, was a region that had been dominated by the Ottoman Turks for over five centuries. At the height of its power in 1683, the Empire stretched from the Persian Gulf to western Algeria in Africa, from the outskirts of Vienna to the Aegean Sea. Even though it steadily shrank in size after 1683, the Ottoman Empire was still ruling or controlling a very large area in 1914...The empire came to an end at the conclusion of World War I (Villellas, 2011; Nautré, 2008). Thus the contemporary political history of the Middle East begins at the war's close in 1918 with the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the partitioning of the Middle East into spheres of influence and League of Nations protectorates awarded to Great Britain and to France (Fisher & Krinsky, 1959).

The United States' relationship with the Middle East prior to World War I, was limited. although commercial ties existed even in the early 19th (Fain, 2008). By the time Britain established its dominance in the Persian Gulf early in the twentieth century, American merchants, missionaries, and naval vessels had been visiting the region for more than a hundred years (Hurewitz, 1972). However, the period after World War II saw an intensive and extensive expansion of US military and diplomatic involvement in the Middle East. The United States was historically disconnected from the abuses of colonial policy in the area (Marsh, 2001).

The U.S. government's robust approach to the region stemmed from a desire to secure three enduring interests: the free flow of Middle Eastern energy from the region, the continued security



and well-being of Israel, and the reduction of terrorist and rogue actor threats. To achieve these ends, the United States committed substantial diplomatic, economic and military resources to secure the support of its regional allies, while proving willing to intervene militarily when it perceived its interests to be threatened (Timmermann, 2015; Modigh, 2003).

2.2.1. Oil

The Middle East is one of the most productive regions of the world of energy; this information was confirmed by the BP Statistical Review of World Energy report which issued in June 2008. where the report acknowledged that more than 60% of the world's proven global oil reserves concentrated in the Middle East and most present in the Gulf states (Gurney, 2008). therefore, The U.S. has always considered the Persian Gulf vital to national security (Trilling, 2002)." Thus, the President Jimmy Carter declared in 1980 "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)." Roger Trilling argues in 2002 that " 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)."

Ensuring the free flow of oil represents perhaps the most constant, and many would say the most important, US interest in the Middle East. Since at least the 1970s, America's key strategic interests in the region have involved not only securing easy access for itself but also guaranteeing an open and secure market for Japan and Europe. Middle East countries, especially the states of the Persian Gulf, are key oil producers, exporting far more than they consume. In 2015, Persian Gulf states produced almost thirty percent of total world oil production, with the United States receiving roughly twenty-one percent of its imports from the region in the first six months of 2015 (Monthly Energy Review October , 2015; Crude Oil Imports from Persian Gulf Highlights, 2015). Europe, China, and Japan all also depend on oil imports for their energy needs (Byman & Moller, 2016).

It is no wonder, therefore, that the security of the Middle East's oil assets and their effective means of transportation (especially in the Gulf region) have remained prime preoccupations of U.S. Middle East policy ever since World War II.

However, some analysts believe that the Middle East is no longer important for US interests, arguing that America does not need Middle East oil because its production of shale oil and self-sufficiency, which reached it and this, makes the importance of the Middle East fall in the US strategy.

On the other hand, Many argue that the flow of oil is still the most critical U.S. interest in the region, made perhaps even more critical in the face of increased global demand and other stresses on the world's still predominately liberal trading system (Garfinkle, 2008). Several weeks after 9/11, Assistant Secretary of State William J. Burns addressed the Middle East Institute in Washington. His

remarks were designed to assure his audience that the Middle East remained a major concern of the administration. "Since the end of the Second World War," Burns insisted, "the United States has understood that a secure, prosperous and stable Middle East is an essential ingredient not only in defending vital American interests, but also the interests of the world economy." Thus Burns reiterated the administration's claims that it was committed to a resolution of the major political conflicts in the region and that it was fully appreciative of the fact that a region "mired in internal conflict serves neither the interests of the people of the region nor the people of the United States (Gendzier, 2002).

2.2.2. ISRAEL SECURITY

What of "stability" as a core U.S. interest in the region? This is a more complicated question than might appear at first glance. At an important level, the U.S. stake in stability in the Middle East is a contingent interest. It only exists because of the other interests it has in the region (Bowen, 2015). Therefore, yet despite the end of the Cold War in 1991, the US has continued to support authoritarian rule in the region; longstanding proxies include Saudi Arabia and Jordan. This continuity has been motivated primarily by the aim of maintaining stability in the near-term, given the potential impact of instability on core US regional interests. This was illustrated during the first Gulf War in 1991, with the US leading a coalition against Iraq after its attempted annexation of Kuwait. President G. H. W. Bush called for 'the restoration of Kuwait's legitimate government to replace the puppet regime installed by Iraq ("Responding to Iraqi Aggression in the Gulf National Security Directive 54 1991," 1991). Those interests that mentioned above have been confirmed by the document, which was issued from the White House on 20 August 1990 under the title (US Policy in Response to the Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait)) and it was top secret, which states as follows:

"US 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 US 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 (US Policy in Response to the Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait).pdf," n.d.)

