

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE KURDISTAN WORKER
PARTY (PKK) WITH INTERNATIONAL AND
DOMESTIC DIMENSION AND ITS
REFLECTION OVER TURKISH-AMERICAN
RELATIONS**

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Introduction

It is widely believed that the attacks of September 11 were a turning point for international relations since it led countries worldwide to assess the threat of terrorism and generate new perspectives for countering these risks. Thereby, America under the Bush presidency called all nations to Americas' 'war on terror' campaign to support the fight against international terrorism. In this campaign Bush even forced all nations to choose their approach, "either with us or against us"¹. However when the war on terror campaign turned into the Iraq operation, supporter for this campaign reduced due to the American's 'unilateral foreign policy implications'². Richardson (2006:235) points out that "the complete collapse in international support for the US in the face of the invasion of Iraq is simply extraordinary. The trend³ held in countries normally friendly, in those normally cautious or neutral and in those normally hostile." In particular, countries which are adjacent to the Iraq region feel that America's war on terror campaign has brought complexity rather than stability. Thus the ratio of supporters for America's terror campaign has ebbed. Turkey is one of the most appropriate examples for showing this transition which started with full support for America's war on terror strategy and then turned into the adversary for America's unilateral intervention towards Iraq due to the sensitivity of Kurdish issue. For example, one survey shows that 80.6 percent of Turkish public opposed the intervention in May 2003(Uslu,Toprak and Dalmis,2005).

¹ See George W. Bush's speech, 'You are either with us or against us', CNN, <http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/11/06/gen.attack.on.terror/>, 6 November 2001

² The U.S. decision to launch war against Iraq despite the lack of an explicit mandate from the U.N. Security Council and without the support of many key allies is the most dramatic manifestation of American unilateralism. For further information regarding American unilateralism see John Dumbrell (2002) 'Unilateralism ? and America First President George W. Bush's Foreign Policy', *The Political Quarterly*, pp279-287. G. John Ikenberry (ed) (2002) ' Democracy, Institutions and American Restraint' in *America Unrivaled: The Future Of the Balance of Power*. Ithaca: Cornell University. 213-239; Sergio Fabbini (ed)(2006) *The United States Contested: American Unilateralism and European Discontent*, London and New York : Routledge p.13

³ In France the number viewing the US unfavourably soared from 34 percent in the summer of 2002 to 67 per cent in March 2003. In Germany the figure went from 35 to 71 per cent in the same period. In Russia the number rose from 33 to 68 per cent, in Indonesia from 56 to 83 per cent, in Pakistan from 56 to 83 per cent, in Turkey from 55 to 84 per cent, in Pakistan from 69 to 81 per cent, in Lebanon from 59 to 71 per cent and in Jordan from 75 to 99 per cent. See Richardson, Louise. (2006) *What Terrorists Want: Understanding the Terrorist Threat*, London: John Murray. pp 235

Initially, Turkey began the 21st Century as a 'strategic partner' of America declared by Bill Clinton⁴ in 1999. Moreover, September 11 reinforced Turkey's strategic importance once again to the US war on terror campaign since Turkey was fully aware of the gravity of the threat due to the PKK (Kurdistan Worker Party) which caused 37,000 casualties over 25 years(Ibas, 2007). Its painful past experiences inspired its significant contributions towards the international counterterrorism struggle. As a result, Turkey immediately pledged its support to the U.S. by opening up the Incirlik Air Base and its air space, deploying commando units and managing the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan in 2002. Yet, during this time serious doubts began to arise gradually within the general public when the U.S. decided to attack Iraq in regions of Kurdish inhabitants. Turkey's past experience illustrated that Iraq caused Turkey to have security problems resulting from Northern Iraq during the first Gulf War. Accordingly America's decision for attacking Iraq led Turkey to be more prudent. On March 1st 2003 Turkey refused the decision to allow U.S. troops through Turkey which made the Kurdish problem much more complicated than ever as America was forced to choose another alternative way to topple Saddam's dictatorship. America has continued its operation towards Iraq, but has seemed to be inactive regarding Turkey's struggle with the PKK.

Nowadays many in Turkey assume that Turkey would not be facing a PKK problem if the Turkish parliament had decided to cooperate with Washington on March 1st 2003. Those (53.6 percent of Turk) believed that a U.S. intervention without a Turkish military occupation of Northern Iraq would result in the establishment of a Kurdish state(Uslu,Toprak and Dalimis,2005). According to Taspinar (2007), such views are naive and wrong. Taspinar

⁴ See President Bill Clinton, address to the Turkish Grand National Assembly, November 15, 1999. In that speech, Clinton said: For better or worse, the events of that time when the Ottoman Empire disintegrated and a new Turkey arose have shaped the history of this entire century... Turkey's past is the key to understanding the twentieth century. But, more importantly, I believe that Turkey's future will be critical to shaping the twenty-first century.

believed that it requires a strong degree of imagination to believe that the PKK is a product of America's invasion of Iraq or Iraqi Kurds. “Instead of constantly blaming nefarious external forces, it is necessary to pay attention to international and domestic dynamics. It would also help to understand how nationalism, socio-economic problems and unfulfilled political expectations can become a toxic cocktail that fuels radicalism” (Taspinar 2007).

