



HEGEMONIC STABILITY THEORY AND SECESSIONIST MOVEMENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST DURING THE 1990S

Seyit Ali AVCU, Ph.D.

Kyrgyzstan-Turkey Manas University, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

Yildirim Beyazıt University, Ankara, Turkey

avcuseyit@hotmail.com

Abstract

Secessionist movements had played a big role in foreign policies of countries in the Middle East, mainly Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Russia during the 1990s. This article tries to answer the question of how Kurdish issue and terror stemming from shaped and changed the international subsystem during the 1990s. I propose a theory to explain the success or the failure of the secessionist movements. These movements are dormant or ineffective due to constraints provided by the international system. The change in the international system, in this case the end of Cold War and the Gulf War, created opportunity for ethnic groups, such as Iraqi Kurds to attempt to secede from central government. The states in the region responded accordingly and this created power vacuum and escalated interstate conflict. In this power vacuum, the support of hegemon for ethnic group was necessary condition for the success of the ethnic secessionist movement. If the USA as a hegemon had supported the secessionist movements, a new international system would have emerged. However, ideological affinity and alliance between regional power and hegemon, as the case between Turkey and the USA, prevented hegemon to support secessionist movement. If ineffective state such as Iraq after the Gulf War was unable to defeat the revolt and ethnic group was fragmented, the civil war reigns as happened in Iraq during the 1990s.

Key words: Hegemonic Stability Theory, Secessionism, Kurds, Turkey, Iraq.

Introduction

Since the first Gulf War in 1991, the international relations in the Middle East had changed substantially till the second Gulf War in 2003. The

possibility of war between Turkey and Syria, crisis between Turkey and Italy, and the capture of the PKK leader, Abdullah Öcalan, by Turkish government in Kenya, showed that the Kurdish issue was not only a regional issue but an international issue involving major powers, i.e., Russia, Europe, and the United States. Four countries in the Middle East, mainly Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria had Kurdish issues. The Kurdish question referred generally to the interstate dynamics among these four states, but it had spread beyond these four countries since the Gulf War of 1991.

The Kurdish issue had played a big role in foreign policies of countries in the region, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Russia especially since the first Gulf War. The consequences of the collapse of the Soviet Union, of the Gulf War and the subsequent escalation of the activities of the Kurdish separatist movements in Turkey, in Iraq, and in Europe had changed the domestic and foreign policies of those countries substantially. On one hand, the Turkish State had been fighting with the terrorist organization, the PKK, since 1984. Turkey undertook a more aggressive policy with respect to northern Iraq, where the PKK had maintained bases and prepared attacks, often with the help of at least one of the two Iraqi Kurdish Groups dominant in the region, the Kurdistan Democrat Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). With the emerging divisions among the Kurds of northern Iraq, Turkey had increasingly relied on Barzani's faction, the KDP, whose territory was adjacent the Turkish frontier, to contain PKK activities.

On the other hand the autonomous Kurdish state was established in northern Iraq in 1992, but it collapsed after 1994 and caused rivalry between the Kurdish factions. The PUK and KDP had controlled northern Iraq de facto since the Gulf war. But a power-sharing agreement between them fell apart in 1994,

leading to fighting in which at various times they aligned themselves with Tehran, Baghdad or Ankara.

The overall question which this article tries to answer is how Kurdish issue had shaped and changed the international system in the Middle East especially since the first Gulf War. International system is defined in this article as the sovereign state structure of the Middle East. Therefore, the puzzling question in this case was why Turkey intervened the situation in northern Iraq. Although Turkey did not want a Kurdish state in the area, considering a fraction, the KDP, as partner, would have legitimized the fraction as sovereign in the region.

