

Turkey's Northern Iraq Policy in the Shade of Security Problems (1991-2003)

A. Sait Sönmez¹, Samed Kurban²

¹Assistant Professor, Dr., Ondokuz Mayıs University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Department of Political Science and Public Administration

²Research Assistant, Ondokuz Mayıs University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Department of Political Science and Public Administration

Abstract: *A new era started in foreign and national security policies of Turkey with the end of Cold War. In this period, Turkey followed a more active foreign policy in the regions such as Balkans, Central Asia and Caucasia. Ethnic conflicts occurred in these areas were defined as new security problems by Ankara. In this period, Turkey's policies to neighbours in the south were mainly shaped within the context of "security" problems. Within this period, Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) terror became the important security issue for Turkey. One of the most important reasons for increasing PKK threat was the vacuum of power that occurred in Northern Iraq after the Gulf War [The war that was Iraq forced to end occupation of Kuwait by coalition forces in 1991]. PKK settled in the area and increased its attacks on Turkey from here. Especially after the invasion of Iraq, Northern Iraq-based security problems increased much more. However, in this period, Turkey's economic and trading activities also increased in the area. The present study analyzes Turkey's policies during 90s to form an sphere of influence in Northern Iraq, to overcome security issues.*

Keywords: Northern Iraq, Turkish Foreign Policy, National Security Problems, Iraqi Kurds

1. Introduction

With the end of Cold War, a new era began in Turkey's foreign and national security policies. With the end of Cold War and dissolution of the Soviet Union, "the Soviet threat" which underlied the national security strategies of Ankara for about fifty years had disappeared. However, PKK terrorism that increased from this date forward became the most important security problem for Turkey. On the other hand, ethnic conflicts that occurred in regions such as Balkans and Caucasia with which Turkey had historical ties and the regional instability caused by these appeared as new problems that influenced Turkey's national security. With Yuenger's expressions, Turkey found itself in the center of the regions "with the most difficult and quarrelsome neighbors and trying to exist in geopolitical ruins remained from the Cold War" (cited from Kirişçi, 1994: 196). The instability that appeared in Iraq after American occupation and the long-term civil war in Syria show that Turkey is also faced with similar security problems today. In fact, Turkey felt threat from the South with different reasons when Iraq and Syria's central administrations were strong, too. However, the instability that occurred as a result of the power loss in the central administrations of these countries caused the threat to increase incrementally.

During the Cold War period, the developments in the area after the Gulf War triggered a big change for Turkey trying to define national security and foreign policy according to the terms of the new period. Ankara's perceived "north" centered threat and foreign policy focused on "south" after these developments. In parallel with increasing PKK terror, Northern Iraq became the region Turkish foreign policy most focused on during the 90s.

In fact, Ankara's interest in Northern Iraq dates back to the years when Turkish Republic was founded. Northern Iraq, which was within the territory of "National Pact" [National

Pact is "targeted territories" of Turkey which was determined by the last Ottoman Parliament, as a reaction to the Sevres Agreement], was one of the territories Ankara laid a claim on during the War of Independence. However, after Treaty of Lausanne and meetings in the League of Nations, Ankara gave up on political right over Northern Iraq, recognized the territorial integrity of Iraq and regarded the developments in the area as the domestic affairs of this country. Thus, Ankara tried not to interfere with Kurdish rebels in Northern Iraq that broke out in different periods, starting from 1920s until 1990s. However, Northern Iraq became a territory that interests Turkey's national security since 1980s. Due to Iran-Iraq war that continued in the region within this period, a vacuum of power occurred in the area and terrorist organization PKK settled in the area by taking advantage of this condition and started to attack Turkey from here. On the contrary, Ankara cooperated with Baghdad and got in a "hot pursuit" of PKK elements and executed air operations in the area. This way, Ankara was able to lessen Northern Iraq-based security problems to a certain extent. However, after the operations for Iraq undertaken by the United States of America (USA) and its allies in 1991 and 2003, the balances in the area changed and the political stability in Iraq was destabilized. Based on these developments, Turkey's Northern Iraq-based security problems both increased and became varied. In return, breakages occurred in Turkey's Northern Iraq policy. This study analyzes Turkey's national security based Northern Iraq policy during the period between the Gulf War (1991) and the United States of America's (USA)'s occupation of Iraq (2003).

2. Historical Background of Turkey's Northern Iraq Policy

Turkey's interest in Northern Iraq dates back to the period when Mosul Question started. About two weeks after Armistice of Mudros was signed, Mosul Question started

with the occupation of Mosul by Britain. This city, which was within the borders of the National Pact and in which a significant number of Turks and Kurds lived, became an important dispute between Britain and Turkey. While National Forces troops were fighting with the Greeks in Western Anatolia on the one hand, they also faced British forces in Iraq. Although Turkish troops had to leave Rendavuz in 1921 as a result of the attacks of British air forces, a troop led by Özdemiş Bey was sent to the area next year to fight British forces. As a result of British forces getting weaker, Britain sent Sheikh Mahmut Berzenci to the area and wanted to form an alliance against Turks. However, Berzenci announced his kingship and also wanted to cooperate forces with Ankara government through Özdemiş Bey. Although the British was stuck in a difficult situation in the area, they did not make concessions to Mosul Question in the Treaty of Lausanne (Fırat and Kürkçüoğlu 2013 (a): 203). While Turkey advocated plebiscite in Mosul, England rejected this with various reasons. Turkey sent armed forces to the region and besides carried out diplomatic struggle. England, the great power of the time, took the problem to League of Nations and used its dominant position on the institution, gained the support of other member countries and tried to solve the problem in its favour. About Mosul problem, the parties came to an agreement finally in June 1926 (see Alantar, 1994: 77-84). The important point here is the fact that the issue which lasted for 8 years shows how important the region is for Turkey.

Starting from this date, Ankara began to see Northern Iraq issue as a domestic problem of Iraq. The most important concern of Ankara resulting from Northern Iraq was the spread of separatist moves in the area to Turkey. Thus, starting from that date, Ankara began to follow a policy that advocated the territorial integrity of Iraq. As a result of this policy which is still maintained, Ankara specifically refrained from using Iraq Kurds against Baghdad (Kılıç 2010: 247). For this reason, except for a few isolated incidents, Ankara tried to stay away from the developments in the area and followed a Baghdad-centered policy.