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 (IS, also known as ISIS/ISIL or by the Arabic acronym *Da'esh*) the security of Israel became at stake and concern both America and Israel, because Israel has more than 70 kilometers border with Syria. But *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).”

Even Israel concern about ISIS does not exist and this was. In response to questions that appeared on several Internet sites as to why ISIS wasn’t fighting Israel instead of killing Muslims in Iraq and Syria, the organization responded on its Twitter account: “We 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 over the security of Israel, on the contrary, it has become safety more than before because almost all the countries in the region live in either internal or proxy war and Israel alone, living in security and safety, thereby the US has achieved one of the important goals of its policy in the Middle East which is keeping Israel's security.

2.2.3 TERRORISM

In the three decades following President Carter’s dramatic expansion of the American commitment to the Middle East, the United States has consistently served as the region’s security guarantor and its most dominant external actor. The U.S. government’s robust approach to the region stemmed from a desire to secure three enduring interests: the free flow of Middle Eastern energy from the region, the continued security and well-being of Israel, and the reduction of terrorist and rogue actor threats. To achieve these ends, the United States committed substantial diplomatic, economic and military resources to secure the support of its regional allies, while proving willing to intervene militarily when it perceived its interests to be threatened (Bhatagnar, Dialynas, Elhady, Lynch, Mcphee, Morgan, Alyneel, Nour, 2015). Where, the US foreign policy before the end of the Cold War adopted containment of the Soviet Union one of the important objectives in its policy toward in the Middle East, but after the latter collapse in 1990 the United States was no longer afraid about the spread of communism in the region and replaced the Soviet threat into terrorism and radical Islam, which began to appear in the Middle East as an influential actor on the international arena scene the end of seventies of the last century, when the Soviet Union occupied Afghanistan, and emigrated *Mujahideen* of Muslims and especially Arabs to Afghanistan to help Afghans in their war against communism and Osama bin Laden was one of them.

Thereby the question of Islamic terrorism became an acute one for U.S. policymakers. The attacks of 9/11 are tragic evidence of the extent to which terrorism constitutes a clear and direct threat to the United States. There is an abundance of evidence—as witnessed by the recent attacks in Paris—that terrorists have both the desire and capability to launch deadly operations in the West, even after more than a decade of efforts to root them out and degrade their capacities. Often forgotten here in the United States is the fact that, today, the vast majority of terrorist attacks are not carried out against the West but in the Middle East itself. To that extent, terrorism also



represents a threat in countries that the U.S. considers strategically important (Bowen, 2015). Therefore, the events of September 11 changed the U.S. perception of the threat terrorist groups posed to the United States and, more importantly, of how to define and address it. Within hours of the September 11 attacks President George W. Bush responded by declaring Al Qaeda and its affiliates, and those who shared its ideology and methods, as strategic threats to the United States. The threats could no longer be handled as law enforcement exercises; they now required an offensive deterrent. Declaring a “global war on terror,” Bush, with bipartisan support and high public approval, expanded the U.S. military, intelligence, and security services focus on confronting the threat non-state actors posed to the U.S. homeland. Bush went so far as to link nations that showed sympathies for, provided material assistance to, and harbored such militants as states that posed a direct threat to the security of the U.S. homeland (Bush, 2001; Bush, 2002).

The G.W. Bush administration’s rationale for promoting democracy in the MENA was a direct consequence of assessing why the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 occurred. For the G.W. Bush administration, a lack of political and economic freedom in the MENA allowed terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda to radicalize alienated individuals. Consequently, democracy promotion rose up in the political agenda. For some within the administration this was seen a policy that could both form the basis of a long-term counterterrorism approach designed to “draining the swamp”, but also as a wider approach to engaging with the MENA region and its governments (The White House, 2002). The idea that democratization was a potent way to fight terrorism was a notion that was viewed with much skepticism in the U.S. and elsewhere, and the implementation of democratization policies was therefore frequently challenged by skeptical U.S. government officials. Common counter- arguments are that there exists no causal relationship between underdevelopment, a democratic deficit, and terrorism; that democratization in fact contributes to political instability; that the Middle East is simply not receptive to democracy due to social, cultural and historical reasons, and that fair elections would result in Islamists taking power, who would then support anti- American policies. Many of these questions remain open to debate (Nautré, 2008).

