

# Türkiye: The Implication of Iraq Conflict on the US–Türkiye Strategic Relationship

Levent DUMAN

Mehmet Emin ERENDOR

**Abstract:** The main purpose of this article is to investigate the foundations of relations between Türkiye and the US and to analyze the impact of the Iraq War on relations between the two countries. The relations that developed in the context of security after the Cold War were naturally supported by economic aid. Although there were many problems in the fragile relations during the Cold War, the ties between the two countries were never completely severed. While frequent occurrences strengthened Türkiye's significance in the area, the divergent interests of the two nations have only recently begun to come into focus. The developments taking place in Türkiye's neighboring countries also attract the attention of the United States, and the repercussions of events in these regions are reflected in Türkiye, especially concerning conflicts involving Russia. In this context, although the relations between the two countries are often touted as an alliance, it highlights the fact that it leans more towards a necessity. At this point, the Iraq War has had a significant impact on the relations between the two countries and has led to the emergence and increase of problems between the two countries.

Levent DUMAN

Adana Alparslan Türkeş Science  
and Technology University, Türkiye  
Email: lduman@atu.edu.tr

Mehmet Emin ERENDOR

Adana Alparslan Türkeş Science  
and Technology University, Türkiye  
Email: mehmetendor@gmail.com

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## Introduction

The end of the Second World War marked the beginning of a new era in Turkish Foreign Policy (TFP). Since its foundation in 1923, Türkiye has adhered to a neutral international policy under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's leadership. İsmet İnönü, the

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successor, effectively maintained a similar foreign policy until the conclusion of the Second World War (SWW). Despite İnönü remaining in the presidency post-war, the shifting global landscape and the deepening divide between the Eastern and Western blocs compelled Türkiye to align itself with one of the existing alliances of that era. Given the perceived primary threat to its security posed by the Soviet Union, Turkish policymakers saw limited alternatives beyond aligning with the Western powers, particularly the US.

The US, emerging as one of the two dominant powers post-SWW, recalibrated its policies, adopting a more active stance in Europe and the Middle East under the frameworks of the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. Naturally, this shift significantly impacted Türkiye's significance at the onset of the Cold War.

Since the end of the SWW, political, military, and economic ties between the US and Türkiye have gone through various phases, intensifying over time as allies. During this alliance era, unprecedented relations were achieved. However, despite improvements, the US and Türkiye also faced serious crises and setbacks. The collapse of the Soviet Union marked a new chapter in their relations. Over the last thirty years, due to changing international relations in the post-Cold War era, the US-Türkiye relations have become more fragile.

Over the past three decades, the US-Türkiye relationship has undergone deterioration due to shifts in global politics in the post-Cold War era. This has rendered the relationship between the two somewhat more fragile. While Türkiye played a significant role in safeguarding American interests in the Middle East during the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union raised uncertainties about the future of American-Turkish relations. However, especially in the period following the September 11, 2001 attacks on the US, the significance of US-Türkiye relations once again surged in importance for American foreign policymakers. Throughout and after the 2003 operations in Iraq, Türkiye's influence in re-establishing regional stability remained profoundly significant to the US. Divergent priorities in the Middle East and the Caucasus consistently presented challenges for cooperation between the US and Türkiye in the post-Cold War era. Despite these differences, pivotal events like the 2003 Gulf War, the Arab Spring, and Russian aggression in the Caucasus underscored the potential for significant US-Türkiye cooperation, aiming to advance the national interests of both states.

This paper contends that the US military intervention in Iraq, coinciding with the end of the Cold War, and subsequent policies toward Iraq have stood as one of the most enduring areas of conflict and cooperation between the US and Türkiye. Despite shared interests across various domains, Iraq remains a focal point of discord in the US-Türkiye relations due to conflicting priorities.

To comprehensively address Iraq's significance in the US-Türkiye relations, this paper is structured into three sections and a conclusion. The initial section analyzes US-Türkiye relations during the Cold War, highlighting both cooperative efforts and areas of conflict. The second section focuses on US policy toward Iraq in the post-Cold War era. Finally, the third section examines the effects of US policies on US-Türkiye relations, particularly concerning Iraq.

## **Evolution of an Alliance:**

### **The US-Türkiye Relations during the Cold War**

Following the War of Liberation, the Turkish Republic was established in 1923 under the guidance of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. As the predominant leader of the nascent nation, Atatürk personally influenced both domestic and foreign policies. In its infancy, Türkiye embraced a foreign policy approach aimed at preserving independence and safeguarding the new regime (Karpas, 1996). Consequently, right from its inception, the core tenets of TFP revolved around the protection of international peace and order through global collaboration and diplomatic resolution of international problems (Aykan, 1999). Even following Atatürk's passing, these principles remained central to the decision-making process among Turkish policymakers (Hale, 2000).

The foreign policies formulated by Atatürk persisted even after his death in 1938. İsmet İnönü, his successor, assumed the presidency in 1938 and held office until 1950. İnönü, as the new president, navigated a policy aimed at safeguarding the country's security during the SWW. From his perspective, Türkiye wasn't prepared to engage in a conflict between major powers and required both economic and military support (Zürcher, 2007). Throughout the war, Türkiye managed to walk a delicate line between warring nations. İnönü successfully negotiated agreements with both Great Britain and Germany while the conflict raged (Deringil, 1989). Türkiye's wartime policy was grounded in pragmatic principles, taking into consideration the prevailing realities of the international arena (Weisband, 1973).

Despite intense pressure from the British Prime Minister Churchill for Türkiye to join the Allies during the war, İnönü successfully kept Türkiye out of the conflict until February 1945, when the war's outcome became apparent. Türkiye received military aid from the Allies to bolster its armed forces. Simultaneously, until April 1944, Türkiye maintained its trade relations with Germany (Weisband, 1973).

Türkiye's declaration of war against Germany and Japan on February 23, 1945, occurred when İnönü had limited room to maneuver between the major global powers of that era. Türkiye was faced with the choice of either declaring war on the Axis countries or abstaining from participation in the impending United Nations Conference (Deringil, 1989).

At the end of the SWW, Türkiye faced a series of demands from the Soviet Union that posed a significant threat to Türkiye's security and integrity. Confronting such demands from one of the victorious powers, Türkiye felt an urgent need to foster strong relationships with powerful nations to counterbalance the Soviet threat. Under these circumstances, Turkish leaders viewed establishing close ties with the US as highly advantageous. From the perspective of the US, the Soviet Union emerged as a new and evolving threat in the post-war period. Hence, the policy of establishing good relations with countries neighboring the Soviet Union, aimed at containment, appeared to be strategically beneficial (Armaoğlu, 1994; Sander, 1996; Oran, 2009).