The events that occurred in the region during an uprising started by Kurds in 1962 against General Qasim who seized power with a coup in 1958 influenced Turkey indirectly. On the one hand, Turkey was pleased with the decline of Qasim rule with this uprising because bilateral relations had deteriorated after the coup. On the other hand, the possibility for this uprising to encourage separatist Kurds in Turkey was a concern for Ankara. However, the developments in Northern Iraq within this period did not interest Turkey's national security directly. Still, Baghdad accused Ankara with supporting the uprising in Northern Iraq. A crisis that threatened Turkey was not experienced while the uprising was suppressed, except for Iraq planes bombing two villages near Hakkari [Two privates were martyred as a result of the attack to Hakkari Rubarik and the village of Biskan. Iraqis who fought with the gangs of Mustafa Barzani had violated Turkish territory before (İrak uçakları 4 ve 5. defa bize tecavüz ettiler, 1962)] by violating the border in July 1962 (Fırat and Kürkçüoğlu 2013(a): 787-788). This policy of Ankara continued until Iran-Iraq war started in 1980s.

3. Turkey's Northern Iraq Policy During Iran-Iraq War

During the Iran-Iraq War between 1980 and 1988, Turkey adopted an attitude that could be considered as impartiality. During the war, two main problems between Turkey and its neighbors in the region were the Kurdish issue and water problem (Sönmezoğlu, 2006: 443). Although Ankara considered Northern Iraq issue as a domestic issue of Iraq, the area turned into a security problem for Turkey starting from 1980s. In 1979, terrorist organization PKK which was settled in Syria and Lebanon had to leave this country as a result of the pressures on Damascus by Turkey in 1983. The organization later settled in Iran, Northern Iraq and Beqaa valley. Starting from this date, Northern Iraq became the area in which Turkey's foreign and security policies centered on. In May 1983, when 3 soldiers were martyred by PKK in Hakkâri Uludere, Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) launched the first cross-border operation to Northern Iraq. During this operation, Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) camps were also harmed besides PKK. Barzani, who condemned the operation, signed the "PKK-KDP Principles of Solidarity" with Öcalan in July (Fırat and Kürkçüoğlu 2013(b): 131-133). On the other hand, the vacuum of power that occurred in the area with the start of Iran-Iraq war was filled by KDP and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). However, both parties being supported by Syria and Iran that helped PKK, increased Ankara's worries. On 15 October 1984, a "Protocol for Border Security and Cooperation" was signed between Turkey and Iraq. According to the aforementioned protocol, both countries had the right to "hot pursuit" in each other's territory on condition that they notified the other party beforehand. However, the activities of Iran in the region as a result of increasing its influence in the area began to be a concern for Ankara. In addition, the security of Kirkuk-Yumurtalık pipeline, the capacity of which was increased during the war, was also under risk (Sönmezoğlu 2006: 443-444). Upon Ankara's concerns, Iranian authorities officially insured the Turkish government that "*no act threatening the security of Turkey shall not be condoned in this country*". An authorized person from the Embassy of Iran to Turkey in Ankara visited the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in accordance with the directive from Tehran, and stated that "Khomeini administration is attentive to maintain the relationship between Turkey and Iran on the bases of friendship and fraternity" (İran, "güvence" verdi, 1984).

In such an environment, as a result of PKK increasing its activities in Southeastern Anatolia region, Ankara began to intervene to Northern Iraq more. With the legal regulations passed in September 1986, TAF was given the right to "cross-border hot pursuit with the consent of the related country". In August 1986 and March 1987, right after PKK attacks, the attacks in the region harmed both PKK and KDP camps (Fırat and Kürkçüoğlu 2013(b): 135). Turkey displayed her determination with regards to the policies conducted on the basis of security problems by way of the aforementioned operations. Following the operation on August 15, Turgut Özal explicitly warned the circles supporting the aforementioned separatist elements by stating that "this operation shall demonstrate that we are very determined in following these bandits into their caves and

pulling them down.” Özal said, “I hereby warn those again who support them from the outside of our borders” (Irak'ta hava operasyonu, 1986). With regards to the operation on 4 March 1987, Hasan Celal Güzel, Minister of State and government spokesperson, declared that the operation had no effect either on the Iran-Iraq war or on the balance in the region. Güzel added that the fact that Turkey respects the independence and territorial integrity of the countries in the region is a fact known by everyone (Ve Sınır Ötesi Harekât, 1987). On the other hand, although convergence occurred between KDP and PUK and before these operations initially, some conflicts occurred between PKK and peshmerga groups in Northern Iraq. These conflicts sometimes turned into fights. As a result of being harmed by Turkish air assaults and losing contact with Iran and thus losing their support, KDP first called for PKK to leave Northern Iraq. Then, KDP cancelled the 1983 protocol signed with PKK unilaterally, and later declared PKK as a terrorist organization. While KDP was trying to draw close to Ankara this way, PUK embraced PKK. The two organizations signed an agreement in 1988 (Fırat and Kürkçüoğlu 2013(b): 136). Towards the end of Iran Iraq War Turkey faced with new problems from North Iraq. In March 1988, Iranian forces captured the town of Halabjah, in North Iraq this caused a fear on the Turkish side that they might go on to take Kirkuk (Hale, 2014: 16).

During the “Operation Anfal” started by Saddam regime against Kurds, Turkey faced new problems. Kurds who ran away from this operation in which chemical weapons were also used, tried to take refuge in Iran during the war. However, when Iran closed the border, they began to take refuge in Turkey. In September 1988, the number of Kurdish refugees in Turkey had exceeded sixty thousand. Thus, Ankara faced a new problem. Ankara's main concern was PKK trying to enter Turkey by infiltrating among the refugees. On the other hand, accepting the refugees could cause the breakdown of Ankara Baghdad relations that had been going on smoothly since 1980 (Fırat and Kürkçüoğlu 2013(b): 138-139). In fact, some problems occurred in this period between the two countries about the problem of refugees. Iraqi soldiers who entered Turkish territory to take back some of the peshmergas that took refuge in Turkey were caught by special operations teams and they were returned at the territory after the delegations of both parties came together. Upon the words of Iraqi ambassador on returning peshmergas, the Foreign Affairs Minister of the time, Mesut Yılmaz gave the following answer: *“There is no convention of extradition between Iraq and our country, even if there was, for this convention to take effect, Iraq should prepare by judicial authorities and convey to us from diplomatic channels who are guilty and what their guilts are. We did not hear about such an initiative so far”* (Peşmergeleri iade yok, 1988). In August 1988, Saddam administration again used chemical weapons against remaining Pasmargahs who were fleeing towards Turkey (Hale, 2014: 16).