However, ISIL’s emergence as a regional and international security challenge came from the politics of Syria and Iraq... The U.S. invasion of 2003 helped give rise to the ISIL... but it is important to understand the larger context of ISIL as a security challenge to the U.S.—one that falls in line with the U.S. national interest of combating international terrorism so that such groups do not threaten U.S. soil. Interestingly, though, Obama did not initially define combating ISIL in terms of national interests. Rather, he spoke of it in moral terms, attempting to link the U.S.-led coalition’s attempts to counter ISIL on the battlefield and financially (through global domestic law enforcement methods that stopped individuals from travelling to and from Syria) to a moral responsibility to both prevent ISIL from staging destructive operations in Syria and Iraq, and to curb its ability to possibly threaten the daily lives of individuals around the world (Bowen, 2015). Therefore, the emergence of the Islamic State has raised a range of terrorism fears. Western officials worry that young European Muslims who have gone off to fight in Syria as anti-*Asad* idealists will return to Europe as anti-Western terrorists directed by the Islamic State. As 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).” Despite these warnings and the real danger that motivates them, the Islamic State-linked Syrian foreign fighter threat can easily be exaggerated (Byman & Moller, 2016).



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 threat on the security of the region and the United States interests and its allies, because the extremist ideology which ISIS holds makes it hard to eliminate it so easily. Despite, the alliance that US-led against ISIS inevitably will defeat it militarily and expelled it from Iraq and Syria. But the real challenge facing the United States and its allies in the region is how to warrior this extremist ideology? That carried by this group and how you can remove its intellectual influence on the liberated areas from ISIS or foreign jihadists who have returned to Europe.

However, US foreign policy focusing on these three objectives in the Middle East, but that does not mean necessarily the other targets of US policy in the region does not exist such as the promotion democracy, human rights and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons... etc. But these goals are not always on the list of US objectives in the area and shall be according to the importance of this objective into the US interests, for example, George W. Bush after the events of 11 September has made a priority of his administration to promote democracy in the Middle East. Where George W. Bush states that one of the main reasons that led to the exposure of the United States to attack is the lack of democracy in the Middle East, but after the Islamist movements won in the general elections in Egypt and Palestine, the Bush administration realized promote democracy means the arrival of Islamist parties to power, which led Bush to back down from this goal, because it did not serve US interests in the region.

In spite of all these strategic objectives and vital national interests of the United States in the Middle East, but the region is no longer served American interests; where broken out the Arab Spring revolutions that led to shifts in stable balances in the region are bothered by the US administration and lost her allies in the region, and the pace of developments and events in the region taking place quickly, and exceed the US reaction which was characterized by high degree of slow and selective. The decline in the US role in the region and the ineffectiveness of this role led to China's growing role in the region, which has become poses a threat to American interests, geopolitical rivalry with China will not only influence in Asia, it will extend to the Middle East inevitably (Nas, 2013).

Expressed this view many Americans researchers such as " Aaron David Miller" , which addresses causes of decline of the Middle East importance in the US foreign policy, which puts it in four following main reasons: first: Diminished the prospect of a new Cold War between the US and its competitors - Russia and China - the Middle East will be the battleground. Second: the end of the US war on terror and the adoption of the United States on the drones to target elements of terrorist groups in the region. Third: the United States is no longer in need of the region after the revolution of shale oil and gas owned by the US that makes it dispense with the Middle East oil. Forth: the collapse of the US allies in the region and qualitative superiority of Israeli on Arab neighbors (Aaron, 2013).

In the light of talk the increasing about the declining role of the US in the Middle East in the interests of increasing the impact of 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 US policies in the Middle East, which are attended by: Robert Satloff, Stephen Hadley, and Dennis Ross. Policy forum's (The Washington Institute) concluded that the U S's allies in the Middle East have reservations about US policy in the region, as they see that the US policy in the region is a



(regressive) policy, which lends itself to other powers such as Russia and Iran to influence the events in the Middle East region. Speakers in policy forum's (The Washington Institute) disagree with some analysis and political views that see that the Middle East is no longer important for the US foreign policy, especially after the US exploration shale oil and gas and draws to Asia. Because they believe that the sufficiency of the United States oil does not mean they are not interested in the international map of oil and gas, and its balances, and secure its interests. On the contrary, they stated the allegation that the importance of the Middle East to the United States stems from only the presence of oil is the view of ignoring other factors such as the geostrategic importance of the region. They also said the United States to rearrange its priorities to develop the area within these priorities, does not mean at all that this will be at the expense of other areas, or is an expression of the regressive policy.

As mentioned above, the Middle East is still important into the point of view in policy of the United States , it cannot be described regressive politics, because it is wrong to say that the importance of the Middle East is related with the existence of oil and gas, there are other considerations to the United States interest in the Middle East, such as the occurrence of the region at the crossroads among three continents of Asia, Europe and Africa and the existence of Israel and safeguarding its security, despite the superiority of Israel's military and economic in the region, as well as the fight against Islamic extremism, and its ideology in the Middle East. All these things make it difficult for the United States to withdraw from the region and give way to Russia, China and Iran to replace them.

In relation to the theoretical framework of US foreign policy in the Middle East, there is new data surfaced on the ground, especially with those who embrace the realism theory to interpretation the US policy, where The realists believe that the state is the main player in the international arena, but after the events of 11 September 2001 new players appeared in the international system which is non-state payer such as al Qaeda, Hezbollah and the Muslim Brotherhood, a recent Islamic state in addition to the national political entities like the Kurds Who has a significant presence in the international arena, particularly after occupation of Iraq by US, and the emergence of ISIS. The non-state role became influenced to the events and decisions made in the region. As for the liberals, they can be Criticizes as well, because when they mention non-state they only focus on multinational companies and NGOs often mention political entities such as the Kurds when they talk about the role of non-state in the international community.