At the end of the SWW, the US and Türkiye didn't have a significant history of cooperation. In fact, from the founding of the Turkish Republic until the end of the war, relations between the two countries remained at a minimal level. Despite Türkiye's efforts to foster good relations with the US during this period, primarily due to America's isolationist policy, such attempts yielded little to no results. Even in early 1945, the US did not appear interested in supporting Türkiye against the demands made by the Soviet Union (Kirişçi, 1998). Apart from the renewal of the 1936 Montreux Convention, which regulated the İstanbul and Çanakkale straits, the Soviet Union also laid claim to two eastern provinces of Türkiye, Kars, and Ardahan, demanding their incorporation into Soviet territory (Karpas, 1975; Çelik, 1999; Hale, 2000).

From İnönü's perspective, who adeptly kept Türkiye out of the war by skillfully navigating between warring nations, forging a close alliance with the US appeared to be the sole means of averting Soviet demands. However, the US maintained its stance of not opposing the Soviet demands on Türkiye, even during the Potsdam Conference. The change in the US attitude toward Türkiye came after President Truman shifted his position regarding the Soviet Union. Truman altered his stance due to the hostile policies adopted by Soviet leader Stalin in the period following the conference. This prompted President Truman to adopt a confrontational policy. As part of this shift, in early 1946, Truman recognized the need to support Türkiye against Soviet aggression (Hale, 2000).

In the post-SWW period, Türkiye's foreign policy primarily centered around aligning itself with various Western alliances to bolster its strength against the demands imposed by the Soviet Union. On August 7, 1946, the Soviet Union issued a strong note to Türkiye, reiterating its demands regarding the administration of the Straits and proposing joint control of the waterway. Faced with this, Türkiye sought to synchronize its response with those of the US and British governments. On August 15, President Truman, along with Under Secretary of State Acheson, Secretary of Navy Forrestal, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, convened at the White House to formulate a policy regarding the Soviet demands on Türkiye. Following this meeting, a decision was made to firmly support Türkiye against the Soviet demands (Türkmen, 2000).

Great Britain played a pivotal role in the formation of an alliance between Türkiye and Western countries. On February 21, 1947, the British government formally informed the US that it wouldn't be able to continue providing military and economic aid to Greece and Türkiye beyond March 31, 1947. The British authorities expressed hope that the US would assume this responsibility in both countries (Athanassopoulou, 1999). By then, leaders from both the US and Britain had concluded that defending Türkiye and Greece against Soviet aggression was crucial for safeguarding Western interests in the region. President Truman, despite facing domestic opposition, decided to act in this direction (Hale, 2000). President Truman sent a message to the US Congress on March 12, 1947, later labeled as the Truman Doctrine, seeking authorization for \$400 million in military and economic assistance to Greece and Türkiye. The message explicitly stated that the assistance to Türkiye aimed to enhance its capacity to resist Soviet pressure and bolster its military capability against potential Soviet attacks or various forms of aggression (Athanassopoulou, 1999).

The Truman Doctrine marked a significant milestone in both the history of the Cold War and Türkiye's attainment of security through close ties with the US (Hale, 2000). This doctrine relieved Türkiye from the sense of isolation in international affairs. Under the Truman Doctrine, Türkiye received support to build a robust military force in preparation against the Soviet Union. The foreign aid from the US was allocated to various branches of the Turkish Military Forces to modernize and enhance Türkiye's military capabilities (Athanassopoulou, 1999). Faced with substantial threats, Türkiye sought a 'powerful friend' against the Soviet Union and was willing to assume any role to garner US support at that critical juncture.

The Truman Doctrine marked just the inception of a lasting cooperation between the US and Türkiye. In July 1947, the two nations signed a military assistance agreement. This agreement involved the provision of weaponry, military equipment, and personnel training by the US. Additionally, plans for road and harbor construction and the establishment of various strategic installations were developed with guidance from the US and implemented using financial aid from the US (Vali, 1971). In September 1947, Türkiye made a request to the US government for an additional \$100 million in aid. The US initially rejected this request, leading to disappointment in Türkiye. Subsequently, Türkiye's exclusion from the Marshall Aid scheme stirred strong reactions within the country. However, following negotiations between the two nations, the US agreed to include Türkiye in the Marshall Plan and provide further economic assistance (Athanassopoulou, 1999).

The formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949 stood as a pivotal step in uniting the Western world against the Soviet aggression. However, the exclusion of Türkiye from the North Atlantic Treaty signed on April 4, 1949, to formalize the new alliance led to disappointment within Türkiye. The NATO membership was

viewed by the Turkish government as crucial to securing US assistance in the event of a Soviet attack on Türkiye. Despite the Truman Administration's establishment of close ties and provision of military and economic aid to Türkiye, Western Europe remained their primary focus. Consequently, the US chose to concentrate its forces in Western Europe, leaving Türkiye in a less prioritized position. Initially, Great Britain did not support Türkiye's NATO membership during the early stages of the alliance. However, Turkish leaders from the outset perceived NATO membership as the sole means of guaranteeing Türkiye's security against potential Soviet aggression. Therefore, Türkiye applied for full membership in NATO in May 1950 (Hale, 2000). At that juncture, the US aimed to sustain its relations with Türkiye without entering into a defense agreement (Athanassopoulou, 1999).

In 1950, after 27 years of single-party rule, the Democrat Party (DP) won the first democratic elections in Türkiye, ending the Republican People's Party (RPP) one-party regime. Shortly after Adnan Menderes became the new prime minister, the Korean War erupted. Menderes, akin to the preceding government, was determined to establish a security agreement with the US. The outbreak of the Korean War provided Menderes with an opportunity to bring Türkiye's concerns to the attention of the US (Athanassopoulou, 1999). In late July 1950, Menderes announced Türkiye's decision to send 4,500 soldiers to Korea. Türkiye viewed its contribution to the Korean War as a means to secure NATO membership. Shortly after announcing the deployment of troops, Menderes' government officially requested to join NATO. However, some NATO members were apprehensive about extending the alliance's reach to the borders of the Soviet Union by admitting Türkiye. The US also did not favor Türkiye's immediate membership. Consequently, Türkiye's request was declined (Hale, 2000).

Despite the initial setback, Menderes' government persisted in its diplomatic endeavors to secure NATO membership for Türkiye, even as Turkish troops were engaged in the Korean War. In early 1951, there was a shift in the US position regarding Türkiye's NATO membership. The US Secretary of State Dean Acheson emphasized the significance of Türkiye in preventing the spread of communism into new areas, successfully persuading President Truman to support Türkiye's NATO membership. Consequently, in May 1951, President Truman announced his backing for granting NATO membership to Greece and Türkiye (Athanassopoulou, 1999). Subsequently, the British government withdrew its opposition to Türkiye's membership, and in February 1952, Türkiye officially became a NATO member (Türkmen, 2000).