Indeed, Saddam regime conveyed to Ankara that they wanted to use their “hot pursuit” right from 1984 Convention for Kurdish refugees in Turkey. However, taking into consideration what Saddam did in Halabja, Ankara was not sure how Saddam would behave to civilians who took refuge in his country and thus gave a negative

answer to Baghdad although Ankara had used this right three times before. In response, Saddam regime cancelled the related agreement and increased the pressure policy to Turkmens in Northern Iraq besides Kurds. Kirkuk Turkmens were exiled to South and 25 Turkmens were executed. On the other hand, after Iraqi armed forces left the area, PKK reinforced its position in the north (Fırat and Kürkçüoğlu 2013(b): 138-139). These events have showed to the *“Turkish government into the realisation that the Iraqi Kurds (who need protection) would not inevitably be enemies”*. It also had an important effect on “Özal's attitude” towards Saddam Hussein, seeing him as a *“dictator was a despot lacking in normal human values, and that he could use his horrific weapons against anyone, including Turkey”*. This point of view would affect Turkey's Iraqi policy during and after the Gulf War (Hale, 2014: 17).

As an indirect result of Operation Anfal, Northern Iraq centered PKK problem became more serious. With the breakdown of Ankara-Baghdad relations, Turkey did not have any right to intervene in the region. On the other hand, “Turkmen” issue was added to Turkey's politics of the region as a new dimension. However, Ankara took the opportunity to get close with the leaders of Northern Iraq within this period. After this date, Kurdish leaders would take place among the actors that Turkey got into contact while determining the policy in the region.

4. Turkey's Policy of the Region During and After the Gulf War

4.1 Gulf War and its effects on Turkish foreign policy

With the 1990-91 Gulf War, new dimensions were added in Turkey's Middle East policy which was built on different balances and in which Turkey was very cautious (Tür 2012: 596). For the first time since 1950s, Turkey made a commitment by joining the new security system with the USA which was formed to ensure security in the Middle East. Turkey first opened the Incirlik air base for the use of allied forces and made it easy for the USA to stock arms and munition so that it could intervene a crisis that broke out in the Middle East immediately (Dış İlişkilerimiz Değişti, 1991). This situation shows the emergence of an important change in Turkish foreign policy. The primary reason why Özal established such a policy during the Gulf War was the concern that the developments that could occur in Iraq and in the area in general after the war could cause negative consequences in terms of Turkey (Gözen 2000: 315). Turkey got under a big economic burden by sending 100 000 soldiers to the Iraqi border and closing the Kirkuk-Yumurtalık pipeline by sticking to United Nations (UN) embargo (Charountaki 2012: 187) [although the loss was between 7-10 billion dollars as of the end of 1991, it is estimated to exceed 20 billion dollars as of the end of 1995 (Gözen 2000: 235). Besides, these numbers show only the loss resulting from closing the pipeline. With the embargo that began with the closing of Kirkuk-Yumurtalık pipeline, Turkmen issue reached the highest level and Turkmens were oppressed to gain political interest (İnan 2013: 82)]. The USA-based foreign policy followed by Özal within this period was based on economic pragmatism [Within this period, Turkey developed its relations, especially with

Arabians and started trading relations with its neighbours in the Middle East for the first time. With the opportunity of Iran-Iraq war, foreign trade volume, which was a few millions of dollars, reached the level of 2 billion dollars (Akgün 2009: 298)]. On the other hand, there were arguments that Özal saw the Gulf War in the period after the Cold War as a chance to show to Western allies, especially the USA that there was no decrease in Turkey's strategic importance (Altunışık 2000: 322). Because starting from 80s, some issues that were problematic between the two countries were tried to be solved. Presidents of the two states decided to make a "strategic cooperation" agreement between Turkey and the USA in Camp David in March 1991. Ultimately, the prophecy that Turkey's strategic importance would decrease after the Cold War and that there would be a breakdown in relations between Turkey and USA lost validity (Alantar 2000: 223). Also there were even claims that he saw this as an opportunity to reclaim new land [Although not official, Turkey's possible targets which were "claimed" to be realized in the area in line with Özal's neo-ottomanism policy, can be summarized as thus: to solve the Kurdish problem in Iraq in line with Turkey's interests, to enable the oil-rich areas in the North of Iraq to assemble with Turkey or to build a "Kurdish Turkmen" federation in Iraq under the control of Turkey (Charountaki 2012: 188). Regional and international conjuncture were not suitable for the realization of these targets which were not confirmed by Ankara. However, these issues took place in the press. ¹Saddam placed Russian made missiles to areas close to Northern Iraq from time to time (Cemal, 1999: 15)]. (Altunışık, 2000: 322). In fact, the circumstances caused by war and Turkey's geopolitical position forced Ankara to follow such a policy (Gözen, 2000: 248).

While Ankara was putting into practice the policy to be followed during the Gulf War, it could not put forth the Northern Iraq dimension of this policy clearly or could not estimate exactly the consequences of the Gulf War in terms of Northern Iraq. However, as a result of some developments, Turkey began to follow a foreign policy that had security worries against Iraq based on Northern Iraq. Due to postwar conditions that occurred in the area, new targets emerged in Turkey's Northern Iraq policy: "*protecting Iraq's territorial integrity (in other words, preventing the establishment of a Kurdish state in the area), looking out for Turkey's legitimate security worries (preventing the PKK attacks to Turkey from the region), protecting the rights of Turkmens in the area*" (Oran 2006: 268) and to "*prevent Saddam from realizing a new operation to the Kurds in the region*".

4.2. Refugee crisis and Operation Provide Comfort: Emergence of a security dilemma for Turkey

After Saddam's suppression of Kurdish revolt that occurred after the Gulf War Turkey faced with another refugee crisis in April 1991. When the refugees piled at the border, Turkey considered the possibility to make a "limited" military intervention along the border. TAF entered Iraq constrictedly for humanitarian aid and to keep the refugees outside. The goal of the army which was not authorized to fire was to not allow the refugees from Turkish border. However, when ten thousands forced the border, Ankara

first accepted the refugees whose number reached to 500 000, later tried to consider the alternatives to send them back (Kirişçi, 1994: 199; Akbaş, 2012: 328). Turkey pioneered some policies such as "safe heaven", Operation Peace and settling Combined task force to the southeastern part of the country. In fact, these policies were a continuation of the active policy followed by Turkey during the Gulf War (Doğan 2009: 84). After Turkey's application *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.*" Under the aegis of *Operation Provide Comfort (OPC)* and a no-fly zone imposed against Baghdad" (Gunter, 2011: 98).

