

THE KURDISH POLICY OF TURKEY AND IRAN

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by
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To my mother and father

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I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

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This thesis was written to comply with the rules of scientific ethics; in the case benefits from the other studies have been referred in accordance with scientific norms. The data are not made any alteration and any part of this thesis is not used in another study in Fatih or another university.

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ABSTRACT

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November 2010

THE KURDISH POLICY OF TURKEY AND IRAN

The purpose of this study is to analyze the different policies Turkey and Iran which have two deep-rooted civilizations follow against the Kurdish problem. To this end, the Kurdish issue, Northern Iraq, political and economic relations, and security issues have been examined in a way the periodic conditions required. The study consists of six sections and the conclusion except the introduction part specifying the purpose and the scope. In the first chapter the basic features of Realism and Neo-realism the major paradigms of the international system will be indicated. This chapter will be important in ensuring the integrity of the issue and establishing the theoretical relationship among the chapters. In the second part, the factors creating the Kurdish problem will be stated and definition of the problem will be done. Furthermore, the approaches the actors who determine the relations of the two countries showed to the period experienced have been examined. In the third section, the perspectives of Turkey and Iran on the Kurdish issue and its definition. Turkey tries solution and termination attempts approaching to the issue from different perspectives. Iran, on the other hand, regards the issue as a separatist initiative and only takes preventive measures.

This study is intended to explain the different perspectives and policies Turkey and Iran adopted regarding the Kurdish problem.

Key words:

Turkey-Iran Relations, Northern Iraq, PKK, PJAK, the Cold War, the USA, Israel

KISA ÖZET

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KASIM 2010

TÜRKİYE VE İRAN'IN KÜRT POLİTİKASI

Bu çalışmanın amacı, iki köklü medeniyete sahip olan Türkiye ve İran'ın Kürt sorunu karşısında izlemiş oldukları farklı politikaları analiz etmektir. Bu amaçla, Kürt sorunu, Kuzey Irak, siyasi ve ekonomik ilişkiler, güvenlik sorunları dönemsel koşulların gerektirdiği şekilde incelenmiştir. Çalışma amacını ve kapsamını belirten giriş kısmının haricinde altı bölüm ve sonuç kısmından oluşmaktadır. Birinci bölümde, uluslararası sistemin önemli paradigmalarından Realizm ve Neo-realizm'in temel özellikleri belirtilecektir. Bu bölüm, konunun bütünlüğünü sağlamada ve bölümler arasındaki teorik ilişkiyi kurmada önemli olacaktır. İkinci bölümde, Kürt sorununu oluşturan faktörler belirtilecek ve bu sorunun tanımı yapılacaktır. Ayrıca iki ülke ilişkilerinde belirleyici olan aktörlerin yaşanan sürece gösterdikleri yaklaşımlar incelenmiştir. Üçüncü bölümde, Türkiye ve İran'ın Kürt sorununa ve tanımına bakış açıları incelenmiştir. Türkiye, soruna farklı açılardan yaklaşarak çözüm ve sonlandırma girişimlerinde bulunmaktadır. İran ise, sorunu ayrılıkçı bir girişim olarak değerlendirmekte ve sadece önleyici tedbirler almaktadır.

Bu çalışma, Türkiye ve İran'ın Kürt sorununda benimsemiş oldukları farklı perspektifleri ve politikaları açıklamaya yöneliktir.

Anahtar kelimeler:

Türk-İran İlişkileri, Kuzey Irak, PKK, PJAK, Soğuk Savaş, ABD, İsrail

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

F. U.	Fatih University
I. S. S.	Institute of Social Science
M. A.	Master of Arts
CENTO	Merkezi Anlaşma Örgütü (Central Treaty Organization)
EU	Avrupa Birliği (European Union)
DTP	Demokratik Toplum Partisi (Democratic Society Party)
ECO	Ekonomik İşbirliği Teşkilatı(Economic Cooperation Organization)
NATO	Kuzey Atlantik Antlaşması Örgütü (North Atlantic Treaty Organization)
PKK	Kürdistan İşçi Partisi (Kurdistan Workers Party)
RCD	Kalkınma İçin Bölgesel İşbirliği (Regional Cooperation for Development)
USA	Amerika Birleşik Devletleri (United States)

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PREFACE

Turkey-Iran Relations were realized under the conditions of the Cold War period till the period of September 11 attacks. Serious problems did not happen in relations before the Iranian revolution. Especially after the Iran-Iraq war, the PKK, northern Iraq, political, cultural and ideological competition established the main parameters of the two countries' relations. During this period called problematic years, Turkey wanted to overcome the points it saw as a threat by establishing relations with Israel and especially with the USA.

A new era in relations began after the Iraq war. Political and ideological rivalry replaced economic relations, the area where the mutual interests intersect. Especially the two country's natural gas agreements became the most important factor in understanding each other. In this context, political, military, cultural and economic issues were re-evaluated.

In this study, the basic reference points of the two countries' approaches to each other have been indicated. The conditions changing in the Middle East region and within these two countries have affected these approaches in different aspects.

INTRODUCTION

Turkey and Iran are the most important countries of the region with respect to their geographical locations, histories, geopolitical, demographic and cultural identities. This situation offers both countries an opportunity to follow unique policies in the regional events. The relations of these two countries who struggle to be more effective in the same region have been shaped within the framework of various factors to the present and therefore have a complex structure.

Although neighboring countries for centuries, both countries wanted to evaluate all opportunities regarding competition. This competitive environment has brought serious problems together with it during certain periods. Especially, to be the decisive power over the region and a wish to make their ideologies dominate have been the factors which expose the two countries. However, having deep-rooted civilizations have made both countries retreat when needed.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the different policies Turkey and Iran which have two deep-rooted civilizations follow against the Kurdish problem. To this end, the Kurdish issue, Northern Iraq, political and economic relations, and security issues have been examined in a way the periodic conditions required.

In the first chapter, the basic properties and the development processes of Realism and Neo-Realism the major paradigms of the international system are examined. These paradigms are important in ensuring the integrity of the issue and establishing the theoretical relationship among the chapters. Explanation of Realism will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the neo-realist theory.

In the second part, definition of the Kurdish issue has been done and causes creating this problem have been analyzed. This problem is multi-dimensional and consists of more than one reason. When the content analysis of the problem is done, it will appear that there are four basic points. Political, economic, cultural and international dimensions have been analyzed in depth. Furthermore, the policies of the countries that are influential in each country's decisions to take and implement have been analyzed. Especially, the objectives of the United States, the dominant power over the region, have been effective in the creation of tension between the two countries. Similarly, the policies Israel developed to be effective on northern Iraq has prepared the ground for major crisis between Turkey and Iran.

In the third section, the approach of Turkey and Iran to the Kurdish issue has been analyzed. Turkey does not see the issue only taking place in its own lands as a separatist movement. It tries to examine the issue from different aspects and wants to establish solution by developing different perspectives. Iran, on the other hand, conceives the issue as an internal

matter. It tries to prevent a separatist movement formed with the initiation of PJAK by military measures.

In the concluding section, a comprehensive evaluation of all issues mentioned above has been made.