Following its NATO membership, Türkiye emerged as one of the alliance's most pivotal members, owing to its strategic geographical position. Türkiye assumed crucial roles in shaping NATO's security policies. Particularly, during the US adoption of the "massive retaliation" policy against the Soviet Union, the utilization of Turkish airbases became important. As early as 1956, the US deployed U-2 aircrafts to İncirlik Air Base in Adana,

and an array of surveillance systems were established in Türkiye's Black Sea region. In line with a 1957 agreement, the US stationed aircrafts equipped with tactical nuclear weapons in Türkiye. Leveraging Turkish facilities and territory significantly bolstered the US capabilities in the rivalry against the Soviet Union (Kuniholm, 1996). This positioning and cooperation with Türkiye provided strategic advantages to the US in the context of the Cold War dynamics.

The US-Türkiye relations remained intact even after the military coup that ousted the Menderes Government in May 1960. The leaders of the coup promptly declared their commitment to maintaining close ties with the US. In return, the US did not oppose the emerging regime in Türkiye (Demirel, 2016). Throughout this period, numerous agreements were signed between the two states concerning the US military presence on Turkish territories. The US displayed a particular interest in enhancing Türkiye's air force capabilities and continued providing military assistance, even after Türkiye became a NATO member in 1952 (Vali, 1971). This ongoing collaboration underscored the consistent cooperation between the two countries in military affairs and defense strategies.

When Sputnik heightened concerns about the Soviet Union's long-range missile capabilities in October 1957, the US urged the NATO members to agree on deploying missiles and nuclear warhead stockpiles in Europe to restore confidence in the US commitment to European security. While most NATO allies were hesitant to accept this additional responsibility, Türkiye was open to hosting these weapons. In October 1959, the US and Türkiye agreed on deploying a squadron of Jupiter missiles without making a public announcement. However, the installation of these missiles did not occur until the fall of 1961, and they became operational around spring 1962 (Kuniholm, 1996). The formal handover of the Jupiter missiles to the Turkish authorities took place on October 22, 1962, amidst the Cuban missile crisis. This situation placed Türkiye in a pivotal position between the negotiating tables of the US and the Soviet Union. Following negotiations, it was evident that the Soviet Union withdrew its missiles from Cuba without requiring the US to make any concessions regarding the missiles in Türkiye. In a private negotiation, however, President Kennedy assured the removal of the missiles from Türkiye. Consequently, the missiles were withdrawn from Türkiye in April 1963 (Kuniholm, 1996). This event underscored Türkiye's strategic significance in Cold War negotiations and its role in global geopolitics during that period.

Despite the collaboration achieved between the US and Türkiye in the post-1945 era, the two countries encountered significant crises. A major rupture in the US-Türkiye relations arose due to the events in Cyprus. In 1958, the British government relinquished its sovereignty over Cyprus, and negotiations among Britain, Türkiye, and Greece led to the establishment of an independent state in 1960. However, this Republic of Cyprus was short-lived as inter-communal violence erupted between the Greek and Turkish

communities in 1963. With violence escalating, Türkiye considered military intervention on the island. By the spring of 1964, Türkiye was preparing for potential military involvement. In June 1964, US President Johnson conveyed a stern warning, known as the “Johnson’s Letter,” to Turkish Prime Minister İnönü. The letter cautioned Türkiye against utilizing any US-supplied equipment in an invasion of Cyprus. Johnson also raised doubts about the US obligations under NATO if Türkiye’s actions led to Soviet intervention. Consequently, in response to Johnson’s letter, the Turkish government abandoned its plans for a military intervention in Cyprus (Vali, 1971; Armaoğlu, 1994). This episode underscored the complexities in the US–Türkiye relations and the delicate balance between their strategic interests within the NATO alliance.

Johnson’s letter had a profound impact on the nature of US–Türkiye relations, leaving lasting effects on both countries. Following the 1964 Cyprus crisis, there was a noticeable rise in anti-US sentiment within Türkiye, accompanied by opposition parties demanding the reconsideration or annulment of bilateral agreements with the US. Various accusations were leveled against US policies, leading to heightened opposition during the 1960s. This deterioration in relations prompted the Turkish government to seek improved ties with nations outside the NATO alliance, including the Soviet Union (Armaoğlu, 1994; Oran, 2009). Despite Türkiye’s efforts to strengthen relations beyond NATO, the Turkish policymakers primarily aimed to overcome the country’s isolation caused by the Cyprus crisis (Harris, 1975). This period marked a shift in Türkiye’s diplomatic approach, as it sought to navigate challenges within the alliance and explore avenues for broader international engagement.

In a relatively short span, the US and Türkiye worked toward mending the rift caused by the Cyprus crisis in their relations. Following negotiations initiated in 1966, it was announced in January 1969 that discussions regarding the basic agreement had been finalized. Subsequently, on July 3, 1969, the Cooperation Agreement Concerning Joint Defense was signed in Ankara. This agreement, which replaced the 1954 Military Facilities Agreement, introduced revisions to some bilateral arrangements while aiming to provide clarity on others. Broadly, it specified that any military installation within Türkiye and its utilization must obtain approval from the Turkish government. Türkiye retained ownership rights over the land designated for joint defense installations, granting Turkish authorities the right to inspect these areas and assign Turkish military or civilian personnel to oversee them. Furthermore, the US military and civilian personnel were obligated to abide by Turkish law within these installations (Vali, 1971). This agreement sought to establish clearer terms and reinforce mutual respect and adherence to national laws between the two nations.

In contrast to the events of 1964, when inter-communal clashes reignited in Cyprus in 1974, the Turkish government opted for intervention, deploying troops on July 20 to safeguard the rights of Turkish Cypriots residing in Cyprus. In response to this military



operation, the US imposed an arms embargo on Türkiye in February 1975. In retaliation, Türkiye terminated the 1969 Defense Cooperation Agreement and assumed control of US installations, placing them under the jurisdiction of the Turkish armed forces. This led to a temporary deterioration in relations between the two countries. However, in September 1978, the US decided to lift the embargo on Türkiye. As a result, Türkiye reopened the US bases on its soil, and a new Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement was signed between the parties. The removal of the embargo swiftly revitalized relations between the US and Türkiye, marking a renewed phase of cooperation (Zürcher, 2007; Armaoğlu, 1994). This turn of events showcased the resilience of their diplomatic ties despite intermittent strains.