This essay attempts to scrutinize the evolution of the PKK and its reflection over Turkish-American relations. In order to analyze this issue, the essay is divided into three parts; the first two parts are devoted to examine the international and domestic dimensions which have fuelled the PKK's facilities, and the latter of the essay seeks to analyse its reflection over Turkish-American relations in the context of war on terror and Iraq invasion.

International Dynamics of the PKK

Throughout history people have witnessed not only significant developments in science and technology, but also the growth of international terrorist activities. Especially, during the Cold War years, terrorism not only became a factor in foreign policy, but also an internal component of the global system. The circumstances that shaped bipolar international systems also legitimised violent covert action, making terrorism a form of state behaviour. Hence, “synergic conjunction of interacting global trends” have formed “structural terrorism”, which became a source of state terrorism. (Kegley, Sturgeon, and Wittkopf, 1998:16)

States adopted a less risky way of pursuing their foreign policy goals, which was by employing terrorism. Hence, terrorism turned into a flexible and highly adoptable instrument of foreign policy, particularly used by the two superpowers in the Cold War era. Although

neither superpower, the US or the Soviet Union, accepted sponsoring terrorism, both supported groups using terrorism against the friends and allies of the rival superpower or directly against the opposite superpower (Schlangheck,1990:170-1). Since both had interest in exploiting and employing terrorism in different forms, they only opposed the use of terrorism by the other side. With the end of the Cold War, the rapprochement between the East and the West had an important impact on the decline of international terrorism stemming from ideological reasons.

However, Hoffman (1998:141) points out that “there was not a decline in the overall level or lethality of international terrorism due to the emergence of regional ethnic and nationalist rivalries—usually combined with religious antagonism.” Ethnic and nationalist groups, which had been long suppressed by Cold War politics, have since increasingly resorted to terrorism in order to pursue their nationalist and ethnic aspirations. Contrary to the superpowers “sponsorship of ideologically motivated terrorism, some states collaborated with nationalist and ethnic groups, which considered the systemic factors as appropriate to change the borders or dominated their rivalries” Hoffman (1998:141). Parallel with Hoffman’s perception, the PKK, as an ethnic and separatist terrorist organization, was founded by the leader of Abdullah Ocalan in 1984. Its goal had been an independent Marxist-Leninist style Kurdish state entirely separate from Turkey and incorporating other ethnic Kurds, especially from Syria and Iraq (Edwards and Hinchcliffe, 2005:81). At some stage during the Cold War, while the PKK covered itself as a leftwing organization, after the first Gulf War it appeared as “an ethnic terror organisation which conducts terrorist activities based on a micro nationalist ideology, funding its violence through illegal activities such as the narcotics trade and arms smuggling” (Ibas, 2007). Turkish soldiers have battled the PKK in the southeast since 1984, a conflict that has resulted in an estimated 37,000 fatalities.

Ethnic terrorists attempt to influence rival groups and hostile governments, but they also aim to forge a distinct ethnic identity and to promote ethnic mobilization. Ethnic terrorists either aim to elevate the status of their communal group or to create a separate sovereign state. Ethnic terrorists need state support for the provision of weapons logistics, and most important for safe havens beyond their borders, (Byman,1998:150-161) besides, Diaspora⁵ communities are usually an important source of support for ethnic terrorism. For example, Cyprus and Bekaa Valley⁶ were famous havens for some terrorist groups, especially those backed by the Soviet Union. “After the Cold War, these places have long been a haven for advocates, activists, and operatives for the PKK” (Harmon, 2000: 88-93).

Furthermore, the ethnic and nationalist terrorism has a strong international dimension since the very objective of it is to create a new country, which would certainly affect the international system(Schmid,1998:58-9). Hence, these kinds of groups often depend on the support of other nations that are interested in changing the international system. In the case of the PKK, many countries have been accused of giving assistance to PKK’s actions outside of Turkey. According to Robins (2002:173) virtually throughout their existence the PKK has been extensively involved with foreign states such as Armenia, Cyprus, Greece, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Russia and Syria. Robins noted that by the mid 1990s senior and influential sources in Turkey had accused eight states of directly aiding the PKK, and a further dozen or so of giving assistance to its members and its front organisations.