CHAPTER I

DEVELOPMENT OF REALIST AND NEO-REALIST PARADIGMS AND THEIR BASIC PROPERTIES

In this chapter, the development and basic features of Realism and Neorealism the most important theories of the international system will be indicated. This chapter will enable to understand the other chapters and comprehend the issue in an integrated structure. The theoretical structure among the chapters will be provided according to the neorealist theory.

Both the language used in explaining the Kurdish problem and the applications in the approach to this problem have shown much difference for both countries. Especially, when the period in which the problem started and the present conjuncture are evaluated, it will be seen that different processes were experienced. This problem which started in the period when the parameters of the Cold War prevailed and which continues now was tried to be solved by applications involving both theories' basic principles. Particularly, the use of military methods to solve the problem for many years showed parallelism with the 'power' element of the realist theory. Both countries wanted to solve the problem of without applying liberal policies. Thus, elements of the state and the power have been the two important decisive factors. Non-governmental organizations and other independent organizations were not used in the solution of the problem.

In analyzing this issue Neorealist paradigms will be utilized as the main theory. However, evaluation of the issue in terms of the countries has not been independent from the functioning of the international system. For this reason, the realist paradigm will be utilized whenever needed.

1.1. Emergence of Realism in the International System

The international system faced major challenges in 1930. In 1929, the Great Depression which emerged in the United States of America and spread to the whole world resulted in the disintegration of the international economic system. In addition, efforts of such states as Germany and Japan which lost the First World War to change the international status quo with the emotions of growing nationalism accelerated tensions in international relations. Thus, the system which was being tried to be formed after the First World War began to unravel. Aiming to create a peaceful world order, 'Idealism' was started to be questioned in 1930s. Especially, the fact that the League of Nations the most important project of the Idealists failed to come up solutions to international problems gave impetus to the new quests¹.

Efforts of questioning 'Idealism' starting before the beginning of the Second World War continued in post-war period increasingly. The United States which became the leader in the post-war international system aimed at not an excluding new order but one in which countries were taken in

¹ For more information Eralp, Atilla (1996), "The Formation of International Relations Discipline: Idealism-Realism Discussion", In *State, System and Identity*, Istanbul, İletişim, p.68-72

according to their powers. It gave priority to the military dimension in the relations rapidly hemispherizing after the Second World War and of the Cold War atmosphere. Thus, a period where the foundations of realist theory are laid and where it is applied being developed fast was entered. Until 1989 when the Cold War ended, the international system was shaped according to specifications set by realist theory.

1.2. Key Features of Realism

In shaping of the Realist theory and in the historical development of the discipline of International Relations, the famous theorist Hans Joachim Morgenthau has a very special position. Realism, according to Morgenthau, is to determine the facts and upload meaning to them through the mind. That is, not only determining the facts and putting them in order but also interpreting them through the mind is needed. Thus, it also requires analysis of the facts obligatory. The researcher should review rational decisions which can be taken in the face of any problem by putting himself or herself in the place of decision maker of the².

Playing a leading role in the systematization of Realism, Morgenthau revealed the basic principles of this theory and these principles were accepted by other thinkers³ of the period. The principles determined by

² Çaman, Efe (2007), "The Development and Evolution of (Neo)Realist Paradigma in International Relations in Germany: Kindermann and Munich School", Kocaeli University Pres, Volume: 2, p.39

³ Herz, J.H. (1951), Political Realism and Political Idealism, Chicago: Chicago Universty Pres; Kenan, George F. (1951), American Diplomacy 1900-1950, Chicago: Chicago Universty Pres; G. Schwerzenberger (1951), Power Politics, Londra: Cage

Morgenthau have basically an essentialist view regarding human nature. Affected by the views of Thomas Hobbes, Morgenthau believes that human nature leads into battle and people are essentially creatures who are selfish and who move with the ambition of power and ruling and who pursue their own interests. The only hope of salvation from the state of war will be possible by people's abandoning their self-management and leaving this under the authority of the state⁴. By keeping the concept of 'interest' important in approaching to human nature, he claims that nations are also in the pursuit of individual interests and he gives big importance to the concept of 'national interest'.

Power phenomenon is a central concept in the science of international relations. Similarly, 'power' is the most important factor in the realist theory because the states can protect the national interests in proportion to their powers. States try to address their objectives by the acquisition, improving or showing of power. For this purpose, Alliances can be formed or violence can be used. In its internal structure, the state can apply any rules by providing monopolization of power. However, putting norms in international relations and imposing sanctions on these norms is not possible because all states are equal sovereign actors and there is no authority binding on the states. Therefore, a hierarchical status is dominant among the states⁵.

⁴ Eralp, Atilla (1996), "The Formation of International Relations Discipline: Idealism-Realism Discussion", p.73

⁵ Çaman, p. 40

1.3. The Changing International Environment and Enquiries into Realism

Realism which is successful in analyzing the international system through the concepts of power and power balance was insufficient to anticipate and examine the transformation after 1989. Realism's being limited in a period when the international system changed rapidly brought with it questioning this discipline.

According to the realists, as human beings have an unchangeable essence, so does the international system. The basic feature of realist theory is the discourse that the international system is composed of sovereign and integral states. In addition, they claim that the most important mode of relationship in the international system is the balance of power and the balance of power can only change through wars. Great battles result in changing the power factor. Thus, the loss of the power of an actor makes it possible to gain power by another actor. However, the collapse of the Soviet Union without war has revealed a situation the realist theory cannot explain.

Security issues are becoming increasingly complicated different from the period of the Cold War. The period in which the military dimension based on power was important had to replace a period in which economic and other issues intertwined with. This situation forces the Realist view of the Cold War period which has an emphasis on the military dimension.

1.4. Neorealism and Its Basic Properties

After the Cold War period, the fact that Realist theory failed to explain the events made possible the creation of new paradigms. The spread of system explanations in the theory of international relations brought with it the emergence of Neorealist theory. It will not be wrong to assess the neorealist theory developed by Kindermann as a theoretical orientation not for rectifying the classical realism of Morgenthau to whom he was a student but for completing and developing it.

Realism grounded that problems arising at the level of international relations are due to human nature. This basic assumption was not sufficient to explain all phenomena. Neorealist theory accepted that the 'international system' is the most important factor in the formation of the problems.

The neo-realist theory which emerged as an integral and complementary opinion for Realist theory consists of the following key features:

- 1) States and other actors interact in an anarchic environment. This means that there is no central authority to enforce rules and norms or protect the interests of the larger global community.
- 2) The structure of the system is a major determinant of actor behavior.
- 3) States are self-interest oriented and an anarchic and competitive system pushes them to favour self-help over co-operation.
- 4) States are rational actors, selecting strategies to maximize benefits and minimize losses.
- 5) The most critical problem presented by anarchy is survival.
- 6) States see all other states as potential enemies and threats to their national security. This distrust and fear creates a security dilemma and this motivates the policies of most states⁶.