The military coup in Türkiye in September 1980 didn't disrupt the relations between the US and Türkiye. The leadership of the military junta sought immediate support from the US following the coup, which was readily provided. Throughout the 1980s, the US-Türkiye relations maintained a cooperative stance. Even after a civilian government assumed power following the 1983 general elections, the relationship between the two countries remained robust. During this period, the US saw Ronald Reagan take office as president, advocating for heightened pressure on the Soviet Union. Consequently, the early 1980s witnessed intensified Cold War tensions between the US and the Soviet Union. Türkiye's growing defense needs, coupled with the US policy shift, led to a further strengthening of relations between the two states. This culminated in the signing of a new "Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement" in March 1980, establishing a fresh framework for the US military activities in Türkiye and pledging military support to the Turkish armed forces. Throughout the 1980s, the US extended substantial assistance to Türkiye. However, Reagan's policy stance softened toward the Soviet Union in his second term, causing some adjustments in the dynamics of the US-Türkiye relationship (Kuniholm, 1996). This evolving context influenced the trajectory of their interactions during this period.

### **The US's Iraq Policy in the Post-Cold War Era**

The Middle East holds a paramount position in the US foreign policy due to a multitude of reasons. Foremost among these is the region's control over more than half of the world's proven oil reserves. Maintaining the smooth flow of oil and gas from the Persian Gulf at reasonable prices is widely acknowledged as one of the most critical national interests of the US. However, beyond oil, the Middle East remains crucial for various other national interests of the US. Ensuring the security of Israel, preserving stability across the region, preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and averting the rise of a dominant power hostile to the US are among the key concerns (Nuechterlein, 2001; Preece, 1986; Friedman, 1993; Seward, 1992; Perle, 2000; Bennis, 2000). Given this array of interests, any destabilizing events or movements within the region are

considered highly significant and cannot be overlooked by any US administration. The multifaceted nature of the US interests in the Middle East ensures the region remains a focal point in American foreign policy decisions.

The concerns of the US regarding the Middle East have evolved in response to changes in the global landscape. In the Cold War era, a primary focus was preventing Soviet dominance in the region. The Middle East was a pivotal theater for the superpower rivalry, and the US was heavily invested in countering Soviet influence to maintain its own interests and strategic leverage. As the Cold War came to an end and the world moved into the post-Cold War era, there was a shift in focus for the US. The emergence and rise of regimes hostile to American interests became a central concern for US policymakers. The region witnessed the rise of regimes or entities perceived as threats to US security, stability, and influence. Addressing and managing these hostile regimes became a top priority for the US policy in the Middle East during and after the Cold War.

Indeed, after the SWW until around 1970, the US heavily relied on Great Britain to safeguard the uninterrupted flow of oil from the Persian Gulf to global markets. When Britain withdrew its forces from the Persian Gulf in 1970 due to financial constraints, this shift prompted the United States to reassess its strategy for ensuring the security of oil flow from the region to international markets. In response to this necessity, President Nixon collaborated with the Shah of Iran to establish shared policies aimed at enhancing security in the Persian Gulf region (Nuechterlein, 2001).

The alliance between the US and Iran aimed at securing the Persian Gulf collapsed following the Shah's fall from power during the 1979 Iran Islamic Revolution. The new Iranian regime adopted a hostile stance toward the US, which culminated in the seizure of the US embassy staff in Tehran during the power transition. In response to this situation, the US National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski made a critical decision by publicly endorsing Iraq to initiate an attack on Iran. The Iraqi invasion of Iran in September 1980 served the interests of the US by weakening the new Islamic government in Iran (Clark, 1998). Consequently, Iraq swiftly emerged as the primary partner for the US in the Persian Gulf region (Friedman, 1993).

Indeed, Iraq had its motivations for initiating the war with Iran. From the U.S. perspective, the principle of 'my enemy's enemy is my friend' played a significant role, leading to support for Iraq in its conflict with Iran. Although the U.S. officially maintained neutrality during the Iran-Iraq war, military assistance to Iraq began when Ronald Reagan assumed office in 1981 (Jentleson, 1994). This support resulted in the Reagan Administration removing Iraq from the list of states supporting international terrorism in March 1982, allowing the legal provision of credits to Iraq. In 1983, Iraq received over \$400 million in guarantees from the US Agriculture Department Commodity Corporation (Jentleson, 1994). The US-Iraq rapprochement continued to strengthen.

In 1984, diplomatic relations were resumed, and the US expanded its support to Iraq, sharing military intelligence and providing economic assistance (Clark, 1998).

The US support for Iraq continued even after the conclusion of the Iran-Iraq War in 1988, extending into economic, political, and military assistance until the invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990. George Bush's presidency followed the policy trajectory set by the Reagan Administration toward Iraq. In a continuation of this stance, President Bush signed National Security Directive (NSD) 26 on October 2, 1989. This directive aimed to offer various incentives to maintain close relations with Iraq (Jentleson, 1994). NSD 26 emphasized the importance of fostering good relations with Iraq, citing their significance for national interests and the maintenance of stability in the Middle East.

The Iran-Iraq War had far-reaching implications for Iraq's military capabilities and strategic positioning in the Middle East. Throughout the conflict, Iraq acquired extensive stocks of conventional weaponry. However, notably, Iraq also directed substantial efforts toward the development of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons during this period. Saddam Hussein's regime prioritized acquiring the necessary equipment and materials for producing these weapons. Iraq infamously used chemical weapons against Iran during the war and subsequently deployed them against its Kurdish minority in northern Iraq following the conclusion of the Iran-Iraq conflict.

The Iraqi regime's use of chemical weapons against the Kurdish population in northern Iraq was indeed a grave violation, but unfortunately, it did not receive widespread attention or prompt action from Western countries, including the US. The media coverage of Iraq's attacks on the Kurds was limited, and many nations, including the US, did not take substantial action against Iraq's genocidal campaign targeting the Kurds (Rezun, 1992). Despite the unanimous passing of the Prevention of Genocide Act of 1988 by the US Senate, which called for economic sanctions against Iraq, the Reagan Administration strongly opposed this legislation. This opposition was largely driven by considerations of US interests, and consequently, there were no significant policy changes towards Iraq despite the genocidal act against the Kurds (Jentleson, 1994).

The perception of Iraq as a potential threat to US interests in the Middle East did not receive significant attention at the beginning of the Bush Administration in 1989. There was a lack of emphasis on Iraq's possible impact on US interests in the region (George, 1993). Following the Gulf War, several scholars highlighted the misunderstanding or misinterpretation of Saddam Hussein's broader foreign policy objectives by the US. Some argued that the US's relatively mild response to Iraq before August 1990 might have contributed to Saddam Hussein's decision to invade Kuwait (Rubin, 1992).