The combined task force, which included 80 planes and 20000 people in the Operation Peace, settled in Turkey on conditions that "*there would be a Turkish general within the activities of the settled force who had the rank and position of an operational commander, getting the approval of Turkish office of commander in chief in operations and the inspection of the arms brought to the area*". In fact, this process started by Ankara which would cause some problems was the result of an obligation (Sönmezoğlu 2006: 546). After combined forces began to be located in Turkey, Ankara specified the following priorities: first, to prevent Saddam rule from starting a new refugee crisis; second, to ensure that the refugees return to their own countries as soon as possible and third, to activate international humanitarian aids (Kirişçi, 1994: 202).

Within the background of combined task force being deployed in Turkey, there lied Özal's thought that the control of the area should have belonged to Turkey. Özal stated that combined task force operation was a suitable tool for peace in Northern Iraq and thus the negative effects of this on Turkey could be decreased (Gözen 2000: 333). Özal wanted to restore Turkey's foreign policy with these policies and to increase Ankara's economic and cultural power and its role in the region. In addition, through this policy, Özal believed that "*it would be possible to prevent Iraqi Kurds from having a negative influence on Turkish Kurds and to prevent the potential imbalances in this region to harm Turkey's economy and integrity*" (Charountaki 2012: 187).

Through combined task force, Turkey had a say in Northern Iraq and got the chance to be close with Iraqi Kurds. Besides, combined task force was Turkey's trump card in issues such as Turkey's regional cooperation and military operations to Northern Iraq. If combined task force left Turkey, it would be settled in another country and thus this power would get out of the control of Turkey. If combined task force left Turkey, Saddam who would get stronger would want to oppress Kurds again and as a result, Turkey would be faced with the refugee problem again [Saddam placed Russian made missiles to areas close to Northern Iraq from time to time (Cemal, 1999: 15)]. In addition, Saddam would try to pursue a rigid policy against Turkey and threaten Gulf countries. These probable developments were contrary to the interests of Turkey (Uzgel 2013: 263). Due to its policies during and after the Gulf War, including the combined task forces being deployed in Turkey, Turkey managed to get military support from Washington about

fighting PKK. On 17 October 1993, in a meeting with B. Clinton, prime minister Çiller asked USA “to force the government of Esad to end their support to PKK”. After the Clinton Esad summit in 1994, Clinton made statements in this context. In addition, USA promised to give to Turkey a significant number of cobra choppers, A 10 tank killers and armoured vehicles to be used in fight with terrorism until 1998 (Kirişçi, 1994: 210).

However, when in the first half of 90s PKK’s activities were on the rise, there were also arguments that combined task force would cause a vacuum of power in Northern Iraq and would help the building of a *de facto* Kurdish state here. There were news in the media that combined task force helped PKK during the operations (Sığınmacının yardımı PKK’ya, 1991; Çekiç Güç intihar, 1993). This caused Ankara to react and to take precautions. Sometimes, western countries were warned for this (Çekiç Güç’ün kulağını çekti, 1992; Soysal’dan Çekiç Güç için ilk uyarı, 1994). In some situations, their activities were controlled (İngiliz silahına haburda geçit yok, 1991). Tour of duty was lengthened half-heartedly. First the ground troops of Combined Task Force (its name was changed into Exploration Force in 1996) left Turkey while air troops continued their duty in İncirlik and Piriçlik until the invasion of Iraq in 2003 (Sönmezoğlu 2006: 546).

4.3 Establishment of Kurdish state and Turkey’s reactions

As a result of the aforementioned developments, after the people of Northern Iraq were saved from a big tragedy, KDP and PUK started the process of building a state in the area. When supporting the policies of Operation Comfort and Safe heavens, the Turkish government did not reckon that a Federal state would be established in Northern Iraq about a year later. However, the developments in the region caused Ankara to worry. Because of this, Turkish diplomacy announced that they were against every kind of development that threatened Iraq’s territorial integrity and they began to follow a policy within this direction. Turkey stated that these developments “would negatively affect security and stability in the region and Ankara would not recognize these activities” Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hikmet Çetin, stated that an “autonomous” government in Iraq could “only be established with the consent of Iraq central government” (Kirişçi, 1994: 206; Taştekin 2006: 250-251). Prime minister Demirel attracted the attention to a long-term threat that “*the federal state founded in the region could claim land from Turkey*” (Hükümet rahatsız, 1992). The former prime minister and the leader of the Democratic Left Party Bülent Ecevit who interviewed Saddam as an interviewer voiced the same worries. It was also stated that Saddam claimed Iraq’s separation would cause a domino effect and Turkey would be affected by this situation (Saddam konuşuyor, 1992). Former president Kenan Evren who made statements supporting Ecevit stated that “*the USA was behind the events and this situation would turn into a serious safety problem for Turkey*” (Kürdistan kuruluyor, 1992). However, in this period, unlike the general tendency in Ankara, president Özal continued to make heterodox statements opposing the government, like he did in some issues. Özal said that “*everything could be discussed including the*

establishment of a federal state in Northern Iraq” (Bela olurlarsa başa çıkarız, 1992). According to Özal, in case of a referendum in Northern Iraq, the people in the region would prefer Turkey to Iraq (Kürt fobisi ve Özal, 1992). These explanations interpreted as Özal’s “neo ottomanist” intentions.

However, just like during the Gulf War, Özal could not determine the foreign policy alone. After the elections in October 1991, his former rival Süleyman Demirel had become the prime minister. The new government made some interventions to restrain the establishment of Kurdish state. Turkish government tried to prevent the formation by negotiating with Washington and Baghdad. The government took support from both capitals about this issue (Askıdaki Kürt Devleti, 1993). Later, this issue was also discussed with western allies France and England (Irak’ın toprak bütünlüğü korunmalı, 1993). In addition, Ankara began to cooperate with Iran and Syria, which were neighbours to Northern Iraq and had a Kurdish population. Hikmet Çetin, began to have the first meetings with the ministers of foreign affairs of neighboring countries such as Iran and Syria, which considered the situation as a safety issue (Ankara’da Üçlü zirve, 1992). In 1993, the first agreement on this subject was signed. The foreign ministers of Turkey, Iran and Syria who came together in Damascus in August 1994 stated that they were against the establishment of a Kurdish state in Northern Iraq (Sönmezoğlu 2006: 549-550) [The Foreign Affairs Minister of the time Mümtaz Soysal expressed the discomfort he felt about mediation initiatives by Western countries in order to stop the conflict between Northern Iraq Kurds. Soysal, who mentioned the meeting between the representatives of Talabani and Barzani in Paris, stated that these interventions almost turned into an effort to turn the settlement in Northern Iraq into building an independent state (Soysal’ın Şam Atağı, 1994)]