⁵ further information regarding Kurdish diaspora, especially those in Europe, and their contribution to the PKK, Philip Robins, Suits and Uniforms: Turkey Foreign Policy since the Cold War, Seattle: University of Washington Press pp.177-180

⁶ see also, Bruce Hoffman (1998), Inside Terrorism; Iran reportedly also provides training and sanctuary for the most hard-line Palestinian factions, including Hamas and the PIJ, as well as the Kurdish PKK. Hamas the PIJ, the JRA and the PKK, also maintain bases either in Syria or just across the border in the Syrian- controlled Bekaa Valley. Indeed, only a few years ago the State Department alleged that at least sixteen different international terrorist organizations maintained training facilities under Syria’s aegis in the Bekaa valley. (194 -5)

However, foreign assistance was crucial for the survival, organisation and military operations of the PKK, and it is important to emphasise that it was not a foreign creation without rationale or support in Turkey itself. The PKK could not have grown so rapidly and prospered so extensively without the co-operation of Kurdish communities in the south-east of the Turkish state. Robins (2002:173-4) designates the critical factors facilitating the Kurdish issue in Turkey as: the increasing growth of a self-conscious Kurdish nationalism inside Turkey; the material disdain for the south-east on the part of the Turkish state, which provided few resources for economic development or social services; structural economic factors, which have helped to accelerate the sharply growing relative poverty in Turkey; and coercive nature of the Turkish state, both in terms of forcing the increasingly extensive activities of the security services. Accordingly, it is highly important to analyse domestic dimensions of this issue in order to find out the reflection of the PKK over Turkish-American relations.

Domestic Dimensions of the PKK issue and Turkey's Sensitivity

In the 19th Century the Ottoman Empire, considered as the 'sick man' of Europe, had been defeated by the 'victorious allied powers' in World War I. Subsequently the Sèvres Treaty, which included many "unpleasant and humiliating peace terms" (Sweig, 2006:123) signed by the Ottoman-Turkish Government. Ahmad (2005) argues that the treaty of Sèvres was merely the culmination of the so-called Eastern Question, the term used to describe "the inter-imperialist rivalry concerning the division of the legacy of the ailing Ottoman Empire." According to Candar, the process of the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire had created a deep xenophobia in the founding fathers of the new Turkish Republic in 1923. Turkish people therefore harboured deep suspicions concerning the intentions of foreign powers, and mainly those in the West. For Larabee and Lesser (2003:81-3) the provisions of the Treaty of Sèvres

regarded by Turks as Wilsonian in inspiration, and American notions of national self-determinism were seen as encouraging Balkan, Kurdish, and Armenian nationalism at Turkey's expense. The legacy of Sèvres is a phenomenon, which Turkish analysts often refer to as the "Sèvres syndrome"⁷, continues to fuel Turkish suspicions of American foreign policy implications. The lasting effects can be seen in the contemporary Turkish debate about American policy in Northern Iraq and the Kurdish issue. Thus the Sèvres Syndrome in Turkey should be kept in mind while analysing the PKK or Kurdish issue.

In order to abolish the Sèvres treaty, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of Turkey, and his fellow soldiers embarked on the war of independence against the 'victorious allied powers' of World War I. After that war, the Lausanne Treaty of 1923 was replaced with the Sèvres treaty. Subsequently, the state in Turkey has sought to create a new identity and sense of loyalty in its subjects. Reform policies have thus aimed to favour Turkish nationalism since the reformist state elite have identified themselves with ethnic Turkish identity and allied themselves with Turkish nationalist groups, which are also known as 'Kemalist groups'⁸ in Turkey (Kirisci, Winrow, 1997:209-10). The goal of Kemalism has been the creation of a homogeneous (Turkish)⁹, centralized nation-state and a secular society. These two goals were

⁷ As a part of Turkey's denial of the existence of a Kurdish problem, the PKK had always been portrayed as an externally-supported organization whose aim was to weaken and divide Turkey. Such a portrayal is very much part of what in Turkey is commonly referred to as the "Sèvres syndrome", a concept popular among nationalists, as well as bureaucratic and military circles. It is based on the belief in a conspiracy and embodies the fear that the Treaty of Sèvres will be revived. Many Turks believe that the U.S. and the EU are trying to weaken Turkey both through partition. (e.g. the creation of a Kurdish State) and through instigating sufficient domestic political turmoil to ensure that the country remains weak. See Bill Park, *Turkey's Policy Towards Northern Iraq: Problems and Perspectives*, New York: Routledge, 2005- p13, Kemal Kirisci and Gareth M. Winrow, "The Kurdish Question and Turkey: An Example of a Trans-State Ethnic Conflict", London: Frank Cass, 1997, pp 209-210

⁸ Also known as Laic Camp in Turkey is the most powerful ideologic faction in which a large number of statesmen including former presidents, politicians, a large number of eminent military staff, supreme court members, and so on take part in.