Indeed, the invasion of Kuwait by the Iraqi Army on August 2, 1990, prompted swift international condemnation. President George Bush promptly voiced the US' disapproval of Iraq's actions, leading to an emergency session of the United Nations Security

Council (UNSC). Resolution 660 was adopted at the end of this session, unequivocally denouncing the invasion and demanding an immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait (United Nations Security Council, 1990a). In response to Iraq's noncompliance with this demand, Resolution 661 was passed by the UNSC on August 6, 1990, imposing comprehensive economic sanctions against Iraq (The United Nations Security Council, 1990b). The persistent refusal of the Iraqi government to withdraw its troops from Kuwait resulted in the formation of an international coalition, predominantly led by the US, to respond to Iraq's aggression. This coalition aimed to enforce the United Nations (UN) resolutions and liberate Kuwait from Iraqi occupation.

On January 16, 1991, the Allied forces launched 'Operation Desert Storm' to free Kuwait from Iraqi occupation (Gregg, 1993). President George Bush, aware of the Vietnam syndrome, urged the military to prevent another Vietnam scenario (Freedman & Karsh, 1991). Consequently, the allied forces focused on the specific objectives of Desert Storm: compelling Saddam Hussein to withdraw his troops from Kuwait and restoring stability in the Persian Gulf. They did not aim to conquer the entire Iraqi territory. The campaign proved highly successful, achieving its goals in just forty-three days. By February 27, 1991, Kuwait was liberated with minimal casualties among the allied forces, while Iraq suffered significant losses, reaching into the thousands (Gregg, 1993).

Following the end of the Desert Storm, the Kurds in northern Iraq, encouraged in part by the US, revolted against Saddam Hussein's regime. Concurrently, the Shiites in southern Iraq also revolted against the central government, leading to approximately 70 percent of Iraq's population slipping from Baghdad's control. Instead of aiding these uprisings against Saddam, the US eased restrictions on Iraqi helicopter forces and permitted Iraq to quell the revolts (Wurmser, 1999, p. 10). Preserving Iraq's territorial integrity emerged as a paramount objective for the US at that time (Halperin & Kemp, 2001). Following the liberation of Kuwait, the US policy leaned heavily towards safeguarding Iraq's territorial unity, showing less concern about the repressive measures adopted by the Iraqi government (Wurmser, 1999, p. 130). Essentially, the US sought to restore the pre-1990/91 Gulf War balance of power among Middle Eastern states. Maintaining a robust Iraq was deemed crucial by the US to contain Iran's influence (Pipes, 1991).

Following the culmination of the 1990/91 Gulf War, the elimination of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) emerged as a key objective in the US policy towards Iraq. This issue served to sustain the international coalition against Saddam Hussein in the post-war era. Particularly highlighted in Western media after 1991, the Iraqi Army's use of chemical weapons in Halabja against the Kurds in 1988 became a focal point, especially for governments like the US and the UK, justifying their policies towards Iraq. On April 3, 1991, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 687 (United Nations Security Council, 1991a). This resolution mandated Iraq to accept the *"destruction, removal, or rendering harmless, under international supervision"* of all chemical and

*biological weapons, related subsystems, components, and facilities.* Iraq was also required to submit a detailed report regarding the locations, amounts, and types of its chemical and biological weapons. Additionally, Resolution 687 established a Special Commission for on-site inspections within Iraq to investigate WMD-related activities. Alongside the WMD issue, this resolution reshaped the sanctions regime initially imposed on Iraq by Resolution 661 on August 6, 1990.

Following the adoption of Resolution 687, the United Nations Special Commission on Iraq (UNSCOM) was established, commencing inspections within Iraq as mandated. Meanwhile, economic sanctions against Iraq persisted. However, among the permanent members of the Security Council, there existed differing perspectives on the role and purpose of these sanctions. For Russia, France, and China, the sanctions primarily aimed at ensuring Iraq's compliance with the Security Council's decisions. In contrast, the US and Britain viewed the sanctions as a means to punish Saddam Hussein and sought to use them to prompt his removal from power (Byman, Pollack, & Waxman, 1998).

The desire to remove Saddam Hussein from power was frequently voiced by American and British officials. There was a prevailing belief, particularly among American officials, that Saddam Hussein's regime, weakened by the Gulf War defeat and compounded by sanctions, would not endure for long (Graham-Brown, 1999). Despite being labeled the "longest, most comprehensive, and severe multilateral sanctions regime ever imposed" by the UN (Cortright & Lopez, 2000, p. 8), these sanctions did not result in a regime change in Iraq. Nevertheless, the US and British authorities persisted in viewing the sanctions as a means of ousting Saddam Hussein. In November 1997, President Clinton reiterated the US stance on Iraq, asserting that "sanctions will be there until the end of time, or as long as he [Saddam Hussein] lasts").

UNSCOM conducted numerous inspections in Iraq until December 1998, when the Iraqi government halted the commission's inspections. As a result, UNSCOM departed from Iraq, prompting the US and Britain to launch a four-day air and cruise missile campaign known as Operation Desert Fox against Iraq in December 1998. This operation involved the launch of over four hundred cruise missiles and more than six hundred sorties by US-British aircraft targeting Iraqi locations (Byman & Waxman, 2000). Despite this military campaign, the Iraqi government persisted in obstructing the resumption of UN inspections. There was no inspection team in Iraq until November 2002 (The New York Times, 2002).

The effectiveness of the UN inspections in Iraq and the ensuing debate surrounding it became deeply politicized. Prior to the UNSCOM's departure in 1998, their report concluded that Iraq was mostly devoid of nuclear weapons and missiles, had considerably reduced its chemical weapons stock, but remained uncertain in terms of biological weapons (Bennis, Zune & Honey, 2001). Amid US pressure, some UN inspection team

members resigned from their roles. Before the events of September 11, French, Russian, and Chinese officials frequently expressed their concerns about the US-UK policies toward Iraq. According to these states and Resolution 687, the sanctions aimed to secure Kuwait's sovereignty, contain Iraq and eliminate its WMDs. From their standpoint, the first two objectives were achieved. Moreover, based on the UNSCOM's final report, substantial progress had been made in eliminating Iraq's WMD capabilities. However, France and Russia argued that complete assurance of WMD elimination from Iraq was challenging, and they remained skeptical about the future intentions of the Iraqi regime. Therefore, these countries, particularly France and Russia, advocated for lifting sanctions and normalizing relations with Iraq (Cortright & Lopez, 2000).