⁶ Baylis, John and Smith, Steve (2001), *The Globalization of World Politics*, Oxford University Press, p. 186

CHAPTER II

DEFINITION OF THE KURDISH PROBLEM AND ITS CREATING THE PROBLEM

2.1. What is the Kurdish Problem?

The Kurdish issue which is the biggest obstacle to social peace and welfare in Turkey is in essence is an ethnopolitic problem.⁷ Such ethnopolitic problems are not only experienced in Turkey. In many parts of the world, political organizations spend a large portion of their time struggling to solve these and similar problems. The presence of ethnopolitic issues bears a universal attribute. Turkey has been dealing with such problems under different names since the moment it began to organize as a nation-state.

The Kurdish problem has many dimensions. Being a multi-dimensional problem brings with it a heavy cost. The Kurdish problem is a problem faced by the Kurds in Turkey and in the region. To diagnose the problem, it has to be analyzed in four chapters as political, economic, cultural and international dimensions.

⁷ Erdoğan, Mustafa and Coşkun, Vahap (2008), "Türkiye'nin Kürt Sorunu" (The Kurdish Problem of Turkey), Ankara, Liberal Düşünce, p.5

2.2. Political Dimension and Representation Issue

One of the biggest problems of the Kurds in Turkey is representation problem.⁸ Each term in parliament, members of parliament of Kurdish origin have existed. However, the political representation of Kurdish identity has never truly been achieved.

In parallel with the changes in Turkey, parties based on Kurdish identity have been started to be established since 1990s. However, the election threshold applied in Turkey and party closure decisions have prevented representations of the parties outside the system.

DEHAP obtained 2 million votes nationwide in the elections held in 2002. That is, it obtained 6.2% of the votes. It became the first party in many cities especially in Southeast and East Anatolia. However, the electoral threshold eliminated Kurds' being represented. As a result, the DTP which is the continuation of the DEHAP had to enter the 2007 elections with independent candidates. However, these independent candidates adversely affected the number of DTP deputies to be chosen. Therefore, 10% of electoral threshold leads to a serious representation problem for the Kurds. Therefore, the lack of political representation hampers the realization of the electorates' actor identity that is active, critical, questioning, discussing, and requesting changes.⁹

⁸ Ibid, p.12

⁹ Ibid, p.13-15

The second important issue arises due to the fact that party closure applications are mostly realized for the Kurdish parties. The first party which was established to represent the Kurds was People's Labor Party (HEP). Founded in 1990, the party entered the 1991 general elections by electoral alliance with the SHP. But it was closed by the Constitutional Court. 6 parties¹⁰ established to represent the Kurds between the years 1990-2010 were closed for the same reasons. Closure of the parties results in not being able to represent the demands of the Kurdish people in parliament. This prohibiting application constitutes a major obstacle in the solution of the problem.

2.3. Economic Dimension and Underdevelopment Problem

Traditionally, the Kurdish population concentrated regions (East and Southeast Anatolia) are the least developed parts of Turkey. Both regions have the lowest rates in terms of all socio-economic indicators. This situation is an important factor in the formation of many problems.

Economic development level varies greatly among regions. Especially, the fourth level 19 developed cities covering 25% of the country's surface area own 15.3% of the country's population but can only get 8.7% of GDP. Among these cities from the Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia Regions are Erzincan, Diyarbakir, Erzurum, and Adiyaman. The fifth level 16 developed

¹⁰ Halkın Emek Partisi (HEP), Özgürlük ve Demokrasi Partisi (ÖZDEP), Demokrasi Partisi (DEP), Halkın Demokrasi Partisi (HADEP), Demokratik Halk Partisi (DEHAP), Demokratik Toplum Partisi (DTP)

cities covering 18% of the country's surface area own 10.1% of the country's population but can only get 3.9% of GDP. In these least developed cities of the country, agricultural activity is in the foreground, and often animal breeding is done¹¹.

Despite the important dimensions of socio-economic differences among the cities in the Eastern Anatolia region, the development indices of all the cities are below the average of the country. While only Elazig reaches the country average, the three cities of Turkey (Bitlis, Agri, Mus) with the lowest index are located in this region. In the Southeastern Anatolia Region with the exception of Gaziantep all cities' development levels are below the average of the country¹².

East and Southeast Anatolia Regions are located in the fourth and fifth development group. Whereas the rate of agricultural industry professionals is 69%, the rate of industrial sector professionals is 6%. In these regions agricultural productivity is low and unregistered unemployment is too much¹³.

In our country, when the development of public investment expenditures (1990-2001 period) are examined regarding the regions, it is understood that public investment expenditures can not fulfill their stabilizing function of the regional inequality and that public investment spending are

¹¹ Dinler, Zeynel (2005), *Bölgesel İktisat (The Regional Economics)*, Bursa, Ekin, p.237

¹² Dinler, s. 241

¹³ Dinçer, Bülent, Özasan, Metin and Kavasoglu, Taner (2003), *İllerin ve Bölgelerin Sosyo-Ekonomik Gelişmişlik Sıralaması Araştırması (The Research of Countries and Regions Socio-Economic Development)*, Ankara, DPT Yayın, p.57

mainly concentrated in Marmara, Central Anatolia and Aegean regions. According to this, in the 1990-2001 periods, while the share of the Marmara region is 25% annually, it is 9.6 for East Anatolia and 8.8 for Southeast Anatolia¹⁴.

2.4. Cultural and Political Dimension

One of the most important reasons creating the Kurdish problem is cultural rights. The emergence of the Republic of Turkey as a nation state accepted the various ethnic elements in the country as one single nation. Thus, like other ethnic groups Kurds were also deprived of opportunities to express their identity freely.

Kurds want to speak their own language freely and would like to use this language in the field of education. In addition, to use their own language in written and visual media, they demand the formation of a free atmosphere and the right to use their names freely. Important steps have been taken in the realization of these demands especially in recent years. This situation has been confirmed by the progress reports of the European Union. However many issues which are not realized or incomplete continue to be important obstacles to the solution of this problem.

¹⁴ Eşiyok, Ali (2005), *AB Sürecinde Türkiye'de Bölgesel Kalkınma Farklılıkları, Büyüme Kutupları, Sanayinin Mekansal Dağılımı ve Bölgesel Gelir (In Turkey Different Regional Development, Growth Poles, Industrial Distribution and Regional Income In the Process of EU)*, Türkiye Kalkınma Bankası, Ankara, p.47

2.5. International Dimension

Developments outside of Turkey have a significant impact on the Kurdish issue in Turkey. After the 1991 Gulf War, a mass refugee migration from northern Iraq has attracted the attention of the world on the Kurds. In order to eliminate all the negative impacts of this migration the Peace Operation began with the participation of 11 countries in 1991. The aim was to create a safe zone at a location near the border with Turkey and to provide the refugees to return safely. Hammer Power created after the Peace Operation was deployed to southeastern Turkey. The duty of this force was to prevent the Iraqi army to enter northern Iraq.

The western states following a non-active policy on the Kurdish problem in Turkey during the Cold War started to give great importance to this problem due to the refugee crisis and the increasing violence and human rights violations afterwards. European governments, in their reports published, requested the improvement of Turkey's human rights policies. They demanded that Kurds be given 'minority rights'¹⁵.