⁹ Expressions of Kurdish ethnic distinctiveness would not be tolerated. The Lausanne Treaty of 1923 which is Turkish organic law made explicit reference to Turkey's non-Muslim Greek, Armenian and Jewish minorities, but not to its Kurdish and other Muslim ethnic groups. (Park, 2005:16-7) Also, one of Atatürk's proverbs which 'Happy is one who can say one is a Turk' has long been discussed. Later on some Turkish politicians (Cem Boyner and Tansu Ciller) reinterpreted this proverb as 'Happy is one who can say I am a citizen of Turkey'.

regularly challenged by Kurdish tribal networks and Islamic communities on the periphery. The most known example is “Sheikh Said Riot in 1925.”¹⁰ At the same time as this riot, deliberately or accidentally inept British cartography led to the historically Kurdish region being divided along the borders of four states Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran.(Ozcan,Yavuz,2006) It is important to highlight the Kurds¹¹ of Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq are the largest population in the world who do not have their own state. According to Park (2005:13) “strategic considerations and political power rather than ethnographic logic or geographic circumstance account for Turkey and Iraq’s mutual borders and those they share both Syria and Iran.” Accordingly, the Kurdish regions acquired the status of a ‘national security’ problem for these states. The entire region became vulnerable to interference by regional and international powers and susceptible to Kurdish ethnic uprisings within individual states. The demise of the Soviet Union and the Gulf War, especially, led all international attention to concentrate on this region.

For Turkey, the ‘Kurdish question’ has occupied both the domestic and foreign policy of Turkey to varying degrees for over eight decades. Through this period Kurds in Turkey, the largest Kurdish population in the world, have had demands ranging from full secession to federalism, and the recognition of individual rights as Turkish citizens within the framework of the process of Turkey’s entry into the EU. On the contrary, the dominant view of the Turkish state, however, during most of this time, has been to reject such a description which

¹⁰ Many Turks still believe that riot was backed by Great Britain to seize the Mosul and Kirkuk in 1925. According to Dahlman, the outcome of the Sheikh Said Riot established the new tenor in the region, most importantly: Britain was able to consolidate its imperial position in Mesopotamia ; Turkey assumed a non-interventionist foreign policy; and Moscow had clearly removed itself from manipulating Kurdish affairs among its southern rivals. See Dahlman, Carl.(2002) ‘The Political Geography of Kurdistan’, Eurasian Geography and Economics. 43 (4): 271-299.

¹¹ There are approximately 30 million Kurds live in that region. Turkey’s approximately 15 million Kurds make up 20% or more of the country’s population. Iraq’s around four and a half million Kurds constitute at least 15% of the total Iraqi population. Iran’s Kurdish population is probably a little larger than Iraq’s. In Syria there are substantially in excess of one million ethnic Kurds. For further detail see, Bill Park, Turkey’s Policy Towards Northern Iraq: Problems and Perspectives, New York:Routledge,2005

Turkey has no Kurdish problem (Robins, 2002: 174) but a problem of terror, aggravated by the economic and social problems of south-eastern¹² Turkey. Indeed, as late as the 1980s, the very existence of Kurds was denied by some elements within the Turkish state, with Kurds being referred to as “Mountain Turks” (Dahlman, 2002). Broadly speaking, the Kurdish issue has for a long time been seen either as a political security problem in the context of the PKK, or as a social and economic backwardness of the south-east of Turkey. Kirisci, mostly quoted scholar regarding Kurdish issue (2005), summarized the failure concerning the Kurdish issue

the failure to accommodate Kurdish ethnicity and culture has been an important factor that has led to the deaths of thousands of civilians and the displacement of masses of people, as well as severe human rights violations. The failure has also caused many governments and international political actors to be drawn into the conflict between Turkey and the Kurds. Accordingly, the Kurdish question became internationalised and came to dominate a significant proportion of Turkey’s foreign policy.

According to Kirisci (2005), traditionally, there were two approaches to the Kurdish question in Turkey. The dominant and hard-line approach had seen the problem as externally driven and has pursued what is basically a military way of dealing with it. The more moderate and liberal approach has seen the problem mostly as a denial of Kurdish cultural and ethnic identity, and has advocated political reforms in support of greater democracy and pluralism in Turkey, and economic reforms aimed at achieving greater development in the east and south-east of Turkey. The latter has also been aware that a peaceful solution of the Kurdish Question in Turkey would improve Turkey’s image worldwide, for example, improving prospects for Turkish admission in to the EU as a full-member.

For the first time, the late president Turgut Ozal, known as the most pro-American leader in Turkey, had tried to change the pattern of Turkish foreign policy where the Kurdish question was understood merely as a security issue that threatened Turkey’s territorial integrity

¹² In order to find a solution for south-eastern Turkey where most of Kurds live, GAP project (Southeastern Anatolia Project) has been launched. Basically, the Project were aiming at controlling irrigation system. However, this consideration led other states within the region to provoke and help the PKK against Turkey due to the importance of water for other regional powers.