Indeed, by the end of the 1990s, the US stance on Iraq faced diminishing support on the global stage. The September 11, 2001 attacks presented an opportunity for significant shifts in the US's Iraq policy. George W. Bush's ascendancy to power followed one of the most contentious elections in the US history. Despite Al Gore winning the Popular Vote in the November 2000 elections, Bush, the Republican Party's candidate, secured the Electoral College vote after weeks of recounts in Florida and numerous legal decisions. Eventually, Bush was declared the new president. In the new administration, several key positions were occupied by individuals who had previously served during George Bush's administration, including Vice President Richard Cheney, who held the position of Secretary of Defense from 1989 to 1993. This not only tied personal connections to various foreign policy issues, particularly regarding Iraq, for the new president—son of the leader during the 1990/91 Gulf War—but also for other members of the administration.

Following the contentious elections, George W. Bush was not initially perceived as a very popular president in his early months in office. Many doubted his ability to execute the agenda he championed during his election campaign. The president's perceived lack of experience and skills across several domains was considered a major hurdle to the administration's success. Additionally, the Republican Party's loss of the majority in the US Senate after the November 2000 elections posed another challenge to Bush's pursuit of his agenda.

Amidst the administration grappling with numerous issues, the landscape dramatically shifted with the September 11th attacks, causing seismic changes in US domestic politics. There was a remarkable unity in Congress, rallying behind President George W. Bush. This newfound consensus granted Bush unprecedented leverage to pursue his foreign policy objectives. His popularity surged notably among the American populace post-9/11, and the Democrats, who held Senate control, struggled to present substantive alternatives to the administration's post-9/11 policies. With historic levels of public backing and a divided Democratic front, the president wielded considerable power in relation to the legislative branch.

The crisis with Iraq had personal resonance for George W. Bush, often referred to as “Bush’s Gulf War” due to its roots in his father’s presidency (Frank, 2002). The President held a personal investment in resolving an issue his father grappled with. Given that many in his administration had served under his father, this personal attachment was not unique to George W. Bush alone. The post-9/11 landscape provided an opportunity to recenter Iraq in the US foreign policy. Initially, there was an effort to link Saddam Hussein’s regime with *al-Qaeda* and Osama bin Laden, championed notably by figures like Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz. However, when the administration couldn’t substantiate this link convincingly, the focus shifted back to the issue of Iraq’s alleged possession of WMDs as a basis for involvement in the ‘War Against Terror’ campaign.

Certainly, in the aftermath of September 11, President George W. Bush experienced a surge in popularity and wielded significant influence in the post-attack period. This period demanded a sustained foreign threat to maintain the administration’s power and deflect criticism regarding the handling of the campaign against al-Qaeda. Even before the 9/11 attacks, plans were reportedly in motion within the Bush administration to remove Saddam Hussein from power (Butt, 2019). President Bush, in a pivotal address to the UN General Assembly on September 12, 2002, accused Saddam Hussein of actively pursuing the development of WMDs and urged the UN to enforce resolutions against Iraq (Bahgat, 2002; Bush, 2002). Leveraging the argument that Hussein represented an imminent threat, the US administration pressured the UN Security Council into passing Resolution 1441 (United Nations Security Council, 2002). This resolution demanded Iraq to grant immediate and unrestricted access to the United Nations Monitoring, Verification, and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), established in 1999 to replace the earlier UNSCOM.

Indeed, following the acceptance of UN inspectors in November 2002 as per Resolution 1441, both UNMOVIC and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) commenced their operations in Iraq. By January 2003, these organizations had submitted reports to the UN Security Council that failed to provide compelling evidence of Iraqi WMD activities. Despite these findings, President Bush continued to press allegations against Iraq for its supposed development of WMDs (NPR, 2005). Secretary of State Colin Powell presented a speech on February 5, 2003, to the UN Security Council where he claimed that the US intelligence had evidence regarding Iraqi WMDs. However, the evidence presented fell short of being convincing or conclusive (Zarefsky, 2007). Following Powell’s speech, reports from the IAEA and UNMOVIC reiterated their findings that no evidence of WMDs activities had been uncovered in Iraq (NPR, 2005).

The George W. Bush administration, despite the absence of evidence concerning WMDs in Iraq, chose to initiate military actions against Saddam Hussein. This was done without securing the approval of the UN Security Council, forming an international coalition

led by the US and the UK (Karaalp & Okuduci, 2021). Their argument revolved around Iraq's perceived failure to comply with Resolution 1441, justifying their actions based on that resolution. In a public address on March 17, 2003, George W. Bush gave Saddam Hussein and some of his family members a two-day ultimatum to leave Iraq. When these demands were disregarded, military operations began on March 20. The US-led coalition swiftly gained control of Iraqi territory, declaring a rapid victory. On May 1, George W. Bush announced the conclusion of major combat operations in Iraq, proclaiming "Mission Accomplished". Over the subsequent weeks and months, many key figures from Saddam Hussein's regime, including Saddam's sons and Saddam himself, were either captured or killed (Council on Foreign Relations, 2011).

The aftermath of the 2003 Gulf War marked a significant shift in Iraq, leading to the removal of Saddam Hussein's regime and the Baath Party's longstanding rule. The US found itself tasked with establishing a sustainable political framework in Iraq, one that reflected the country's diverse population and accommodated historically marginalized groups—the majority Shiite population and the Kurdish people in northern Iraq. Following the war, the newly formed "Coalition Provisional Authority" assumed direct governance during the transition phase, lasting until 2007. Throughout this period, insurgencies persisted in various regions, resulting in the loss of thousands of lives. Under the US supervision in the post-Saddam era, Iraq underwent substantial political restructuring. New political parties emerged, while fresh military and police units were established, accompanied by the implementation of new legislation. In 2005, Iraqis voted on a new constitution designed to balance power among the country's major religious and ethnic factions. The Shiite community, representing the largest demographic, secured the position of prime minister along with key ministerial roles. The presidency was allocated to the Iraqi Kurds, granting autonomy to the Kurdish Regional Government and formal recognition to the Peshmerga forces. In contrast to the Saddam era, Iraqi Sunnis no longer held dominant political sway and were relegated to the parliamentary speaker position (Hamasaed & Nada, 2020).