CHAPTER THREE

THE US FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS THE IRAQI KURDS AFTER EMERGENCE OF ISIS

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The US foreign policy towards the Iraqi Kurds, after the emergence of (ISIS) passed through two different stages. The first one began with the attack of the Islamic state (ISIS) on Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq (KGRI) we can call this stage the one prior to referendum that was held



on September 25, 2017. When (ISIS) tried to enter Erbil the capital of (KGR), then USA president Barak Obama announced that "Erbil is a red line for us" thereafter, it began to defend it by preventing the Islamic state from approaching Erbil and provided support to the (KGR) militarily and politically. The second phase of the US foreign policy towards the Kurds after the emergence of (ISIS) begins after the referendum in the Kurdistan; which we can call it the post-referendum stage. The relations were shifted from stage one completely, in which the US abandoned its support in particular the political one. Such abrupt shift in policy was a shock to Kurds as they did not expect this position from the US, given the sacrifices that *Peshmerga* made in fighting (ISIS). The Kurds attacked by The Popular Mobilisation Forces (*al-hashd alshaebi*) loyal to Iran, Iranian Revolutionary Guards and Iraqi army. The US did nothing, making the Kurds to feel disappointed and despondent with the US reaction.

In this section, the research attempts to shed light on these two stages. Find out the reasons that led America to abandon the Kurds and try to answer these questions, why did not America support the referendum of Kurdistan? What should the Kurds do to win the support of US policymakers? To be sure that America will support for them in the future.

3.2. STAGE BEFORE THE REFERENDUM

After the end of World War I and the fall of the Ottoman Empire. At the time, President Woodrow Wilson supported the idea of autonomy for non-Turks in the Ottoman Empire. But the Kurds were to be disappointed: denied their own self-determination, their lands were split among Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria (Noack, 2014b). Towards the end of the First Gulf War, the Kurds saw a window for independence. Encouraged by the Americans, they rose up against Saddam Hussein's regime for the third time. But America gave the green light to Saddam Hussein to attack the Kurds; as a result more than 1.5 million Kurds became refugees on Turkey and Iran... American troops and arms never materialized, though they eventually sent in air support, which helped the Kurds push Saddam Hussein back to Kirkuk. In order to protect the Kurds, a no-fly zone was formed that lasted nearly a decade, until the Second Gulf War (Newton-Small, 2017). In 2003, when the USA started the second Gulf War, the Iraqi Kurds turned out to be natural allies of the Western coalition. The northern front of the war was to a large extent covered by the Kurds. They fought bravely and again, the hope of being recognized as a state emerged. Again the Kurds were needed for regional balance and the Western-minded force in the new Iraq, not as an independent political entity by the West (KROSS, 2017).

The United States has helped ensure Iraqi Kurdish autonomy, while insisting that Iraq's territorial integrity not be compromised by an Iraqi Kurdish move toward independence. Iraq's Kurds have tried to preserve a "special relationship" with the United States and use it to their advantage (Katzman, 2015). The Kurds achieved recognition of their autonomy in the new constitution of Iraq. They again agreed to remain part of Iraq, but refused to allow the units of the Iraqi army to enter their territory or have their *Peshmerga* forces join the Iraqi army. The constitutional agreement of 2005 provided holding a referendum on the future of the city of Kirkuk in 2007 at the latest (KROSS, 2017). However, the central government in Baghdad temporized to implement Article 140 specialized to resolve the disputed areas and followed a sectarian policy and monopoly power, which led to collapse of the ISF in northern Iraq enabled the Kurds to seize long-



coveted Kirkuk and many of its oil fields. However, the collapse of Baghdad's forces also contributed to the advance of the Islamic State force close to the KRG capital Erbil before U.S. airstrikes beginning on August 8, 2014 (Katzman, 2015), Rick argue in his article in the Washington Post that "the sectarian politics of the leadership in Baghdad, which is mostly Shiite, is partly to blame for the chaos gripping the region (Noack, 2014b)." For a few hours, the city of Erbil was in a state of panic. ,the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) just 30 minutes became far from Erbil the Kurdish capital, then American war planes swooped in and began bombing and President Obama pledged 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, 2017). This decision ran counter to his presidential campaign in 2007, when he promised 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 outlined the inchoate U.S. strategy to "degrade and ultimately destroy the terrorist group known as ISIL [the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, also known as ISIS or the Islamic State] (Obama, 2014). After a rapid convergence of U.S.-Kurdish interests and the subsequent threat to those interests – that the United States decided to directly support the Kurds, despite weeks of reluctance. U.S. fears that Erbil would use its new position of power to further destabilize Iraq were likely assuaged by the belief that such actions would be equally detrimental to stability in Kurdistan (Press, 2017). The war against ISIS has changed Western attitudes towards the status of (Iraqi) Kurdistan. Providing direct military assistance to the Kurds (until now, everything went through Baghdad with considerable trouble) has become an accepted practice of even the most cautious European countries. Even Sweden has sent an armed unit to Erbil. *Barzani* has met with Angela Merkel and, in May, also with President Obama. Washington has now officially agreed to help establish a full Kurdish army that, in addition to the heavy armour of ground forces, also includes the air force and (strangely enough) a naval element (KROSS, 2017).