The primary development that bothered Ankara was that Turkey’s security concerns and the state of Turkmens and Arabs were not mentioned in the meeting of the USA with Talabani and Barzani in Paris. Following these developments, Turkey banned the transfer of international non-governmental organisations (NGO) and foreign country representatives to Northern Iraq from Habur gate (Fırat and Kürkçüoğlu 2013 (b): 558-559). Minister of Foreign Affairs Mümtaz Soysal stated that restrictions would be brought to citizens of third countries who wanted to go through to Northern Iraq from Turkey to help PKK or to encourage Northern Iraq Kurds for freedom (Büyükelçiliklere uyarı, 1994). Later, “Baghdad visa” laid down as condition for those who wanted to pass to Northern Iraq (Bağdat’da vize memnuniyeti, 1994)

On the other hand, a cooperation was sought with Baghdad, which was trying to take Iraq’s territorial integrity under protection despite the USA. In this direction, after 1994, Turkey moved to alleviate the economic embargo imposed on Iraq and after 1996, supported the cooperation between Baghdad and KPD in response to PUK-PKK convergence (supported by Iran and Syria) [Within this period, KDP handed over PKK’s second most important name Şemdin Sakık indirectly (Aslan 2006, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr>, retrieved on 12 November 2015)] (Sönmezoğlu 2006: 550). In the second half of 90s, although the relations of Turkey

with Syria and Iran began to be problematic, the cooperation was maintained with these countries for the territorial integrity of Iraq. Within this context, within his Office of foreign affairs, İsmail Cem started an initiative named "Neighbourhood Form" to prevent the tension in Iraq from turning into war (Tür 2012: 598).

4.4 Turkey's policy of forming sphere of influence in the region over KDP and PUK

Although Ankara opposed to the establishment of a Kurdish state in the region, a close contact was made with KDP and PUK, the pioneers of this formation. On 21 February 1991, when the war was still going on, Özal bypassed TAF and National Intelligence Organization (NIO) and negotiated with Barzani and Talabani. This negotiation with Kurdish leaders annoyed some senior bureaucrats in Ankara. However, Özal had turned to such a policy because of obligation. In response to PKK attacks at the beginning of 90s, Ankara did not have the chance to cooperate with Iraq national government. After Operation Anfal, Ankara-Baghdad relations had tensed while they had reached the breakpoint in the Gulf War. Saddam's troops had allowed PKK to settle in the area while they were leaving the Northern Iraq. With the weapons left by Iraqi army, PKK increased its attacks. In response to this, with the support of KDP and PUK, TAF made three cross-border operations to Northern Iraq, in the October and August months of 1991 (Fırat and Kürkçüoğlu, 2013(b): 555). In February 1992, KDP leader Barzani met President Özal, Prime minister Süleyman Demirel, Vice Prime minister Erdal İnönü and Minister of Foreign Affairs Hikmet Çetin after the visit he paid to Ankara on returning from Europe (Dış İlişkilerimiz Değişti, 1993: 295). In this interview, Masoud Barzani stated that the negotiations with the Baghdad administration were suspended due to the economic blockade they implemented in the northern part of the country. Barzani explained that they made a decision not to send a committee to Baghdad in order to continue the negotiations on autonomy, as long as the blockade is in effect (Görüşmeler askıda, 1992).

In July 1992, diplomatic passport was given to Talabani and Barzani and the relations with Northern Iraq had brought to an active basis (Doğan, 2009: 84). This situation shows that Özal's policy of "cooperating with Kurdish leaders while fighting with PKK" had become Ankara's formal policy in time. As it is, preventing the establishment of a Kurdish state in the area and increasing Ankara's activities in the area could be possible through friendships with Kurdish leaders. Both parties helped Turkey during TAF's fight with PKK from time to time. On the other hand, KDP and PUK authorities expressed in different platforms that Turkey's friendship was important for them. KDP spokesman Hoşşyer Zebari stated that Turkey was the vital connection between Northern Iraq and the West and the whole world and that Kurds would lose all they gained if the combined task forces left the area. While Barzani was talking about cooperation against PKK terror (Gunter 1993: 301), Talabani just went on to say that Northern Iraq Kurds wanted to "unify with Turkey" under "Anatolian Federation" (Kuzey Irak sancılı, 1992).

When Saddam withdrew Iraqi soldiers from Northern Iraq after the Operation Comfort in 1991 and the economic embargo placed on Northern Iraq, the people of Northern Iraq met serious economic problems. After the related issue was debated in National Security Board (NSB), a decision was made to give economic aid to the people in the region. In addition, electricity would be given to the region, and investments would be made to the region in infrastructure and superstructure services (Akyol, 1993: 11). Turkish government decided to make an economic aid of 13,5 million dollars in September 1993 (Kirişçi, 1994: 203). When Saddam government demonetized the old Iraq dinar and brought the new one, Turkish lira (TL) was put in circulation in Northern Iraq. Thus, Northern Iraq became the second place outside the borders of Turkey in which TL was used, after Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (Lira Kuzey Irak'ın doları oldu, 1995). On the other hand, some Kurdish businessmen coming from the region began to make investments in Turkey (Kürt işadamları, izin peşinde, 1992). Thus, in time, Northern Iraq began to get under the influence of Turkey economically. The foundations of Turkey becoming the most effective economy in the region were laid in this period.

However, with the establishment of local governance in Northern Iraq, Turkey's concerns of security and uniformity for the territorial integrity of Iraq continued to increase. Turkey began to make military operations to Northern Iraq in order to prevent PKK and other Kurdish groups in Northern Iraq from becoming political powers as a result of the vacuum of power in the area, to suppress the terrorist activities to Turkey and to take the area under control (Taştekin, 2006: 251). Although the support of KDP and PUK was taken during the operations, sometimes the supporters of these parties were also harmed in these operations. This situation caused disapproval in Kurdish leaders. In one of his statements, Barzani said that "*Ankara expressed being uncomfortable about the elections in the area; however, we informed the authorities in Ankara that our aim was not to establish an independent Kurdish state*" (Gunter 1993: 304). However, since they needed Turkey's friendship, KDP and PUK considered Ankara's sensitivity about PKK and left the organization outside the elections and the process of becoming a state. They even started to fight PKK with Turkey. In the end, as a result of being caught between two fires, PKK had to go the South of Iraq (Fırat and Kürkçüoğlu (b), 2013: 557; PKK Kuzey Irak'tan kovuldu, 1992). During this period, Ankara stated that "*PKK was being armed by Saddam and KDP and PUK were afraid of the risk of the organization's controlling the area*" (Charountaki 2012: 188). However, in 1994, when an armed struggle started between KDP and PUK, the relations of Ankara with Barzani and Talabani also changed.