(Candar, 2005). After the first Gulf War, Ozal had set a precedent by holding talks with Kurdish leaders from Northern Iraq. Ozal had sought to start an open discussion of the Kurdish issue in Turkey. In 1992, he had even suggested that the allowing of radio and television broadcasting in Kurdish and the teaching of Kurdish as a second language at school could help the government to deal with the question more effectively (Kirisci and Winrow 1997, 137). Ozal's radical decisions toward Kurdish policy brought drastic change in Turkey. These rights for Kurds, such as broadcasting, teaching Kurdish, Kurdish radio, have just been implemented after 2004. However Ozal's effort had been criticised after the negative outcomes of the first Gulf War.

The gap between moderates and hard-liners concerning the Kurdish issue diminished after the capture of the PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan in 1999. Since, certain factors have played a critical role in its development, most importantly the improving relations with the West and the changing strategy of PKK after the capture of its leader. The capture of Ocalan coincided with Turkey candidacy with EU in 1999. The PKK, therefore, has used new-found opportunity spaces brought about by the European Union's Copenhagen criteria¹³ as the EU had criticised Turkey bitterly regarding the Kurdish Issue.

It is worth noting that America's stance toward the Kurdish Issue is slightly different from the EU's stance. According to Davutoglu (2001:476) while America sees the Kurdish Issue as an important component of the Iraq equation, Europe considers the same issue as being a Turkish domestic problem. This basic nuance has led the EU and America to approach Turkey differently. For Kirisci (2005), compared to Europe, U.S. relations with Turkey regarding the

¹³ According to this criteria, prospects of membership require that a candidate country achieve stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and respect for and protection of minorities. This was the turning point at which the potential process was set in motion that led to the EU's formal acceptance of Turkey's candidacy.

Kurdish question were more ambiguous. America made an unequivocal distinction between the PKK and the Kurdish question but it did not hesitate to criticize Turkey bitterly on its human rights violations but was unambiguously critical of the PKK and supported Turkey's struggle against the this group. In short, America has tried to resolve this issue in the Iraq equation, but due to the Northern Iraq issue, America's approach has discontented among the Turkish policy makers especially those taking part in Turkish military¹⁴. However, Turkey's support for coalition powers to attack Iraq during the first Gulf War had brought another dimension to the post-Cold War U.S. – Turkish relations regarding the Kurdish Issue and the PKK since lessons from the First Gulf War have affected Turkish support to America's current Iraq invasion.

By supporting coalition powers during the first Gulf War had four important outcomes; first, Turkey got involved in a Middle Eastern dispute, second Kurdish refugees from North Iraq came to Turkey because of Saddam's repression, thirdly, the rising possibility of independent Kurdish state and lastly increasing the PKK's attacks. Those outcomes guided Turkish foreign and domestic policy in the following years. Thus Turkey draw their red lines which consist of resisting Kurdish independence in Iraq, countering Kurdish militants, suppressing Kurdish attempts towards the oil-rich city Mosul and Kirkuk, protecting Turkmen's right in Northern Iraq, and defending Iraq's unitary structures (Prager, 2003). These red lines do not completely overlap with America's interest in Iraq. Especially, the dissolution of Iraq

¹⁴ Turkish Military is the most important institution in terms of foreign policy, security and several times domestic affairs. According to Mc Gregor: The role that Turkey's generals play in the country's political life is unfamiliar to most Western states. The generals give speeches suggesting directions for public policy, call for politicians to be prosecuted, robustly defend the nation's international reputation and persecute any perceived deviation from official Kemalism—the secular political and social movement created in the 1920s by General Mustafa Kemal Ataturk as a nationalist response to the implosion of the Ottoman Empire. Opinion polls consistently reveal that the Turkish military remains the most trusted element in Turkish public life, despite a history of coups and political interventions. Experiencing 45 different governments since 1946, many Turks view the military as a powerful force for national stability. Mc Gregor, Andrew.(2007) 'Turkey's Dark War: Counter-Terrorism Strategies for the 21st Century', Global Terrorism Analysis (The Jamestown Foundation). 5(14):10-2

resulting in an independent Kurdish state, an unacceptable idea for Turkey because this possibility are considered as provoking Kurdish subjects in Turkey and increasing the terrorists activities of the PKK, which have been mainly trained in Northern Iraq.

However Makovsky (2000) points out that the U.S. aims at advocating the maintenance of Iraq's territorial integrity. Conversely, Aykan (1999) claims that the 'non-fly zone'¹⁵ established between the Turkish border and the area north of the 36th parallel after the Gulf War to protect the civilians in the region from Saddam Hussein turned out to be a de facto Kurdish State that was a threat for Turkey's integrity because of the 'domino effect'. Regardless of America's stance concerning this issue, it may be said that the dissolution of Iraq and creation of an independent Kurdish State within the lands of Iraq does not discontent the U.S. as it does Turkey. Therefore Iraq is at the very centre of the U.S. – Turkish relations regarding the PKK and Kurdish issue, and has increased in importance for both Turkey and the U.S.