Therefore, the Obama administration has begun directly providing weapons to Kurdish forces who have started to make gains against Islamic militants in northern Iraq, senior US officials said...The additional assistance comes as Kurdish forces took back two towns from the Islamic insurgents, aided in part by US airstrikes in the region (Press, 2017). The initiation of military support for Iraq's Kurds and airstrikes in northern Iraq have had marked an important turn in U.S. foreign policy. Although military support for the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) remains limited, arming the Kurds represents a serious change in U.S.-Kurdish relations and appears to conflict with previous U.S. policy in Iraq. In particular, direct military and political support for the KRG will strengthen Erbil's position vis-à-vis the central government in Baghdad, and thus may perpetuate the process of political fragmentation unfolding in Iraq. How do we account for this new shift in U.S. policy toward Iraqi Kurdistan? (Kaplan, 2014) That said, many Kurds still carry lingering worries 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," says Lawrence, author of *The Invisible Nation: How the Kurds' Quest for Statehood Is Shaping Iraq and the Middle East* (Lawrence, 2008), and a correspondent with NPR. "The Kurds have been very frustrated with a lot of the stages long the way," he says. "But certainly these airstrikes would restore some of that trust. I feel like I've had many Kurds quote Churchill to me in the past week: 'Americans can always be counted on to do the right thing... after they have exhausted all other possibilities (Newton-Small, 2017).



President Barack Obama authorized the airstrikes to protect US interests and personnel in the region, including at facilities in Erbil, as well as *Yazidi* refugees fleeing militants (Press, 2017). According to the report for Carnegie Middle East Centre mentioned that the United States has a number of interests in Kurdistan, all of which serve to justify Obama's retraction of the no-engagement policy. For instance, the region is a stable and trustworthy pro-U.S. ally that Washington needs in an increasingly unstable and chaotic the Middle East. The report named that Many U.S. lawmakers view the region as a fledgling democratic, secular, and pro-Western friend determined to support the fight against the *Salafi jihadists*. It is in a geostrategic area bordering Iran and Syria. It also has the potential to be a great oil-exporting entity and has given contracts to several U.S. companies, including ExxonMobil and Chevron. And Erbil, the Kurdistan region's capital, hosts a significant number of Americans (Mansour, 2017). These interests were confirmed by an article published by international correspondent Mark Corcoran in ABC News when he stated that US airstrikes obliterated the vanguard of the insurgents as they came within range of Erbil's outskirts. In recent years Erbil has been transformed into an oil-boom town, a base for numerous multi-national energy corporations, including the big American companies Chevron and Exxon Mobil, all now drilling for oil and gas. Corcoran mentioned Prominent US commentator and author Steve argues that the threat to US energy companies was a factor in Washington's rush back to Iraq. "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", he wrote in a blog for New Yorker magazine (Corcoran, 2014).

On the other hand, Senator Conrad Burns in an article published in CNN Under the title "Why U.S. should support independence for Kurds" argue "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." The senator criticized those who say that America should not interfere in the affairs of other countries except in the interests of the US in the region, when he said "Undoubtedly, there will be those that argue that the United States should not interfere with the internal politics of foreign nations. They will argue that our interest in the region is based solely on the vast reserves of natural resources that Kurdistan possesses. Such doubters fail to understand the true importance of supporting freedom and are ignoring the ambitions of the Kurdish people." The Senator appreciates the sacrifices of the Kurdish people for independence, by saying the people of Kurdistan have been striving for independence and the right of self-government for generations. They have been close several times only to be struck down by outside world powers. They have endured atrocities and have paid the price for freedom. And it is therefore time that the United States took heed of these sacrifices and fulfilled its moral obligation to support the people of Kurdistan and their ambitions for freedom and national sovereignty (Burns, 2017).