The authority problem formed in northern Iraq after the Gulf War was an important factor in increasing the growth of the PKK issue. Turkey's military interventions carried out to resolve this issue were subject to harsh

¹⁵ Kirişçi, Kemal, M. Winrow Gareth (1997), *Kürt Sorunu Kökeni ve Gelişimi (The Kurdish Question: Origin and Evolution)*, İstanbul, Tarih Vakfı, p. 176

criticism by the European states as well as the United States. The basis of concern about the operations was the human rights violations¹⁶.

The Kurdish problem which is one of the most important problems of the Middle East region does not only affect the countries of the region. The visibly mostly affected states are Turkey and Iran, but as the problem contains political, economic, cultural and ethnic elements, it is no longer a regional issue but has become an international one.

The European Union highlights in every platform that it is involved in the problem especially in terms of human rights and democracy. Israel, on the other hand, uses the problem in the strategic sense in order to be effective on the region and reach the promised lands. And the United States uses the Kurdish issue as a means to maintain its global dominance and control the Middle East region.

2.5.1. U.S.A.

The new balance of power which was formed after World War II resulted in the appearance of the U.S. and the Soviet Union on the stage of history. Especially, the U.S. replaced the UK and wanted to fill the gap in the Middle East region.

The 21st century is the age of energy, and this situation requires each country to take new positions and to identify strategies in this direction. For this reason, the U.S. wants to be effective in the Middle East region and

¹⁶ Kirişci and Gareth, (1997), p.180

wants to get control of this region. As a requirement of being a global actor, it is in an effort to have an advantageous position in strategic issues. Owning the strategic products of our age such as oil and natural gas or controlling these products will make the United States the dominant actor in becoming a hegemonic power.

After the Gulf War II, many talks were made about the future of northern Iraq. Besides, the agreements containing many states (Washington, Ankara, Dublin) were made. However, these processes could not create a solution, and invasion of Iraq in 2003 by the United States brought the process to a very different situation.

The process which started to change after the the prime ministry bill dated 1 March 2003 to authorize the government to send the Turkish Armed Forces to foreign countries and allow the the presence of foreign armed forces in Turkey failed¹⁷ on the ballot in the Assembly because of insufficient votes led to reshaping the relationship between the US and Turkey. Thus, the other actors in the region, the Iraqi Kurds were started being supported by the United States. This support reached further levels by transforing the Iraqi state system from a unitary structure to a federal structure and legalizing the presence of Regional Government in Northern Iraq¹⁸ with the 2005 elections and the constitution of Iraq which became effective afterwards. Strengthened politically and economically, the Kurds confirmed

¹⁷ http://www.belgenet.com/2003/tbmm_010303.html

¹⁸ Iraq Constitution, Article 141

their position both in northern Iraq and in the settlement of the Iraqi state. Especially, Jalal Talabani's being the president created a significant example of this situation.

The inner structure of Iraq which changed after the elections in Iraq in 2007 and the changing dynamics of the region resulted in the balance policy application of U.S. The increase in the demands for independence with the empowerment of the Kurds as a result of 2005 elections, preventing Turkey from individually acting against the PKK based in northern Iraq, the United States' increasingly having difficulty in Afghanistan and the increase in the need for military support were effective in the implementation of this policy¹⁹.

Although not an official policy of the United States, a possible Kurdish state's establishment may lead to dangerous processes. Possible improvements could be like this;

- Independence of the Kurds may prompt effect on the other ethnic groups for the same demand,
- The independence of the Shiites or their being an effective power could further reinforce Iran's dominance,
- The reaction of the Arabs to the United States can reach very high dimension,

¹⁹ Bahçeşehir Üniversitesi (2009), "ABD'nin Irak'tan Çekilme Süreci ve Bölge Dinamikleri Açısından Değerlendirilmesi"(Withdrawal Process of the U.S. from Iraq and Its Evaluation in terms of the Regional Dynamics), İstanbul, Bahçeşehir University Pres, p. 10

- In all the relations between Turkey and the United States, troubled processes can begin²⁰,

If we are to evaluate the process from the invasion of Iraq to the present, it is seen that the U.S. does not have a definite goal on Iraq. The changing political and regional developments in the process seem that this situation will remain as it is for a long time because the possible establishment of a Kurdish state will create more responsibility to the United States. The United States' being active in Iraq and the policies that it implements affect Turkey directly and Iran indirectly. Thanks to the support of the the United States, Kurds' beginning to take place as a prominent actor in Iraq after years does not coincide with the interests of Turkey and Iran. Both countries have substantial Kurdish population. This situation triggers separatist movements and leads to incidents of terrorism.

2.5.2. Israel

Iraq has a strategic importance with its position. Therefore, it has always been taken into consideration by the great powers. Especially it's having borders with three major Middle Eastern countries further increases its importance. At the same time having rich oil deposits makes its strategic importance more visible. That there is Kurdish population in the neighboring countries (Turkey, Syria, and Iran) forms opportunity to take effect on these

²⁰ Bahadır Koç, Şanlı, (2007), "ABD'nin Kuzey Irak Politikası ve Türkiye'nin Çıkarları Üzerindeki Etkileri" (The US policy on Northern Iraq and Its Effects on the Interests of Turkey), Ankara, Stratejik Analiz, p.34

countries because the possible establishment of a Kurdish state will cause redefining the political, cultural, economic and military order in the region.

During the Cold War, Iraq was considered as one of the most powerful countries of the Arab world. As we know, Iraq is a country which does not have borders with Israel. However, its potential power has always attracted the attention of Israel and was seen as a major threat to Israel. For this reason, Israel has wanted Iraq to remain as a weak and unstable country, and has set targets in this direction. The following statements taking place in the Zionism plan confirm this intention.

Iraq on the one hand is rich in oil, but on the other hand, it is a scrappy country inside. Therefore, it can become a candidate as a strong goal for Israel. Iraq's division is even more important than Syria's division for us²¹.

Although the majority of people are Shiites and the minority administrators are Sunni, Iraq is not a different country from its neighbors in essence. 65% of the population has no participation in power. Power is in the hands of a 20% of privileged layer. Also in the north is a large Kurdish minority. If the army and the oil revenue are taken from the hands of the ruling regime, Iraq's future status will not be different from Lebanon's situation in the past²².

These objectives were realized to a great extent after the Gulf War II. Iraq's armed forces lost their influence and the country was divided into three as Kurds, Sunnis and Shiites.

In addition, a piece of news confirming the above mentioned details took place in the daily Sabah newspaper. The Pulitzer Prize-winning

²¹ Shakak, Israel (1982), *The Zionist Plan for the Middle East*, Association of Arap-American Universty Graduates, p.97

²² Shakak, (1982), p.4

American journalist Seymour expressed the following information in an interview to Sabah Daily:

Israeli intelligence and the army entered northern Iraq after that time (end of 2003) and still continue to work quietly in northern Iraq. Within this work called Plan B by Israel, Kurdish commandos are being trained. According to a former Israeli intelligence officer, these Kurdish commandos were trained in a way to receive the same results like Mistaravim, Israel's most secret commandos. Israel has also held operations with the Kurds. However, they are not armed actions. Agents along with the Kurds enter Iran and Syria to do the intelligence work. Israel feels under threat due to Iran which became even stronger with the war. Therefore, especially nuclear activities are being reviewed in Iran. Mossad agents, intelligence officials are working in the Kurdish areas with businessmen identities without carrying Israeli passports²³.