The dilemma between the U.S. and Turkey resulting from the PKK

¹⁵ See Lenore G.Martin, "Turkey's Middle East Foreign Policy" in Leonere G Martin and Dimitris Keridis(eds), *The Future of Turkish Foreign Policy*, (Cambridge: MIT Press,2005:pp 157-189) During the Gulf War, Operation Provide Comfort and Operation Northern Watch, conducted by the U.S. and the UK from Incirlik air base, were intended to protect the Kurds in the north and contain the Saddam Hussein regime by policing a no-fly zone in the north of Iraq. See also Kemal Kirisci and Gareth M. Winrow, *The Kurdish Question and Turkey: An Example of a Trans-State Ethnic Conflict*. (London:Frank Cass, 1997:p 159) The Late President Turgut Ozal played a central role in the introduction of the idea of a safe haven. Ozal knew that to ensure the return of the refugees and extend assistance there was an immediate need to stop Iraqi aggression and create a secure environment. What he seemed to have in mind was the creation of a safe zone along the Iraqi border.

Recently, suspicions towards the U.S. aroused resulting from Northern Iraq. America has long been accused of giving assistance to the PKK and creating an autonomous Kurdish State in Northern Iraq (Baran,2007;Criss, 2007). In fact, in the 1990s America's stance toward Turkey regarding Northern Iraq and the PKK was quite ambiguous because of various reasons. For example, in the period of the counterinsurgency campaign, there were more U.S. weapons deliveries to Turkey than in the entire Cold War period. During the Clinton administration, America sent more arms to Turkey than it had received from 1950 to 1983, according to Chomsky (2007:124) 'Turkey was the leading recipient of U.S. military aid, outside of Israel and Egypt'. Between 1952 and 1997, America provided Turkey with nearly \$ 15 billion or an average of \$ 316 million annually, in military assistance, mainly via grants and credits for the purchase of American made equipment (Sweig, 2006: 127). Moreover, during Clinton's presidency the PKK leader, Ocalan was captured in Kenya in 1999. Through the entire process of Ocalan's capture, America effectively supported Turkey. Also the PKK, with its all changing names, has been seen as a terrorist organization in 'America Terror list' (Harmon,2000:248-9). Yet simultaneously the U.S. government, particularly the Congress, was deeply critical of human rights violations in Turkey. To illustrate, in 1995 one report prepared under instruction from the Congress, suggested that Turkey was using U.S. weapons against Kurdish civilians. In reflection of this report, Super Cobra Helicopters which were effective particularly against the PKK in rugged and inaccessible mountain terrain were cancelled (Kirisci, 2005). However, it is worth noting that America is not the only country which criticizes Turkey bitterly regarding human rights violations against Kurds.

After the PKK leader was captured, the PKK started to change its strategy in order to find a peaceful solution. During Ocalan's trial, he declared publicly that the organisation agreed a ceasefire (Edwards and Hinchcliffe, 2005:83). Ocalan even wanted to be a mediator between

the Turks and Kurds. However, according to Marcus (2007), Turkey's capture of the PKK leader Ocalan in 1999, coupled with his subsequent decision to suspend the separatist war, was hailed as a great victory for Turkey and in the initial euphoria, it was easy to believe the rebel group had collapsed. But the end of the war did not mean the end of the PKK nor the end of Turkey's Kurdish problem. This positive evolution also coincided with Turkey's candidacy to the EU.

These developments were accompanied by a growing commitment on the part of the Turkish government and political leaders to support greater democratisation and reforms in Turkey. In 2004 broadcasting and education in Kurdish, an amnesty for terrorists became legal for the first time in the history of the Turkish Republic. On the other hand, in 2002 the PKK changed its name to the Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress (KADEK), then again in November 2003 to the Kurdistan People's Congress (Kongra-Gel). According to Park (2005:47) "these name changes in part reflected a somewhat useless attempt to evade international proscription, but were also indicative of internal rifts, with reports of a shift towards a non-violent approach by some leading PKK figures." However on the 1st June 2004 the PKK's unilateral ceasefire of February 2000 was called off. There has subsequently been a marked increase in violent exchanges inside Turkey between Turkish security forces and PKK units.

General belief regards this upsurge of violence as being facilitated by the PKK's freedom of movement in Northern Iraq. Since the refusal of the Turkish government to join U.S. troops created a new opportunity space for the PKK and the Iraqi Kurds. The worsening of Turkish-American relations has helped the PKK enhance its bases in Iraq, attack targets inside Turkey, and network with radical Kurdish cohorts in Iraq and Iran (Ozcan, 2007). As Barkey (2007)

noted, “the Turks blame the Iraq War for creating the conditions that have given rise to a potential independent Kurdish state.” The majority of the Turkish people (60.5 percent) believed that the United States favored the establishment of a Kurdish state in Northern Iraq (Uslu, Toprak and Dalmis, 2005). They also accuse the U.S. of ignoring Turkish red lines on Kirkuk and federalism, and demands to take action against the PKK. In fact, Turks are convinced that the U.S. prefers its new found Kurdish allies to its old NATO ally. A deputy leader in the main opposition party, Ali Topuz (Barkey, 2007), went so far as to accuse the U.S. of using the PKK as a weapon against Turkey, whereas Turkey has sought support to remove the PKK from Northern Iraq. Despite negotiations and meetings among government and military authorities at several levels, no substantial progress had been recorded until Turkey’s last cross border attack (Ibas, 2007). Ankara hoped that the U.S. should ensure that eliminating the PKK in Northern Iraq is part of its effort in the global war on terror.