We can say that this period began in 2014, when the Islamic state approached Erbil. One could call it the golden period in the history of the Kurdish-American relations; in which the relations were official. The two parties signed an official agreement and Kurdish sources revealed that the military agreement signed by the Kurdistan region of Iraq with the United States of America includes the establishment of five US bases in the region, and cooperation spanning 20 years subject to



renewal. This convergence angered both Turkey and Iraq. Unfortunately, this relationship did not continue as the situation changed after September 25 when the Kurdistan Region organized a referendum on independence. The Kurds felt disappointed again by the US position thereby going back to the old mantra of "the Kurds have no friends but the mountains"

3.3. STAGE AFTER THE REFERENDUM

The US foreign policy toward the Iraqi Kurds changed after the Kurdish leaders held the referendum in Kurdistan on September 25, 2017 unilaterally; the US has warned Kurdish leaders not to take such a step, saying that the time was not appropriate for a referendum because priorities should be to eliminate Islamic State terrorism. "There is no ambiguity on what the U.S. position was on this issue. The United States has been telling the Kurds and telling Kurdish President since last spring not to proceed with this because this would be not good for Kurdistan, not good for Iraq, and would play into the hands of the hardliners and the hands of the Iranians," said Stuart Jones, the former ambassador to Iraq (CALAMUR, 2017). But the Kurds did not take these warnings seriously. The Kurdish leadership's perception was that the international situation would change after the referendum and the international community will deal with the Kurds as a de facto, such as what happened in 1992 when the Kurds insisted on holding elections despite the opposition of the international community to this step, but it became de facto after that. This was the perception of Kurdish leaders when they insisted on holding the referendum.

Ziva Dahl argues in her article in the Washington Times that: It appears that the Iranians saw an opportunity to extend their influence in Iraq. Gen. *Qassem Soleimani*, commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), instigated and supported the action to take Kirkuk. 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. This allowed Iran-backed Iraqi forces to take Kirkuk largely unopposed. The seizure of Kirkuk is a key element of Iran's plan for regional hegemony. A representative of the governing Kurdish 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). According to report from Washington Times, Iran now strives to control Kurdish soil between Mosul and the Syrian border to enable a physical link from Tehran to Syria's Mediterranean shoreline and to Tehran's Hezbollah allies in Lebanon. While Western eyes shift to Here's why this is particularly important: Kurdish energy reserves pumped north through Turkey has the potential to help undermine Russian energy levers on Ankara and the European Union (EU). NATO partner Turkey relies on Moscow for 35 percent of its annual oil and 60 percent of its natural gas. The Europeans are no less dependent on Russian energy, and are Security concerned of the associated strategic risk that Brussels published an Energy Security Strategy in 2014 purposed primarily to diversify its energy purchases away from Moscow. The report added that An American strategic reversal in the Middle East cannot be delivered by ISIS, but it can be driven by Tehran (and allied Moscow), displacing Washington from its interests in Iraq. An independent Kurdistan, strengthened by resolute U.S support, will prevent that by disrupting Tehran's territorial ambitions. Our doing so, however, requires courage (Audino, 2017). However, the Kurds were again shocked by America's reaction to the referendum, the history repeats itself. The Kurds have bitter memories of a previous US betrayal when the US and the Shah backed a Kurdish insurgency against Iraq as a means to pressure Saddam.



But then in 1975 Kissinger helped negotiate a settlement of the issue and gave Saddam a green light to attack the Kurds. Some 200,000 Kurds escaped into Iran and 40,000 were forcibly repatriated. Kissinger famously said, “America has no permanent friends or enemies, only interests (Erich, 2017).” The Kurds believed that the United States and the West would appreciate the sacrifices made by the *Peshmerga* when they fought on behalf of the world the worst terrorist organization (ISIS). But American interests seem to be above all considerations. What we want to highlight here is, why the US did not support the Iraqi Kurds in their referendum and abandoning them again?

The US position on Kurdish aspirations for independence from Iraq has been contradictory. Historically, Washington has supported self-determination in places such as South Sudan, Kosovo and East Timor as they sought independence. Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt made this value central to the war effort. The UN enshrined the principle of “equal rights and self-determination of peoples” in its charter. US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson emphasized these values in a speech 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).

The United States’ long-standing policy has been to attempt to bridge the Arab Kurdish divide, pressuring the Kurds not to declare independence from Iraq and the Iraqis not to use force against the Kurds. That policy appears to be breaking down, leaving the United States with a choice of attempting to maintain a neutral posture or adopting an outright pro- or anti-Kurdish policy (Boot, 2017). David Pollock is the Kaufman Fellow at The Washington Institute argues in his article that the Kurds are seeking an independent, self-governing state for moral as well as practical reasons. The quest is likewise rooted in historical events and unfulfilled promises from the Iraqi government. From a moral perspective, the Kurdish argument has three premises: (1) the right to self-determination; (2) a history of oppression, including genocide, meted out by successive Iraqi governments; and (3) the case that, over the past twenty-five years, the Iraqi Kurds have created a stable, peaceful, relatively democratic, and tolerant region that does not threaten neighbouring states (Knights, Pollock, Wahab, & Pollock, 2017).