4.5 Turkey's struggles for ending KDP-PUK conflict and protecting territorial integrity of Iraq

While Turkey increased cooperation with KDP during the Northern Iraq operations in time, PKK, Syria and Iran began to get close to PUK in order to benefit from civil war. With Saddam regime getting involved in the balance, Turkey-Iraq-KDP coalition was formed against Iran-Syria-PKK-PUK coalition in Northern Iraq (Charountaki 2012: 189).

Between the years 1995 and 1996, PKK increased its power in the region as the fight between KDP and PUK became more intense. On the other hand, Turkmens who were between caught between two fires had to take refuge in one of the two sides (K. Irak'ta büyük kaos, 1996). In this period, the "(so-called) Kurdish Parliament" which was founded by PKK decided to move to Northern Iraq from Brussels (Sözde Kürt parlamentosu Kuzey Irak'a taşınıyor, 1996). The problem was negotiated with Iran and Syria again to solve the problem with the support of these two countries. The agenda of the meeting of ministers of foreign affairs which was organized in Tehran on 3 January 1996 was the stabilize the region (K. Irak'ta İran rahatsızlığı, 1996). However, Iran and Syria's supporting PUK and PKK caused Turkey to get closer to America. Iran and Syria's increasing effect on Northern Iraq over Talabani and PKK could be stabilized by the activities of combined task force, TAF's cross-border operations and Saddam KDP alliance. In addition, PKK's increasing effect in the region with the freedom to act in the region could have been limited with the support of the USA (Elekdağ, 1996:17). Different policies were started to apply for this. A security zone was started in the southern part of Turkish-Iraq border (Güvenlik kuşağı için start veriliyor, 1996). TAF, ministry of foreign affairs and NSO authorities brought Talabani ve Barzani together to end the fights (Silopi'de üçlü zirve, 1994).

Ecevit, who was closely interested in Northern Iraq issue, who interviewed Saddam [These negotiations and Ecevit's Northern Iraq plan were probably made with the suggestion or within the knowledge of the government. This was because the plan could cause a reaction by USA if it had been put forward directly by the government. In addition, due to Saddam's policies during the Gulf War, the reaction Ankara would show was not certain. On the other hand, the fact that the government did not want to undertake the risk of failure can be another reason why Ecevit was not on the forefront. Within the period when Northern Iraq Plan was put forward by Ecevit, Ecevit was close to the government. While his party was not with the government, he supported the minority government founded by Mesut Yılmaz] and who advocated cooperation with Baghdad, participated in attempts to make peace between KDP and PUK. The "Northern Iraq plan" which was put forward by Ecevit was based on unifying Iraq. According to the plan, a connection was to be made between Ankara and Baghdad and thus, the process of dialogue was to start between Barzani and Talabani. Thus, with the intermediacy of Ankara, the parties would determine the future of Iraq together. However, Talabani and Barzani, who got closer to Saddam when they experienced a problem between themselves, stated this time that Saddam was a dictator and did not comply by this plan (Bila, 1996: 16; Ecevit'ten çözüm planı, 1996). However, with the strengthening of the alliance between Iran Syria and PUK, Turkey supported the alliance between KDP and Baghdad. In September 1996, KDP's beating the PUK forces and dominating Northern Iraq was welcomed by Ankara. KDP had achieved this with the support of Baghdad and Saddam did not promise anything beyond "autonomy" to Northern Iraq. On the other hand, besides PUK, some of PKK elements had been cleared from the region (K. Irak Saddam'ın elinde, 1996). The so-called Kurdish parliament was taken out of Northern Iraq (Örgüt şokta, 1996).

4.6 Ankara and Washington processes: Turkey's clashing interests with the USA's

In a period of time when Turkey was pleased about KDP's dominance in the area, USA started the Ankara process to reconcile the parties. These negotiations, in which Turkey took part unwillingly, did not bring any successful results and Barzani was not willing to take part in meetings (Kürt toplantısında pürüz, 1996). Turkey has emphasized on the PKK terror and the territorial integrity of Iraq in bilateral contacts with the KDP and PUK before and during the meeting. Turkey's anticipation from Ankara negotiations is that the KDP and PUK respect the territorial integrity of Iraq and they reach agreement by dialogue with Baghdad (K. Irak'ın nabızı Ankara'da atıldı, 1996). However, the fact that Ankara accepted the presence of the regime in Northern Iraq "unwillingly" as a result of USA pressure is seen as a diversion from the policy of protecting the territorial integrity of Iraq (Fırat and Kürkçüoğlu 2013(d): 563).

At the meeting performed in Ankara, pioneered by the USA and Turkey, to find solutions to the disputes between the northern Iraqi Kurdish leaders Mesud Barzani and Celal Talabani, despite some improvements, progress has not been made in the key issues that caused conflicts to begin. No agreement has been reached on the issues of sharing of revenues from the Habur border gate, the representation ratios of the groups in local government, new election calendar and purification Erbil from the gun. As a result, it has been agreed that these issues should be reconsidered on November 15th at a meeting between the parties in Ankara. In the joint declaration after the negotiations, the following provisions were also included: protection of the territorial integrity of Iraq, determination of the future of Iraq by the "common will of all Iraqi people", not leading to "intervention of other powers that would deepen conflicts or increase tension" and separation of the forces from "northern cities", taking into account Turkey's security concerns, and taking measures against the terrorist organization PKK (K. Irak'ta hayal kırıklığı, 1996). However, in the statement that KDP made after the meeting, claiming that the "joint declaration" was declared without their approval, they said that they were not agree totally with the joint declaration. The fact that saying the issues outside the provisions that the KDP has agreed to will later be settle out, was also made Iraq's territorial integrity and the PKK issue controversial (Barzani kızdırdı, 1996). Iraqi Kurdish groups met again in Ankara on November 15th after the first negotiations failed. However, no concrete results were obtained also in the second round of negotiations aimed at resolving disputes between Mesud Barzani and Celal Talabani. During the negotiations, while the PUK gave the message "We are bound by the joint declaration announced after the October 30-31 Ankara meeting", the KDP, which previously stated not to accept a large part of the declaration, has not clarified its stance again. Therefore, instead of making a joint declaration, Turkey and the USA made a statement as two co-chairs. In this statement, the provisions involved in the October 30-31 declaration were repeated and it was asserted that both the KDP and the PUK confirmed their commitment to taking Turkey's security concerns into account, protecting Iraq's territorial integrity and preventing the intervention of "other powers" (K. Irak süreci tıkandı, 1996).