Washington agreed to an ‘action plan’ but which Ankara clearly interpreted as obliging American forces to confront the PKK presence in Iraq on Ankara’s behalf. Immediately Turkish General Ilker Basbug (Park, 2004) was already declaring that the US’s fight against the PKK as not meeting expectations. Abdullah Gul, the current President, appeared to have given up on US goodwill on the issue. Telling a Turkish News paper he said that “we cannot progress on this issue by relying on other countries”, and that Turkey will itself “do what our security necessitates”. In the following days, Gul was asking how much longer the operation could be postponed and declaring that the US had “lost the Turkish people already” as a consequence of their inaction (Park, 2005:44-6). Conversely, America reportedly showed its support Turkey regarding the PKK. Condellezza Rice told the reporters that “we would like to act in a way that fulfills two conditions: first of all, that it is going to have an effect on the

PKK; and secondly, that it is not going to contribute to destabilization in the North."¹⁶ Moreover, Rice declared that "Whether it is al-Qaeda or the PKK ... terrorism is simply not an acceptable tool in the modern world"¹⁷ and Bush reaffirmed the American position to PM Erdogan. Erdogan contrarily told the reporters that the PKK terrorists captured by the Turkish security forces have weapons of US origin¹⁸ and he also stated that "There is no positive progress in fighting against terror. From now on we wait for a concrete result; we cannot just sit and wait anymore"(Laciner,2007). In fact, Erdogan's feeling reflected the general feelings of Turks regarding the PKK.

Even though America seemed not to take any further step towards the terrorism, the Centre of Excellence-Defence Against Terrorism¹⁹ was established in Ankara in order to further contribute to the international struggle against terrorism. Yet many Turks cannot understand why the U.S. would not put pressure on the Iraqi Kurds, primarily Massoud Barzani, to stop harbouring members of the PKK. The phrase 'allies against terrorism' has become completely meaningless for Turks, as for them it is clear that America defines 'terrorist' as only those groups that attack Americans and American interests (Baran, 2007). This is considered by the majority of Turks to be a major insincerity. At times academics, politicians and journalists have become involved with this argument. Domestic uproar had forced the government to take a radical step towards the PKK with or without the U.S. consent because everyday media had covered the story of Turkish soldiers killed by the PKK militants. During this time, the Turkish move into Northern Iraq was averted by last-minute diplomacy and the appointment

¹⁶ See, Rice: Anti-PKK fight must not destabilize Northern Iraq, USA Turkishtimes, http://www.usaturkishtimes.com/news/english/rice:anti-pkk_fight_mustn%19t_destabilize_n.iraq/

¹⁷ Michael Rubin, The Same War, New York Sun, 2 November 2005

¹⁸ PM Erdogan said that the separatist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) was hiding behind the United States and Iraqi governments and using US weapons against Turkish forces. See, 'US support for PKK could damage relations with Turkey: PM', *AFM*, 22 October, 2007 <http://www.turkishweekly.net/editorial.php?id=49>, (accessed on 23rd March 2008)

¹⁹ for further information see <http://www.tmmm.tsk.mil.tr/>

of a special U.S. negotiator, retired General Joseph Ralston, to work with the Turks on the PKK.

According to Barkey (2007), American efforts at handling the complicated problem of Northern Iraq had been stepped up with the appointment of General Ralston. He and his Turkish counterpart²⁰ had sought ways to improve dialogue and intelligence cooperation between the Turkish and American bureaucracies. Barkey believes that Ralston's appointment bought Washington some time and dissuaded the Turks from militarily intervening in Northern Iraq against the PKK in 2006. In fact, it seemed that part of U.S. policy is based on a strategy of keeping Turkish troops out of Iraq. As Holliday (2007) noted that some Turks discarded his appointment as a mere token gesture and questioned the American commitment to dealing with the issue given the deteriorating security situation throughout the rest of Iraq.

Finally Turkish forces entered Iraq to attack PKK fighters operating from the Qandil Mountains on February, 2008. Despite Condoleezza Rice said that "no-one should do anything that threatens to destabilise the north"²¹ in 2007, during this operation U.S. forces in Northern Iraq have helped to facilitate Turkish military operations at the border. Yet, throughout the operations, America urged Turkey to conclude its cross-border operation soon. Even President Bush said that "Turkish troops should withdraw from Northern Iraq as short a time as possible,"²² at the press conference. However, the General Yasar Buyukanit made it clear that the operation will end when we accomplish our mission. Even he sarcastically, told

²⁰ While General Joseph Ralston resigned, on the other hand General Edip Baser was fired.