After World War I, the Kurds came tantalizingly close to getting an independent state. Nearly a century later, they are no closer to an independent homeland. There are many reasons for this: regional instability; suppression of the Kurds, most dramatically in Turkey and Saddam Hussein’s Iraq; vehement opposition to a Kurdish state; infighting among Kurds; and, despite some prominent Western supporters, no viable advocate for Kurdish statehood (CALAMUR, 2017). In addition, “A: The KRG is not economically viable. B: The political conditions were simply not prepared. We’re seeing that,” he said. “There’s a very sharp reaction from Iran. There’s a sharp reaction from Turkey and a sharp reaction from Baghdad. So the neighbours weren’t prepared for this. They weren’t willing to go along. There were a lot of issues that were not resolved (CALAMUR, 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 KRG for the recent referendum as an unpaid adviser to the Kurds, pointed out that the area, has long been a bastion 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). on the other hand, Jones, who was U.S. ambassador from 2014 to 2016, argued the KRG is slightly bigger than the U.S. state of Maryland and about the size of Switzerland. But what it does have in area and population it lacks in the factors that make a stable state. Those reasons are why the U.S.



doesn't support an independent Kurdish state at the moment (CALAMUR, 2017). However, for years, Iraqi Kurds have had a cosy relationship with Washington, building up a reservoir of goodwill across the government and on Capitol Hill. But in the ultimate test, as Iraqi Kurdistan went to the polls Monday to vote in an independence referendum, Washington pulled out all the stops to discourage the vote, fearing it would tear at Iraqi unity and hamper the fight against the Islamic State (TAMKIN, 2017). Therefore, Max Boot argues that the least-bad option for the United States is to continue to muddle through, working to guarantee Kurdish autonomy while keeping alive the fiction that Iraq remains a unitary state. It offers a way to paper over intractable disputes, such as the one between Baghdad and Erbil, that would otherwise result in needless bloodshed (Boot, 2017).

Therefore, one can conclude that America did not support the Iraq's Kurds in their referendum because of it considered that the time was not right and the danger of (ISIS) still exists. These were the American argument for not supporting the Kurds at this stage. But the researcher believes that the real reasons were the US interests with these countries who inhabit the Kurds are greater than US interests with the Kurds. Another factor also played a role that is internal Kurdish disintegration impeding American support further apart, especially after the October 16 event in Kirkuk embarrassing the Kurdish friends. Therefore, the Kurds should unify and put their house in order at home first and thereafter seek to sway USA sympathy towards its cause showing America that its interests lie with Kurds.

CONCLUSION

- The US foreign policy goals in the Middle East have not changed, but foreign policy has changed.
- The Middle East is still important to US foreign policy, and US cannot relinquish this vital region of the world. it is not linked to energy as some analysts believe.
- The Kurds are of great importance in the Middle East as a non-state actor, if they stay united, they can influence America's policies in the Middle East.
- US foreign policy is a realistic policy in terms of the theoretical framework, so it always follows its interests in dealing with the Middle East.
- America is using the Kurdish issue in the Middle East as a card to make a balance of power. Therefore, we see that sometimes they support them and others abandon them.
- The disintegration of the Kurdish House was one of the main reasons that led America to abandon them in October 16, 2017.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- America should reconsider its policy toward the Kurds because it will not find an ally like the Kurds in the region.
- The Kurds should unite the Kurdish house to be more influential in the region
- The Kurds must and as soon as possible determine the date of elections in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq



- Working to promote democracy in Kurdistan through the establishment of state institutions and the unification of military forces in the formation of one within the Ministry of *Peshmerga*.
- To continue promoting the spirit of peaceful coexistence in Kurdistan and to build the state of citizenship instead of the national state to win the support of Turkmen, Arabs, Christians, *Shabak* and others.
- Working to attract US interests to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq through investments.
- Work on building an active lobby in America to influence decision-makers in America in favour of the Kurds.

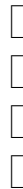
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پوخته

رۆژ ههلاتی ناوهراستی یهکیک له و ناوچه گرنگانیه له سیاسهتی دهرهوهی ئەمریکا بۆ بهدییهانی بهرزهوندیکانی سترتیجی خۆی له ناوچهکه دا . سیاسهتی دهرهوهی ئەمریکا لهسەر بنه‌مای بهرزه‌وهندی ناسایشی نه‌ته‌وهی ئەمریکی داده‌ندریت بهرامبه‌ر به ده‌وله‌تان ، وه ئەو بنه‌مایه یه‌کیک له ئارمانجه‌کانی سه‌ره‌کی سیاسه‌تی دهره‌وهی ئەمریکایه له رۆژ ههلاتی ناوه‌راست . ئەمریکا سی‌ به‌رزه‌وهندی سه‌ره‌کی هه‌یه له ناوچه‌که‌دا : به‌رده‌وامی ناردنی وزه له ناوچه‌که بو جیهان ، پاراستنی ناسایشی ئیسرائیل وه شه‌ر له دژی تیروزم . مه‌به‌ست له‌و توێژینه‌وه تیشک خستنه‌ له‌سه‌ر سیاسه‌تی ئەمریکا به‌رامبه‌ر به کوردی عیراق له رۆژ ههلاتی ناوه‌راست له‌ دوای دروست بوونی داعش ، وه به‌تایبه‌ت له‌ دوای هێرشێ داعش بو سه‌ر هه‌ریمی کوردستان له‌ ساڵی 2014 ، که ئەمریکا نه‌یه‌یشت به‌روه هه‌ولیر بێن . وه له‌ هه‌مان کات دا توێژینه‌وه‌که هه‌ول دده‌ت بو زانینی ئە هه‌کارانه که نه‌یه‌یشت ئەمریکا پشتگیری گشتی‌رسی کوردستان بکات ، وه نایه ئەمریکا بۆ خۆی نه‌ جولا‌ند کاتی هه‌شده‌ی شه‌عبی - که له‌سه‌ر ئیران هه‌ژمار ده‌کری‌ن - و سوپای عیراقی به‌ پالپشتی پاسه‌وانی سه‌وری ئیران هێرشیان کرده سه‌ر شاری که‌رکوک له 16 ئوکتو‌به‌ر؟