Israel's increasing its effectiveness in northern Iraq after the occupation of Iraq was perceived differently by Turkey. Stronger relationship of Israel with the Northern Iraq after the war has led to a conflict of interests of both countries²⁴. Today in Israel, there is a population about 50,000 Kurdish Jewish who migrated from northern Iraq²⁵. Israel's political influence over northern Iraq which continues through the Barzani family disturbs Turkey. Turkey defends the territorial integrity of Iraq. Israel, on the other hand, supports the Kurdish administration and thus contributes to the formation of a possible Kurdish state. In addition, the Mistaravim commandos' providing military training to peshmerga units causes discomfort in Turkey²⁶ because the peshmergas constitute the largest armed group in northern Iraq.

²³ "Kürtler devlet kurarsa Türkler savaş açar", *Sabah*, (22.062004)

²⁴ www.bilgestrateji.com/store/dergi2/Erdem.pdf

²⁵ <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3177712,00.html>

²⁶ www.bilgestrateji.com/store/dergi2/Erdem.pdf

Israel attempts to use its presence in northern Iraq to balance the increasing effect of Shiites in Iraq and to narrow Iran's influence area in the region. This situation is monitored carefully by Iran and is a serious inconvenience. Intelligence works especially with the Kurds increase Iran's concerns. Israel wants to establish the environment to closely monitor Iran's nuclear activities by means of the Kurds. In addition, by improving relations with Turkey it wants to act together against Iran's nuclear threat. However, Turkey wants to continue the relations made with Iran and raise the level of relations further.

2.5.3. European Union

European Union sees the Kurdish problem as a problem of Turkey. It thinks that the issue be addressed within the Iraqi borders.²⁷ This is why the European Union approaches to the problem with the principles of democracy, human rights and normative principles such as protection of minorities. Turkey wants to become a member of the European Union, but the EU requires, for membership, the Kurdish problem to be solved. To this end, Turkey's EU membership is based on the solution which it will have to the Kurdish issue and which will satisfy the EU.²⁸

The approach of the European Union to the Kurdish problem became more comprehensive after October 3, 2005 when the membership

²⁷ Davutoğlu, Ahmet (2001), *Stratejik Derinlik (Strategic Depth)*, İstanbul, Küre, p. 444

²⁸ Kurubaş, Erol (2009), "Etnik Sorun-Dış Politika İlişkisi Bağlamında Kürt Sorununun Türk Dış Politikasına Etkileri" (The Effects of Kurdish Problem to Turkish Foreign Policy in terms of Ethnic Issue-Foreign Policy Relation), *Avrupa Çalışmaları Dergisi*, Ankara, Volume: 8, p. 53

negotiations began. In the annual reports published, detailed information about the Kurdish problem was given. All the points Turkey applied or left incomplete were reflected in the annual report in depth. The economic structure of Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia never mentioned before was reflected in the reports. The following data published in the report in 2005 suggests how comprehensive the review is:

The progress of the country in the East and Southeast regions where the majority of people are Kurdish origins has been slow and irregular. Even in some cases the situation was worse. Although a comprehensive policy to address socio-economic and political issues has not been set up, - the practice of emergency situations was abolished though- a number of security measures such as road closures and checkpoints are being practiced in some of the cities in the Southeast. This situation has effects upon the public life. In this difficult situation, there are concerns that the security forces have sometimes disproportionate responses. The ongoing relative economic backwardness, lack of basic infrastructure, lack of capital, limited employment opportunities and the security situation and especially the presence of a large number of land mines of the east and southeast are preventing the return.²⁹

The reports presented every year and the criticisms, omissions and inaccuracies specified in these reports have brought significant progress in Turkey's Kurdish problem. The approach to the problem has been both in the direction of fulfilling the conditions of membership for the European Union and in a tendency to solve the problems of Turkey's own citizens. In this regard, in particular the steps taken and the applications in 2008 and 2009 were reflected positively in the 2008-2009 report.

Following the changes introduced in June 2008, TRT was allowed to broadcast in languages other than Turkish all day in the country. In January 2009, TRT (the state channel) began operating channel TRT-6 which broadcasts 24 hours a day in Kurdish. In September, the Higher Education Council (YOK) approved the initiative of a Turkish University (Mardin Artuklu

²⁹ 9 Kasım 2005 Türkiye İlerleme Raporu (The Progress Report of Turkey)

University) to establish a "Living Languages Institute" envisaging higher education in Kurdish, and the other languages spoken in the country. In the opening ceremony of TRT-6, the Prime Minister spoke a few words in Kurdish. Local politicians and political parties used the Kurdish language during election campaigns and political activities. Most of the cases opened against Kurdish politicians for using Kurdish language in the invitations, holiday celebrations or local activities resulted in acquittal despite the prosecutors' appealing the decisions. Governorates in various cities in the southeast have begun to provide public services in Kurdish.

Only the cultural and political progresses could not be got in the direction of solving the problem. Especially during the AK Party for the solution of economic problems of the region deep analyses were made and serious applications were started in this regard. These developments were reflected in the 2009 progress report:

In May 2008, the Turkish Government announced the main principles and general content of the plans prepared for the development of the Southeast region. In this context, the government has pledged to allocate a sum amounting to 14 billion euros by increasing the planned spending by 10.2 billion euros for the Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP), between the years 2008 to 2012. The four main pillars of the Action Plan constituted the economic development, social development, infrastructure development and strengthening of institutions. In a large part of investments the priority will be given to the energy and agriculture sectors.

Regarding the solution to the Kurdish problem, after the year 2007 significant progress was experienced. Undoubtedly, the European Union's approach to the subject and the important impact of the reports published played an important role in the realization of this progress. The applications have been the evidence about the change of Turkey's perspective to the issue. The problem seen previously as the problem of terrorism and separatist movements is assessed in terms of democracy, human rights and economic issues today.

The European Union does not have issued reports on the Kurdish problem in Iran as it has on Turkey. As Iran is not a member of the EU and is not in any decision bodies, it is not within the scope of direct examination. The EU only approves the sanctions on Iran regarding the issues the international community jointly decides. Besides, the EU assesses this problem as a violation of human rights and takes condemnation decisions.

CHAPTER III

TURKEY AND IRAN'S PERSPECTIVES ON KURDISH PROBLEM AND THE POLICIES THEY PRACTICE

Turkey and Iran have lived together as neighbors in the Middle East region for centuries. When the conditions of the region and the environment are taken into account, these two countries emerge to be the leading two major powers of their region. Both countries are being affected either directly or indirectly by the problems being experienced in the Middle East region. Especially the Kurdish problem continues to exist as the region's most prominent and most important problem.

Both countries have different approaches to the events occurring across the region. In this section, the policies being implemented by the two countries towards the region's most important problem will be analyzed. Turkey sees the Kurdish issue as a serious problem which rocks the state system. Therefore; it tries to fix the problem by making more than one definition. However, different definitions further deepen the problem. Iran, on the other hand, sees the issue as the struggle of a group wanting autonomy. Accordingly, it focuses its policies on the prevention of this struggle.