However, this transition phase witnessed a surge in sectarian tensions within Iraq. These internal clashes, combined with the turmoil, provided an opening for Al-Qaeda to gain a significant foothold in the country. Al-Qaeda evolved into the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) and later expanded its influence beyond Iraq's borders. The US managed to contain ISI by deploying additional troops and forming alliances with Iraqi Sunni tribes. President Obama unveiled a plan to withdraw forces, and by December 2011, aside from a few hundred trainers, all US troops had exited Iraq. Yet, sectarian tensions resurged following the US withdrawal, bolstering ISIS recruitment among Iraqi Sunnis due to policies favoring Shiite dominance in the central government. In 2013, ISIS broadened its operations into Syria and rebranded itself as the "Islamic State in Iraq and Syria" (ISIS). By mid-2014, ISIS controlled a significant portion of Iraqi territory and proclaimed



the establishment of an Islamic State. To counter escalating tensions and the growing influence of ISIS, a US-led international coalition formed in September 2014, resulting in the redeployment of the US troops to Iraq. Over the next two years, this coalition successfully reclaimed territories held by ISIS. Presently, the future of the US forces in Iraq remains uncertain, with no definitive agreement reached between the US and Iraq (Hamasaed & Nada, 2020; Berger, 2020).

### **The US's Iraqi Policy and the US-Türkiye Relations**

The US-Türkiye relations faced restructuring amid the changing international landscape in the 1990s. At the outset of the decade, the George Bush administration hesitated about the future direction of relations with Türkiye (Kuniholm, 1996). Some analysts believed that Türkiye's significance to Washington might diminish after the end of the Cold War, as sustaining relations had been crucial during that era. However, the rupture of the 1990/91 Gulf War highlighted the enduring importance of maintaining strong ties. In the post-Cold War era, the Middle East grew notably more unstable, emphasizing the ongoing value of a robust relationship between the US and Türkiye. This transition signaled a shift beyond Türkiye's traditional roles within the NATO alliance (Kramer, 2000).

Since the outset of the crisis triggered by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, Türkiye adhered to a policy of backing the UN decisions. Under President Turgut Özal's leadership, Türkiye swiftly stood by the US-led UN coalition (Çelik, 1999). When the UN Security Council passed Resolution 661 to impose economic sanctions on Iraq (United Nations Security Council, 1990b), Türkiye promptly endorsed these measures. Prior to the enforcement of sanctions, Türkiye had maintained extensive trade ties with Iraq. However, the enduring sanctions took a toll on Türkiye's economy, causing significant losses in the ensuing years (Aydın & Aras, 2004; Zürcher, 2007).

Since the onset of the crisis, Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein consistently defied UN decisions. In response, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 678 on November 29 (United Nations Security Council, 1990c), providing Iraq a final chance to comply with prior resolutions. This resolution authorized member states to use "all necessary means" if Iraq didn't adhere to decisions by January 15, 1991. As previously discussed, Iraq continued to resist UN Security Council Resolutions, prompting the commencement of "Operation Desert Storm" on January 16, 1991. The military campaign to liberate Kuwait spanned 43 days before a ceasefire was declared. While Türkiye didn't deploy military troops, it contributed to the international coalition's efforts by allowing the use of Turkish bases, opening its airspace, and deploying a significant number of ground troops to the Iraqi border. This strategic move compelled Iraq to allocate some troops to the north rather than concentrating entirely on the southern conflict with coalition forces (Cleveland, 2008; Oran, 2009).

Despite the cessation of military operations against Iraq, long-term stability in the country remained elusive even three decades after the initial conflict. Following Operation Desert Storm, the enduring economic sanctions against Iraq inflicted considerable economic strain on Türkiye. More critically, these sanctions posed new security threats for the nation. When Saddam Hussein utilized his helicopter forces to quell revolts by the Shiite population in the south and the Kurdish population in the north at the conclusion of Desert Storm, Türkiye was directly impacted. The Iraqi Army's aggressive actions in northern Iraq led to the deaths of tens of thousands of Kurds, more than a million Kurds fled to the Turkish and Iranian borders for refuge (Wright, 2002). In response to this humanitarian crisis, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 688 on April 5, authorizing the use of force to protect the Kurds in northern Iraq (United Nations Security Council, 1991b). This resolution led to the establishment of a 'safety zone' by US, French, and British forces in northern Iraq under 'Operation Provide Comfort'. In April 1991, the US deployed approximately 10,000 troops to safeguard the Kurds, with an additional 11,000 troops sent by allied countries. This security intervention facilitated the return of most displaced Kurds to their homes by the end of May 1991 (Byman & Waxman, 2000). Simultaneously, the coalition forces, while deploying ground troops, issued a directive to Saddam Hussein to cease flying aircraft in the area north of the 36th parallel (Nelan, 1992). In response to the US's threat of force, Iraq halted its offensive against the Kurds, and Saddam Hussein complied with this order in northern Iraq until 1996.

Operation Provide Comfort was primarily launched by the US to safeguard the Kurds in northern Iraq from Saddam Hussein's regime. Concurrently, the operation aimed to reassure Türkiye, a long-standing and strategically crucial ally (Byman & Waxman, 2000). Türkiye's paramount concern was to prevent the establishment of an independent Kurdish state, which posed a direct threat to its territorial integrity. Throughout the 1990s, the US officially pursued a policy advocating a unified Iraq. Consequently, Türkiye and the US appeared to align, at least in principle, on the fundamental aspects of their approach toward Iraq.

After the withdrawal of ground troops from Northern Iraq, the establishment of no-fly zones remained intact, covering regions north of the 36th parallel and south of the 32nd parallel. Originally, these zones were implemented to shield the Kurds in the north and the Shiites in the south from Iraqi air assaults. While the US asserted that these zones were established based on UN Security Council Resolution 688, some authors argue otherwise, suggesting that the no-fly zones lack a solid foundation in international law and were not explicitly authorized by the UN (Bennis, Zune & Honey, 2001; Graham-Brown, 2001). France's decision to cease participation in enforcing the no-fly zone in the north in late 1996 and in the south by the end of 1998 (Graham-Brown, 2001) led to the US and British aircraft being the sole patrollers of these zones until the onset of

the 2003 Gulf War. Following France's withdrawal, the US and UK implemented more assertive strategies while policing the no-fly zones. Throughout the Clinton and George W. Bush administrations, these nations escalated their use of firepower during these enforcement operations. Preceding the declaration of war against Iraq in 2003, the George W. Bush administration initiated attacks on Iraqi targets beyond the confines of the no-fly zones (Bennis, Zune, & Honey, 2001).