With the failure of Ankara process, Bill Clinton's bringing KDP and PUK together in Washington in 1998 caused Ankara to feel discomfort. US administration made Barzani and the Talabani sign "an agreement, under the USA's initiative, that considers Turkey's concerns". Responding to the questions of journalists after the agreement, Massoud Barzani said, "The terrorist organization PKK can not have a base in northern Iraq, and Talabani agrees with this issue". PUK leader Celal Talabani, who expressed his support to the PKK until now, also stated that they will do their best on the fact that the actions against the borders of Turkey do not take place, and they are determined on this matter (Kürtlere ABD şemsiyesi, 1998). Kurdish leaders stated that they would found a "Northern Iraq" state in Iraq and the name of this official state was not going to be "Kurdish state" or "Kurdistan" (Civaoğlu, 1998: 21). Ankara had not been informed about this process which meant "a federal structuring" in Iraq again. Kurdi leaders later came to Ankara and informed about Washington consensus, they explained that they were taking Turkey's sensitivity into consideration and they said that they would send away PKK from the region. One of the reasons for bringing together these two leaders against Saddam was the preparation of allies to cooperate with in the operation to Iraq by the USA. Again within the same period, the USA can be seen to have an active role in the capture of Öcalan. In 1997, Saddam deported UN supervisors with the allegation that they were spying and after this, with England, the USA first bombed and then prepared to occupy Iraq which increased Ankara's concerns [The USA being uncomfortable about Turkey's increasing role in the area is shown as another reason for Washington process. Turkey was increasing its influence in the area more and more everyday and was breaking the political monopoly of the USA in Northern Iraq (Charountaki 2012: 188)]. Vice Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz, who came in contact with USA Foreign Affairs Minister Madlene Albright in 1999 reemphasized Turkey's sensitivity on this issue: "*possibility of mass migration due to occupation like in 1991, the protection of Iraq's territorial integrity and establishment of a Kurdi state in Northern Iraq*" (Taştekin 2006: 254-255).

Upon the gathering of the parliament of Kurdish groups in northern Iraq in Erbil after 6 years, and at the request of then-current president Ahmet Necdet Sezer, the top of the government came together at the extraordinary summit of Chankaya Palace. At the summit, the negative effects of the Kurdish groups' acceptance of the Washington treaty, which excluded Turkey and Turkmens from northern Iraq were emphasized. Another factor which disturbed Ankara at the parliamentary meeting was the emphasis made on "federal government". Ankara considered this as a process that would facilitate the disintegration of Iraq (Köşkte Kuzey Irak zirvesi, 2002). The then-current Prime Minister Ecevit has expressed his views about the new constitution draft foreseeing a federation in Iraq as follows; This study is a draft. Neither yet finalized, nor formalized. However, the draft is not acceptable as such. Once, this is almost annihilating Iraq. Almost no authority is delegated to the central authority. This ignores Baghdad. To the Northern Iraq which it foresees as a federal state, it gives the powers that exceed this status. It predicts a status close to independence. District federation president is anticipated. It

connects the security forces to this president. Not only the interior security, but also the external security is connected to this president, so it foresees an army in a sense. The Turkmen and the Syrians are granted some minority rights. If this draft, which annihilates Iraq and ignores Baghdad, becomes definite and formalized, Turkey will not accept it. It is not a text that can be accepted by Turkey (Ecevit: Sevr'e dönüş olmaz, 2002).

4.7 Turkey's cross border operations against PKK

Within this period, Turkey increased the number of cross-border operations in Northern Iraq and continued to destroy PKK camps and bases in Northern Iraq and to fight PKK. Extensive operations were made in 1992, 1995, 1997 and 1998, and during these operations, the number of soldiers in the area reached 50,000 (Charountaki 2012: 189). One of the largest operation, was launched in March 1995. More than 35,000 troops and heavy armory, which included fighter planes and tanks, were included in the operation (Kirişçi, 2009: 30). On 7 November 1998, when the last extensive operation was made, when Barzani and Talabani came to Ankara to negotiate, TAF entered Northern Iraq from 10 different regions along a line of 350 kms (Öğür et al. 2014: 38). During the some of these cross-border operations, TAF got support from KDP and PUK forces (Hakurk kuşatmada, 1992). From time to time, European Parliament, some western countries (Türkiye ve PKK'ya kınama, 1992; Harekata ABD freni, 1992; Kuzey Irak'tan çekil, 1992). and a great number of Arabian countries, mainly Iraq, Syria, Libya and Egypt, objected to Turkey's cross-border operations (Kohen, 1997: 20). But different than 1980's Turkey did not have "Iraq's will" for these operations. So in the first half of 90s, arguments such as "legitimate defense" was used while the right for "existence" was used in the second half (Oran, 2006: 268).

With the help of these operations, the organization's power in Northern Iraq was damaged to a great extent. On the other hand, with the capture of Abdullah Öcalan in 1999 and with the withdrawal of the support given to the organization after Adana Consensus was signed with Damascus, PKK lost its strength to a great extent. However, Ankara continued its Iraq policy in accordance with two priorities: "*the protection of the territorial integrity of this country and preventing Northern Iraq from becoming a safe zone for PKK*" (Tür 2012: 598). When the parliament gathered in October 2002, Ankara warned the Kurdi leaders for the last time "not to declare independence, not to work for a memberstate based on ethnic structure, not to play for the status of Mosul and Kirkuk and to represent Turkmens fairly" (Şahin 2006: 290).