3.1.1. Uncertainty in the Definition of the Kurdish Problem

The biggest debate in the past and today is taking place in the definition of the Kurdish problem. Very different approaches are in question in defining the problem. These different approaches do not contribute to the resolution of the issue, and moreover they lead to the matter's moving in an uncertain direction. Solving the problem requires its being properly understood and defined.

At this point now, it is unlikely to reduce the Kurdis issue to the plots of the outside forces as has been claimed for a long time. Of course there are outside forces provoking this issue, but they are not the source of the problem. The problem is there not because there are these or those outside forces, but because there are Kurds. Kurds are one of the ancient peoples of the Middle East. However, they do not have a state. Nearly half of them live within the borders of today's Turkey, and the rest in Iraq, Iran, Syria, and some few in Armenia and Azerbaijan. Serious cultural and lifestyle differences and deep dialect differences are available among them. However, they are increasingly developing a common 'consciousness of the Kurds'.³⁰

3.1.2. The Discourse that the Kurdish Problem is a National Integration Problem

It is a historical fact that Kurds live in Turkey where many ethnic elements live. Ignoring the facts by fighting against the history can not go beyond a meaningless fight. Accepted as the basic ideology of the republic, in line with nationalism, the idea of creating a single nation in the 1930s became more evident. Therefore, not seeing the ethnic differences became the official policy. One of the factors that accelerated this process is the

³⁰ Akyol, Mustafa (2006), *Kürt Sorunu Yeniden Düşünmek: Yanlış Giden Neydi? Bundan Sonra Nereye? (Rethinking The Kurdish Question: What was Went Wrong?Where to from now)*, İstanbul; Doğan, p. 13

resistance of the Kurdish leaders relatively dominant in the east to the intervention of the central authority to their own sphere of influence 'in order to create a standard nation'. This attempt to resist sometimes caused important riots. There were two main reasons for the reaction manifested in the east.

The local potentate (bureaucrats origin) who were acting very autonomously before the republic opposed to the tendency of the republican administration to entirely control the monopoly of power rather than to share it. Second, the religious elements taking place within the ruling/power bloc of the Eastern Anatolia power was inconsistent with the concept of the secular state. Religion and the local traditional authority (ies) had an organic relationship. The local traditional rulers who understood that they would both lose their politically dominant position and the support of religion to their superior positions, by making their clusters riot, revolted to the newly formed ideological-political structure. This ideological structure's integration with the policy of "making others like Turks" deepened the problem.³¹

The attempt of building a single nation being applied as a requirement of the official policy brought with it resistance or disappearance of the local authorities. Many local authorities agreed to be a part of the center. The aim here was to preserve the existing order. Besides, many local authorities acted against the center. As a result of this, the desired success was not achieved in the chiefhood and tribal order. Because the problem in the east was both ignored and not thoroughly understood, the authorities created internal and external enemies by trying to find the causes of problems

³¹ Ergil, Doğu (2009), *Kürt Raporu: Güvenlik Politikalarından Kimlik Siyasetine (Kurdish Report: Security Policies to Identity Politics)*, İstanbul; Timaş, p. 83

elsewhere. Thus, the situation of not being able to unite became either the source or cause of all problems.³²

3.1.3. Having a Discourse that the Kurdish Problem Does not Exist

The Republic of Turkey established in the rest of the Ottoman Empire which was multi-religious, sectarian and races was built as a nation state. The new state adopted the approach of 'one country, one nation, one language and one flag'. Thus, everyone was described as Turkish. In the 88th article of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey adopted in 1924, it is stated that the inhabitants of Turkey irrespective of the religious and racial differences shall be considered as Turks in terms of citizenship. Besides, the rhetoric of 'Blessed is the one who says I'm a Turk' rhetoric has registered this situation. Furthermore, the following expressions of Cemal Gursel, the 4th president fully reflected the official discourse:

The citizens living in eastern Anatolia, regarding themselves different from Turks as they speak a language dissimilar to Turkish; we also think like that as we are ignorant, once again prove that they are original Turks..so approving that there are scientific evidences making it impossible to deny... There is no race on the Earth with self-identity that can be called as 'Kurd'.³³

This discourse was adopted by the state from the establishment of our republic till the end of 'Cold War'. Thus, the Kurdish ethnic identity was ignored. Kurds became Turks politically and legally.

³² Ibid, p. 84

³³ Fırat, M.Şerif (1970), *Doğu İleri ve Varto Tarihi (The Eastern Provinces and History of Varto)*, Ankara; Kardeş, p. 67

3.1.4. Problem of Separatism and Terrorism in the Discourse of the Kurdish Problem

The state sees the Kurdish problem as the problem of separatism and terrorism. Therefore, safety perception has always been total. The state has legitimated severe security measures to overcome this problem. Namely, the protection of the country's territorial integrity, protection of the regime and the country's continued domination over the material and spiritual values.

The most innocent demands in Turkey regarding the Kurdish issue has been charged with separatism for years, and even taking the word of 'Kurd' in mouths was considered a crime. When the case files of tens of thousands of Kurds detained on charges of separatism are examined, it will be seen that they were accused of separatism just because they said they were Kurds and would like to freely use their language.³⁴

Besides this, the Kurdish problem is seen as the same with the problem of terrorism. The understanding that (the Kurdish problem = PKK; PKK = Terrorism) is a very common sense. Orientated by and standing with the help of outside forces, the PKK wants to divide Turkey. For this reason, as there is a PKK problem, there is a Kurdish issue. From 1984 when the PKK made its first act to the present, as the issue is perceived as a mere problem of terrorism, military measures have been used as primary methods.³⁵

As the ways of postponing rather than solving the problems and overcoming by military means is preferred, the politics of the country has

³⁴ Tan, Altan (2010), *Kürt Sorunu: Ya Tam Kardeşlik Ya Hep Birlikte Kölelik (The Kurdish Question: What About Perfect Fellowship or Slavery)*, İstanbul; Timaş, pp. 18-19

³⁵ Ibid, p.19

violently increased. As the aim of the use of violence is to protect the integrity of the country and not to divide the nation, it has been presented as a legitimate form of behavior.³⁶

3.1.5. Discourse of Regional Underdevelopment

Another approach to the Kurdish problem is the one which sees the problem as economic backwardness and a concept of feudalism. The region is economically backward than the western part of Turkey. Besides, education and training activities have not reached the desired level. The low level of welfare is an important factor in the support for the PKK. If the economic level rises, both PKK and the ethnic problem will end. The necessary steps should be taken, for example, first the region's skewed economic order should be handled by land reform and industrialization should be encouraged; second, a thorough training and education campaign should be started, finally, the built-feudal order should not be permitted.³⁷

Unemployed, powerless and hopeless people do not have much to lose. The ones who can not get connected to today may not try to extend their branches of hope to tomorrow. The 'Organization' offers them a job and purpose for today, hope and new positions for tomorrow.³⁸

3.1.6 An Ethnic Identity Discourse and the Kurdish Problem

Another aspect of the Kurdish question constitutes the problem of identity. Identity is the design of somebody regarding how he or she defines himself/herself today, what he or she was in the past and what he or she will

³⁶ Ergil,(2009), p. 90

³⁷ Tan, (2010), p.20

³⁸ Ergil, (2009), p.113

be in the future. The state had sought to create a homogeneous nation from a heterogeneous population structure during the establishment period. The objective was to establish the national unity.