ئه‌م توێژینه‌وه Neoclassical Realism وه‌ک چوارچۆیه‌ی نه‌زه‌ری به‌کار ده‌ینیت وه هه‌ول ده‌دات که تیشک بخاته سه‌ر بیروکه‌ی هه‌ر یه‌ک له مورگینتو له واقعی کلاسیکی و والتزومیرشیمر له واقعی نوی یان واقعی بوونییه‌وی . توێژینه‌که ده‌لیت کورد گرنگیه‌کی ئه‌وتوی نیه له سیاسه‌تی دهره‌وهی ئەمریکا چونکه ئەو

وهلاتانهى كه كورد تيدا دهژين زور گرنگترن بو ئەمريكا له كورد ، و بهرژه‌وهندی ئەمريكا له گه‌ل ئەو دهوله‌تانه زورتره له كورد ، بويه ئەمريكا گرنگى به كورد نادات وهكو پيويست ، و ساسه‌تى بهرامبه‌ر به‌كورد جيگير نيه بويه جار باش ده‌بى و جاريش خه‌راب ده‌بیت ، به گويهرى بهرژه‌وهنديه‌كانى له رۆژه‌هلاتى ناوه‌راست . تويژينه‌كه گه‌يشته ده‌رئه‌نجامى ئەوه كه ئارمانجه‌كانى ئەمريكا له ناوجه‌كه نه‌گوراوه به‌لكو ساسه‌تى بو گه‌ياندن بو ئەو ئارمانجه‌كه گوراوه .

وشه‌كانى سه‌ره‌كى : كوردى عيراق، ساسه‌تى ولايه‌ته يه‌ككروه‌كانى ئەمريكا، داعش، واقعيه‌ت، بهرژه‌وهندی نشتيمانى و رۆژه‌هلاتى ناوه‌راست .

ملخص

الشرق الأوسط ه ي من إحدى المناطق المهمة في السياسة الخارجية الأمريكية لخدمة مصالحها الاستراتيجية في هذه المنطقة . سياسة الولايات المتحدة الخارجية، تتبنى مبدأ مصلحة الأمن القومي الأمريكي في رسم السياسة الخارجية تجاه الدول، وهذا المبدأ هو أحد الأهداف الرئيسية للسياسة الخارجية الأمريكية في الشرق الأوسط. وللولايات المتحدة ثلاثة مصالح رئيسية : التدفق الحر للطاقة من منطقة الشرق الأوسط، الحفاظ على أمن إسرائيل ورفائها، والحد من التهديدات الإرهابية. الهدف من هذا البحث هو لدراسة السياسة الخارجية الأمريكية تجاه كردستان العراق في الشرق الأوسط بعد ظهور داعش، وخاصة بعد هجوم داعش على أراضي كردستان في عام 2014، وأمريكا لم تسمح لهم بدخول أربيل . وبالإضافة إلى ذلك، يحاول البحث معرفة الأسباب التي أدت إلى عدم دعم الولايات المتحدة لاستفتاء كردستان، ولماذا لم تحرك ساكنا عندما هاجم الحشد الشعبي المواليين لإيران والجيش العراقي وباسناد من الحرس الثوري الإيراني مدينة كركوك في 16 أكتوبر تشرين الاول؟

وستخدم الدراسة الواقعية الجديدة الكلاسيكية كإطار نظري لهذا البحث . يحاول هذا البحث تسليط الضوء على أفكار مورغنثاو من الواقعية الكلاسيكية وأفكار والتز وميرشيمر من الواقعية الجديدة أو الواقعية البنوية. تقول الدراسة إن الكرد لا يملكون أهمية كبيرة في السياسة الخارجية الأمريكية، لأنهم يعيشون في منطقة مهمة جدا للسياسة الخارجية الأمريكية، ومصالحها مع هذه الدول أكثر أهمية من مصالحهم مع الكرد. وبالتالي، فإن السياسة الخارجية الأمريكية تجاه الأكراد، كانت غير متماسكة ومتناقضة، بسبب اعتمادها على المصالح الأمريكية في المنطقة . ووجدت الدراسة أن أهداف السياسة الخارجية الأمريكية في الشرق الأوسط لم تتغير، ولكن السياسة الخارجية قد تغيرت لتحقيق هذه الأهداف.