²¹ Ian Black, 'US pleads for calm after Turkish troops pursuing PKK enter Iraq', the Guardian, 19 December 2007, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/dec/19/iraq.usa>

²² Turkish Daily News, 'Turkey, US in row over troop pullout' February 29, 2008.

the U.S. that “a short time is a relative notion that may be one day or one year”²³., when the U.S. Defence Secretary Robert Gates told Turkish leaders that they need to wrap up their military operations in Northern Iraq quickly and that the continuing assault there must not last longer than a week or two. Subsequently Turkey ended the cross-border operation within 8 days. As a result of this cross border attack over Northern Iraq in pursuit of PKK militants and destruction of their camps in the region brought another discussion point since that operation has been lambasted by highly official people such as two opposition party leaders (Deniz Baykal and Devlet Bahçeli), retired Generals staff, and certain NGOs got involved with the discussion. These parties believed that America did not want Turkey to end the PKK and America’s war on terror campaign does not work for Turkey as the US does not want terrorist elements to be removed from northern Iraq. For example,

Main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) leader Deniz Baykal told Turkey has been subject to US pressure from the outset to end the operation at once. Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) leader Devlet Bahçeli has criticized a decision to pull out troops from Iraq after a ground offensive launched. He said that the offensive was ended prematurely under US pressure.²⁴

Although, majority of Turks still believe that this operation was terminated before its scheduled time under the pressure of the US, General Yasar Buyukanit denied ‘any foreign influence on the decision, which had come just one day after U.S President George W. Bush urged a swift end to the offensive.’²⁵ Still these arguments have been continuing in Turkey. It is worth nothing that these arguments regarding the PKK insurgency among the top Generals and Political Party Leaders have never happened throughout the Turkish history. My premise is that suspicions towards America will never be concluded until the PKK are eliminated.

²³See Yasar Buyukanit’s expression, ‘ US told no timeframe on Iraq pullout’, *Today’s Zaman*, 27 April 2008, <http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=135205>

²⁴ ‘Opposition-military row over Iraq withdrawal cools off’, *Turks.US*, 12 March 2008, available at <http://www.turks.us/article.php?story=20080312083640563> (accessed on 21 March 2008)

²⁵ ‘Top Turk general says Iraq withdrawal on schedule’, Reuters, 1 March 2008, available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSL01678169> (accessed on 21 March 2008)

Conclusion

The PKK is the most appropriate example to show how the ethnic terrorism can be hazardous if unfulfilled ethnic expectations within the state combine with international support. Firstly, Turkey must have differentiated the Kurdish question from the PKK before accusing of external factors. Later on, the Turkey's old-Kurdish rhetoric which 'Turkey has no Kurdish Issue' resulting from the Sevres Syndrome must be transformed by using new contemporary policy formations which are required by EU. However, it is worth noting that rather than seeing the Kurdish issue as an important component of joining EU, policy-makers in Turkey must find permanent solutions regarding the Kurdish issue.

As for the US concern the PKK, it is difficult to say that Turkey end the PKK without America's support in terms of arms, intelligence and its supremacy within the region. Therefore, Turkish officials want to see America unequivocally more clear concerning its support against the PKK in the light of war on terror. Especially, Bush's declaration which "Our war on terror begins with al-Qaeda, but it will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated,"²⁶ caused many Turks to wait America's participation over the PKK issue. Conversely, America faces dilemma resulting from the Northern Iraq and its Kurdish allies. It can be said that the 1st March, 2003 failure plays critical role over the America's foreign policy strategy concerning the Kurds and the PKK. While America sees Turkey as a geopolitically important country, the Kurds in Iraq was the crucial allies during the Iraq invasion. America deservedly does not want Turkey to get involved the Northern Iraq issue without its consent. Basically, in order to prevent a new ethnic-conflict between Kurds and Turks in Northern Iraq, America request from Turkey first

²⁶ Michael Rubin, 'The Same War', New York Sun, November 2, 2005.

to find a peaceful solutions rather than using force. Yet, it is worth noting that Rumsfeld's dictum which the Mission must determine the coalition; coalition must not determine the mission"²⁷ may prove that America would give priority to its new-Kurdish allies. It does not mean that America could not support Turkey for its struggle against the PKK. For this reason, Turkey must understand America's priorities and beware of the chauvinism which fuels the nationalist backlash against the America. Lastly, if Turkey, Iran and Syria want to use the America's foreign policy rhetoric stating missions can determine the coalition, a new possible ally may be established among those countries in order to prevent Kurdish domination in the region. Accordingly, America must beware of this possible ally and enhance new approach towards the region.

²⁷ see, Rumsfeld's Annual Report Outlines Lessons Learned in War on Terror, 19 August 2002, available at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=43544>

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