Before commencing operations to remove Saddam Hussein on March 20, 2003, the George W. Bush Administration sought military support from Türkiye. The US requested Türkiye's involvement in the operations by sending troops and opening Turkish territory for the deployment of US forces against Iraq. A bill addressing these requests was presented for a vote at the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA) on March 1, 2003, but it failed to gather enough votes to pass. Subsequently, prominent US officials, including President George W. Bush, publicly criticized Türkiye, leading to a surge in anti-Türkiye sentiment in the US. The strained relations between the two countries led to several confrontations between their respective military forces. One notable incident occurred on July 4, 2003, when US forces detained 11 Turkish Special Forces officers in the northern Iraqi city of Süleymaniye and placed sacks over them. This incident significantly damaged the relationship between Türkiye and the US, escalating anti-US sentiments in Türkiye to a peak. Consequently, the George W. Bush Administration decided against further exacerbating the tension with Türkiye (İşyar, 2005; Duman, 2011).

During the period of the no-fly zone from 1991 to March 2003, the Kurds residing in northern Iraq leveraged this situation to advance their own interests. In October 1991, the Iraqi government opted to withdraw its troops and funding from three governorates in northern Iraq. Consequently, this area fell under Kurdish control without a formal status. When the Iraqi central government imposed a blockade on the Kurdish region and halted the payment of salaries to government officials there, various Kurdish parties and factions formed a coalition called the "Kurdistan Front". This coalition took charge of governing the region and ensuring the payment of civil servants' salaries (Myloie, 1992). Additionally, an agreement was established under the oil-for-food program, allocating approximately 15% of the total revenues from the oil trade to be spent in northern Iraq (Feuilherade, 1996). Until the commencement of the 2003 Gulf War, northern Iraq remained outside the control of the central government in Baghdad, although it was formally acknowledged as part of Iraq.

The US and British aircraft patrolling northern Iraq successfully neutralized the threat posed by Iraqi aircraft to the Kurds. However, this restriction did not extend to Turkish and Iranian aircraft. Throughout the 1990s, Türkiye frequently utilized northern Iraq's airspace to counter the activities of the terrorist organization PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party), conducting airstrikes and deploying ground troops on temporary missions in the region. The primary objective was to prevent increased attacks and infiltrations from

the PKK terrorism, safeguarding Türkiye's territory and preventing terrorist activities within its borders. These actions were carried out within the legal framework outlined by the UN treaty, aimed at protecting Türkiye's territorial integrity. Despite objections from the UN and the European Union (EU) regarding Türkiye's operations in northern Iraq, the US did not strongly oppose these actions (Graham-Brown, 2001).

Following the 1990/91 Gulf War era, Turkish President Turgut Özal instigated a shift in Türkiye's Northern Iraq policy. Özal actively sought to cultivate strong ties with Iraqi Kurdish leaders, particularly Massoud Barzani, head of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), and Jalal Talabani, leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). By fostering relations with both Barzani and Talabani, Özal aimed to gain insight into Northern Iraq, exert influence on the region's future, and collaborate with these factions against the PKK. To this end, Özal invited representatives from the KDP and PUK to Ankara in March 1991. Additionally, Türkiye provided Turkish diplomatic passports to Barzani and Talabani, permitting them to establish party offices in Ankara (Kayhan Pusane, 2017).

Despite Türkiye's continued apprehensions about certain regional situations, it maintained a policy of cultivating positive relations with Iraqi Kurds even after 2005. The Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) representatives conducted negotiations with the Turkish officials on various issues. The Turkish President Abdullah Gül paid a visit to Iraq in March 2009, and he became the first Turkish president to visit Iraq in 33 years. During this visit, President Gül used the term of "Kurdistan Regional Government" to describe the entity in northern Iraq. President Gül's use of the "Kurdistan" word became an indicator of the intensity of relations between Türkiye and the KRG (Duman, 2021).

The PKK continued to use various areas in northern Iraq as safe havens following the 2003 Gulf War. In response, Türkiye persisted in conducting border operations into northern Iraq, specifically targeting the PKK members (Erkmen, 2015). More recently, Türkiye's military operations in this region have intensified, and rather than working through the Iraqi central authority, Türkiye and the Joe Biden administration have increased their coordination for these operations. Presently, Türkiye and the Biden administration are closely collaborating on military actions in northern Iraq. Türkiye initiated significant cross-border operations against the PKK targets in this region starting in April 2021. Despite objections from Iraq's central government, the Biden administration has upheld Türkiye's authority to target the PKK elements in northern Iraq (Akal, 2021).

## **Conclusion**

The relationship between Türkiye and the US has been pivotal for Türkiye since the end of World War II. During the Cold War, the US served as the linchpin in safeguarding Turkish security against the Soviet threat. Although the relations between the two countries started in a positive framework during the Cold War period, the developments

that took place during the period allowed the relations between the two countries to be strained from time to time and even to the point of rupture. However, the developments in the international conjuncture during these periods when the relations loosened or even reached the breaking point enabled the re-establishment and development of relations between the two countries.

However, the end of this era brought about uncertainties in their future ties due to evolving global threats. Despite this shift, both countries still share common interests in various areas during the post-Cold War era. However, changing priorities have led to more frequent disagreements between the US and Türkiye. While both acknowledge that finding common ground in this volatile era might be challenging, these disagreements have not hindered cooperation on many other important matters (Duman, 2011).

The relationship between the US and Türkiye has indeed been a complex tapestry of cooperation and discord, particularly centered around Iraq over the past three decades. Their policies regarding Iraq have led to numerous agreements and disagreements between the two nations. While some disputes escalated into crises, the mutual interests in maintaining a strong relationship ultimately prevailed, enabling them to navigate through these differences.

The aftermath of the rejected resolution in March 2003 had a lasting impact, causing a setback in the relations between the US and Türkiye. Even though Türkiye permitted the use of its airspace during the 2003 Gulf War, the dynamics between the two nations seemed to shift more towards a necessity rather than a steadfast alliance.

The ISIS terrorist organization problem, which emerged as a result of the US policies in Iraq, has also affected both the territorial integrity of Iraq and the course of relations between Türkiye and the US. The main reason for this is that the US trained the YPG, the Syrian branch of the PKK terrorist organization, to fight against ISIS and did not consider Türkiye's sensitivities. As mentioned before, the foundations of the ISIS problem were laid during the Obama era, allowing the terrorist organization to operate effectively inside Syria. The active support of the YPG terrorist organization operating in Syria has naturally led to strained relations between Türkiye and the US.

When evaluated in the historical context, it is clear that the relations between the two countries will not continue in the usual flow and will have an up-and-down graph. The main point to be mentioned here is that the US does not consider Türkiye's sensitivities and therefore the relations between the two countries have been worn out. Türkiye took into account the sensitivities of the US during the September 11 attacks and showed a stance against terrorism and supported it in this context, but the fact that the same sensitivity was not shown by the US and the activities of terrorist organizations in the region in the process that started with the Iraq war will also affect the relations between the two countries in the future.

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