When it was understood that creating a standard community is not that easy, suppression of the cultural differences and diversity specifications that were suspected and believed to be contrary with the nation-building project.³⁹

Citizens who live in a country may have different religions, denominations and languages. These differences may occur within a system without separation or conflict. But the use of oppression element acted as a blocking function in achieving this goal. Thus, the 'sub-identities' got further consolidation.

Viewed from this aspect, the request of the Kurdish identity to enter politics and self-advertise can be interpreted as a compound expression of the discontent created by dissatisfied expectations and unmet demands. Approaching to the Problem of the East from the perspective of this analysis, it is clear that not making the Turkey Kurds like Turks but that they should feel that they are from Turkey and that their commitment and responsibility should be to this country and its common political identity is needed.⁴⁰

3.2. Iran's Kurdish Problem Approach

There is a dense population of Kurds in the various settlements in the North West and western regions. It is known that the Kurdish population in Iran is closer to 5 million. Like the ones in other countries, Iran Kurds believe in different religions and sects. The majority of Kurds are members of the Shiite sect. Besides, in areas near the border with Iraq, there are Kurds who are members of the Sunni sect.

³⁹ Ergil, (2009), p. 116

⁴⁰ Ergil, (2009) pp. 118-119

Iran prevented the demand of self-determination and any attempt in the direction of autonomy by oppression and violence because as it is in Turkey, there are many ethnic elements within Iran. While analyzing the Kurdish problem experienced in Iran and whose effect continues today, not considering the Iraqi Kurds and limiting the issue only to the events within Iran will be incomplete to create a unity. The experienced process will be analyzed in two parts. In the first part, the Iranian Kurds and Iran's point of view to the Kurdish problem will be examined. In the second part, PJAK's effectiveness in the Kurdish issue and the policies it implemented will be explained.

3.2.1. Iranian Kurds

The population of Kurds who live in Iran is made up of 30% Shiites and 70% Sunnis. Shiite Kurds are united with the system. However, Kurdish nationalism developed among the Sunni Kurds who could not adapt to the system. Iranian Kurds have continued their activities in Iran to establish an 'autonomous Kurdistan,' from the beginning of the 20th century to establish until today. To this end, during both the Shah and Khomeini eras, they had serious resistance attempts. This conflict keeps the Kurdish issue always on the agenda.

That Reza Khan set up close relationships with the Germans at the beginning of World War II resulted in the Allies' invading Iran in 1941. Putting an end to the Reza Khan management brought about social and

political changes in the country. The termination of the centralized structure led to the emergence of some requests and conflicts in the society. This environment also affected the Iranian Kurds. Thus, in 1946 Mahabat Republic was founded in Iran by the Kurds, yet this Republic was terminated in 1947, and the Iranian Kurds had to seek refuge in Iraq.⁴¹

The Kurds that sought refuge in Iraq continued their struggle against the Shah by being re-organized with the support of the Iraqi management. The Kurds that performed attacks on Iran from Irak till the 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution could not get the results they wanted. In the Iran-Iraq war which emerged after the revolution, Kurds sided with Iraq. At the end of eight years of war, Kurds seriously caused serious damage on Iran. This process ended with the outbreak of the Gulf War. Thus, the Iranian Kurdish groups began to settle in northern Iraq.

The Islamic Republic of Iran which was established after the revolution in Iran did not find many political movements in Iran in accordance with their interests. For this purpose, the existing political institutions and especially Kurdish political movements were banned by the new government. Iran-Iraq war which began in 1980 caused Iran to direct all its power of to this war. During this war, Iran could not obtain enough effectiveness in internal political developments.⁴²

⁴¹ Keskin, Arif (2008), "İran'ın Kuzey Irak Politikası: İran ve Iraklı Kürtler" (Iran's Northern Iraq Policy: Iran and Iraqi Kurds), TURKSAM, Ankara, see. <http://www.turksam.org/tr/a1383.html>

⁴² <http://www1.american.edu/cgp/pdf/hicks/pdf>

With the end of the Iran-Iraq war, Iran used its military power to defuse the opposition groups in the Kurdish regions. These opposition groups which became stronger during the war were being supported by some neighbouring countries. During this period, destruction over hundreds of settlements, and emigration of thousands of people to different places were made. In addition, mines were placed in the border side of the lands intensely inhabited by the Kurds. Furthermore, many Iranian troops were deployed in these places.⁴³

Different treatments applied to Kurds in Iran continued until the start of the Khatami period. Status of the Kurds was not known by the other countries. In the formation of this situation Iran's Islamic revolution and Iran's adopting a closed management approach were effective.⁴⁴ The reform applications which started with the Khatami period caused significant changes in Iran's political system. In this period, the Kurds of Iran have been given some administrative responsibility, a limited degree of cultural and language freedom, as well as some favorable conditions regarding publication of newspapers, journals and television broadcasts. The changes realized in the type of management led to specific improvements in the situation of the Kurds.⁴⁵

⁴³ <http://www1.american.edu/cgp/pdf/hicks/pdf>

⁴⁴ Salih, Khaled (2005), "What Future For The Kurds?", Middle East Review of International Affairs, Volume: 9, p. 92

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 93

Ahmadinejad era has brought the start of pause in reforms being implemented. Especially during this period increase in the activities of PJAK necessitated a policy change.

3.2.2. Use of Violence and the Role of PJAK

It is not clear exactly when Kurdistan Freedom and Life Party was established. It first appeared as student-based human rights movement in the middle of 1997. Inspired by the Kurdish autonomous region in Iraq and the actions of the PKK in Turkey, PJAK started to carry out its activities. Instead of using violence, in its first years it had an effort to create and maintain the Kurdish national identity. PJAK held its first armed action in 2004.⁴⁶

As a result of both the changing political atmosphere in Iran and regional developments, PJAK increased its actions in 2005 and 2006. According to information published by the government of Iran, PJAK killed at least 120 Iranian soldiers. In the attacks carried out in 2006 they killed more than 120 soldiers. Not knowing the exact number of soldiers killed in these attacks is due to Iranian government's not giving exact figures in its statements.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Brandon, James (2006), "Iran's Kurdish Threat: PJAK", *Terrorism Monitor*, Volume: 4, p. 2

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 1

The aim of PJAK is not to weaken the Iranian army by fighting them continuously and for long term. The objective is to protect the national identity of 5 million Kurds living in Iran and to prevent the assimilation of this identity.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 3

CONCLUSION

In order to understand the policies that Turkey and Iran implemented and are implementing on the Kurdish problem well, it is required to know the historical past and bilateral relations of these countries well. When the yesterday of Turkey-Iran relations which have an old history is examined, it will not escape from attention that a series of developments based on tensions were experienced.