5. Conclusion

It is possible to talk about many factors that influence Turkey's Northern Iraq policy. Some of these are Turkey's historical connections and economic and commercial relations with the region, Turkmens in the area and Northern Iraq's geopolitical position. While Turkey connects Northern Iraq to West, Northern Iraq connects Turkey to Iraq and the Persian Gulf, that is to the east of Middle East. Rich oil reserves on Northern Iraq- Basra line are an important attraction center for Turkish economy. In the following

years, Turkey focused on Northern Iraq market more. Due to the economic embargo placed on Iraq in 90s and the inconsistency in Northern Iraq, Ankara could not make the necessary expansions in this field. Thus, within this period, the basis of Turkey's Northern Iraq policy consisted of security problems caused by "regional inconsistency". However, Turkey faced a great number of dilemmas while stating Northern Iraq policy. On the one hand, Turkey advocated Iraq's territorial integrity and on the other hand supported the Coalition powers during the Gulf War so that Saddam's power, which was regarded as a threat, could be decreased. Besides, in order to protect the Iraqi Kurds from the attacks of Saddam, Ankara located combined task force to Southeastern Anatolia region; however, opposed to the establishment of a Kurd state under the patronage of this force within the region. On the one hand, Ankara tried to prevent KDP and PUK from becoming a state and on the other hand cooperated with these powers against PKK.

This finely-tuned policy of Turkey in Northern Iraq was successful in some of the areas of foreign policy. Ankara could not prevent the establishment of an "autonomous government" in the region. However, thanks to the active policy conducted in the region in 90s decreased the influence of PKK to a great extent. The relations with Kurdish leaders were out of necessity because of the difficulty of fighting PKK powers in the region without the support of KDP and PUK. On the other hand, if Kurdish leaders were not contacted, they would most probably get closer to Iran and Syria since they had problems with Iraq for a long time. This possibility was confirmed with Talabani's alliance with Iran, Syria and PKK when the civil war between Kurdish groups had become deeper. Thus, Turkey both increased her role in the area and prevented the area from becoming a domain of Iran and Syria by developing relations with Kurdish leaders. On the other hand, Turkey's welcoming Kurdish refugees in 1988 and 1991 and protecting the civilian Kurdish people caused Turkey to increase her reputation among Kurdish people. During the high-profile visits to the area in the following years, one of the reasons for the interest in Turkish politicians was the policy of protecting "oppressed and civilian people" followed by Ankara. The people of Northern Iraq think that Turkey is closer to them than the outer countries in the region.

Northern Iraq issue is an issue with local, regional and global dimensions. Actors such as Iraqi Kurds, Turkmans and Arabs in local dimension, Turkey, Iran, Syria and Israel in regional dimension affect the problem. Turkey has the capacity to solve Northern Iraq issue in her favor within local and regional dimensions. However, global powers such as the USA, Russia and some European countries involved in the problem make this capacity of Turkey more difficult. Thus, Northern Iraq issue influences Turkish-American relations. After the Cold War, the USA and Turkey were able to cooperate relatively smoothly in regions such as Middle East, Caucasia and Balkans. However, it was understood with Iraq issue that the Middle East policies of Turkey and the USA would not be very well-matched. Turkey wants a centralized administration strong enough to assure stability and also too weak to threaten the countries in the region. Thus, Turkey did not make any efforts to overthrow Saddam

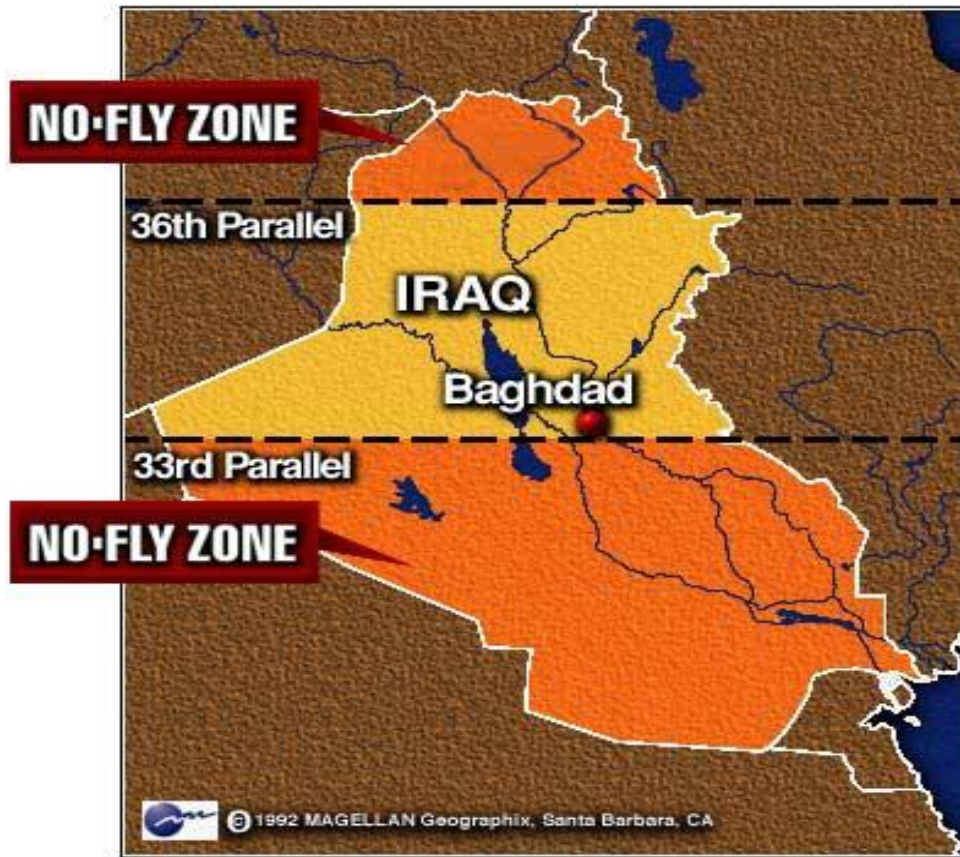
after the Gulf War. The USA's Iraq policy was overthrowing Saddam rather than decreasing his power. On the other hand, Turkey emphasized Iraq's territorial integrity and advocated a unitary Iraq. While the USA did not explicitly defend the split of Iraq, she was open up to the establishment of an autonomous region in the North within a federal Iraq. These differences in the Iraq policies of both actors were messengers of the bill and sack crises that would come out in the following years.

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Map 1: No Fly Zones,

Resorce:https://www.google.com.tr/search?q=no-fly+zone+%C4%B1raq&rlz=1C2AVNG_



Map 2: Kurdish Areas of Northern Iraq during 90's.

Resorce:<https://www.google.com.tr/search?q=Kurdish+Areas+of+Northern+Iraq+under+puk+and+kdp&rlz=>