During the Shah period, Turkey and Iran were in cooperation as a requirement of external dynamics and strategic conditions. In this period when the Cold War was effective, both countries were not able to set policies in line with their own priorities. The two countries' relations were continuing under the pacts required by the international conjuncture of the period. Therefore, both sides were not able to develop their economic, cultural and political relations in accordance with free decisions.

The new domestic and foreign policy objectives identified after the Iran Islamic Revolution, enabled Iran to act more liberally compared to the previous period. Basing the new foreign policy objectives on the export of the Islamic Revolution, Iran was planning to be a regional power.

Major changes occurred in Turkey's evaluations against Iran after the revolution, which had a negative approach during the Shah period. Turkey preferred the recognition of the new Iranian regime considering that a lack of authority which may occur as a result of Iran's internal confusion may lead

to the intervention of the Soviets and the likelihood of strengthening the Kurdish groups. Turkey's recognition policy of Iran was in compatible with the understanding of 'Versatile Turkish Foreign Policy' that Bulent Ecevit, Prime Minister of the period, emphasized.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the bipolar system disappeared, and significant changes were experienced in the world. Especially, countries in Central Asia and Caucasus region gained their independence. The new international conjuncture occurring as a result of these changes influenced Turkey and Iran relations and made them compulsory to be redefined.

The end of the Cold War and the disappearance of the Soviet threat led to the feeling of loneliness on Turkey. The start of the Gulf War, however, increased Turkey's strategic importance again.

Between 1989-97 covering the Rafsanjani period, Turkey-Iran relations exhibited a fluctuating course. During this period, relations, although improved in certain areas (trade, economic), continued with major issues. In this period when great stress and tension were experienced, PKK and ideological conflicts caused bilateral relations to be adversely affected. The PKK problem, which was not resolved in mutual relations and which formed one of the main sources of the tensions experienced started in the 1980s and reached its peak point during the Rafsanjani period. Therefore, between the years 1991-92 operations were carried out by the Turkish Armed Forces against the PKK.

When Turkey-Iran relations are examined up to the Khatami era, it will be seen that there are two basic dimensions. First, the co-operation or compromise size starting with the Sadabad Pact and continuing with Baghdad Pact, CENTO, RCD and the ECO line; and second a competitive or the polemic size formed over the Kurds, Northern Iraq, Central Asia and the Caucasus, Turkey-Israel strategic cooperation and ideological issues.

Khatami era was a period when positive developments occurred in the relations of the two countries. Iran's efforts to establish peace in foreign relations was perceived as a suitable policy for Turkey. Besides, the reform initiatives inside was an indicator that it moved away from the ideological objectives. The concepts of dialogue between civilizations and economic dependence between countries were followed with interest by Turkey. In addition, Khatami's using conciliatory style instead of confrontational rhetoric contributed positively to the development of relations. Although some problems were experienced in the area of security, important steps were taken in political and economic areas.

The only decisive actor on the international system, the United States' losing its effectiveness made it possible to start new initiatives. Thus, a multipolar world order or a time when regional forces were more active began. As a result of the significant impact of the favorable international environment, incredible developments occurred in the Turkish-Iranian relations. In addition, changing conditions in the Middle East region resulted in this situation inevitably. Two distinctive changes were perceived as an

opportunity in terms of Turkey and Iran. They formed common denominators by adopting the understanding of win-win instead of losing their advantageous positions by competition. Especially, taking the economic relations to the highest level and the steps taken in this direction were reflected positively on the political and security issues.

Both countries have had different approaches to the Kurdish problem. Turkey has evaluated the problem for many years on the axis of terrorism and separatism. This point of view has made the military component one of the most important policies in the solution of the problem. In this period where harsh power was used the desired results could not be obtained in every aspect. The search for military solution has led to the growth of the problem. Intense conflict environment which has continued for long years in the areas where Kurdish people have lived has made the inevitable emergence of economic, political and cultural issues as well. This situation has led to the growth of the problem. Thus, this case has been a cross-border issue, not an issue of Turkey.

Iran, on the other hand, has evaluated the problem as the request of the Kurds to determine their own destiny. Iran has carried out the same method applied in Turkey for the Kurds within the territory of Iran. It has prevented all kinds of initiatives of Kurds for autonomy by applying pressure and violence policies. The most important reason for implementing this policy is the fact that there are many ethnic factors in Iran. Any ethnic group's winning a different status might have a domino effect and other ethnic

elements also might have similar demands and thus force the system. In order not to realize this danger, demands of the Kurds have been prevented by military policies.

When the policies both countries implemented against the Kurdish problem are analyzed, such results appear to have emerged. Turkey considers the issue as a separatist attempt. The method used for this initiative was realized in the form of terrorist attacks. Therefore, Turkey, at the first stage, used the element of military power to eliminate the separatist attempt and the terrorist activities which appeared as a result of these activities. In the following years, it saw this element as one of the most important tools in solving the problem. Iran, like Turkey, considered this issue as a separatist attempt. It saw the issue as Kurds' getting political rights and protecting their national identity. PJAK used the elements of violence it applied and the activities to accomplish this goal. The methods used by Iran against the activities of violence showed parallelism with the ones of Turkey. Military power was chosen as the most important deterrent and effective element.

This issue has been supported by some civil society organizations and political parties in Turkey. However, the terrorist activities which were applied have in no way been considered to be right and they have always been condemned. In particular, Kurdish people's being deprived of the political and cultural rights was effective in strengthening this support element. Likewise, in Iran, element of violence has been supported and

seen appropriate by no organizations. Unlike the one in Turkey, this situation has been supported by no organizations and non-governmental enterprises.

This problem has been recognized as the most important threat against Turkey's state integrity because almost 15 million Kurds are available in Turkey. This intensive population lives in the 20% territory of Turkey. Separatist claims always kept the threat of division of territorial integrity alive. This threat's being seen very serious was significantly effective in not realizing or slowing down the economic and other gains the Kurds will get. In Iran, on the other hand, this problem was not seen as the most important threat against the state as in Turkey because there are nearly 5 million Kurds in Iran and the Kurds did not have separatist initiatives. They struggled not to be assimilated, to protect the national identity, and to achieve political and cultural rights. Iran agreed to these requests to a limited extent without damaging the structure of the state.

Turkey has dramatically failed in the policies it implemented against the Kurdish issue. As all aspects of the content of the problem have not been analyzed, wrong policies have been applied for many years. In particular, the use of the military element both for the prevention of the growth of the problem and its solution has brought this situation to more dramatic levels. Not using the civil elements and neglecting the social dimension has been one of the most important missing parts in the lack of formation of solution. However, this situation has started to progress in a positive direction especially because of the case of Turkey's being a candidate country to the

European Union and with the change in the state's perception and view of the problem.

In Iran, as this problem was not seen as the most significant threat, the policies applied were at a lower level. Kurdish population's being proportionately much less and their being less demanding in getting political, economic and cultural rights as in Turkey have been effective in the implementation of these policies. Also, less appearing on the agenda by international organizations has constituted a comforting factor for Iran. In addition, PJAK's not being as effective as the PKK has eliminated the Kurdish issue from being a priority issue in Iran's domestic politics.

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