Another puzzle was that despite the U.S support for Turkey against the PKK, the relationship was troubled by the different position of Turkey and the U.S. toward northern Iraq. Turkey claimed that a Kurdish state in northern Iraq was acquiring attributes that potentially influence Kurds living in Turkey. This represented a clash between the interests of a middle-level power and hegemon. The concept "hegemonical system" is used in this article. In such a system, according to Adam Watson,

"Some power or authority in a system is able to "lay down the law" about the operation of the system, which is to determine to some extent the external relations between member states, while leaving them domestically independent." (Watson, 1992, p.15). This concept of hegemony is related to, but slightly different from, the more economic one of 'hegemonic stability' theory, such as in Keohane (1984), or Gilpin (1987, pp. 72-80, 85-92.)

This paper is not interested in the birth and formation of the Kurdish issue. The question goes as far as late nineteenth century. Instead, it analyzes the situation of the issue during the 1990s, the actors involved the question in the area, and their interaction with reference to past if it is necessary. First, I

build up a theory that can explain the situation during the 1990s and lay out the hypotheses. Second, I give brief historical summary of the Kurdish issue. Third, I test hypotheses by looking at the interaction of the actors.

The Theory of the Success of Ethnic Revolt

The irony is that despite the increasing role of ethnicity in international realm, the major schools of the international relations theory have not studied the issue thoroughly. The study of ethnic conflict has been alien to study of international relations. If they do, they usually treat ethnic conflict as epiphenomenon, that is, a by-product of the interaction between state building and anarchy (Stack, 1997, p.11).

How can we explain the situation stemming from the Kurdish question in the Middle East during the 1990s? Which theory can help us to understand the developments that have been occurring especially since the first Gulf War? In this section, I will analyze the neo-realist and neoliberal theories to the extent that they try to explain the Kurdish issue. Carment and James claim that general theories of conflict, including those derived from realism and neoliberalism, do not explain the interstate dimensions of ethnic conflict. "Orientation toward systems and states, as level and unit of analysis respectively, discouraged the exploration of domestically generated ethnic conflict." (Carment & James, 1997, p.196).

The neorealist paradigm failed to explain the phenomena. First of all, as the dominant approach of the post-war era, realism hardly considered ethnicity. Ethnicity has no real place among studies of the great powers or of the global balance of power. Second, neorealist paradigm assumes that the actors are rational. This is not true when it comes to the behavior of states. The actors behave sometimes irrationally because of the complex and historical base of nationality.

Third, realist paradigm takes the states as unitary actors. As we see in this case, the rival groups, the KDP and the PUK are not states in northern Iraq, nor the PKK.

Neoliberal paradigm is capable of explaining the interaction between regional states to some degrees. The states cooperate because of a common fear of balkanization. For example, Turkey and Iran, and Turkey and Russia have cooperated regarding the Kurdish issue. But neoliberalism is insufficient to explain the phenomenon as a whole. The advocates of neoliberal school argue that because of the vulnerability to internal turmoil, along with weakness in general, the states are reluctant to support changing boundaries. The hypothesis of neoliberal theory that the weak states do not interfere ethnic strife elsewhere does not hold in empirical world. "This view tends to underestimate the importance of domestic politics in relation to transnational ethnic affinities. For states experiencing ethnic strife and resultant disorder at home, foreign policy becomes an extension of domestic needs. In other instances, intervention in a weak, deeply divided state may arise out of opportunism, as implied by political realism." (Carment & James, 1997, p. 198). Turkish intervention to northern Iraq falsifies the neoliberal explanation. A third paradigm, world system theory, does not consider military and geopolitical dimensions of ethnic conflict. "It concentrates instead on the way that economic dependence engenders competition among ethnic groups within developing societies. World system theory emphasizes class as the central cleavage and source of ethnic conflict within and across states and excludes military and geopolitical competition." (Carment & James, 1997, p.196).

Change in the International system → creates opportunity for ethnic groups → escalates ethnic conflicts → escalation of interstate conflict **1** → support for ethnic group by hegemon → success → new international subsystem **2** → nonsupport by hegemon **A** → ethnic group is crushed → return to old subsystem **B** → ineffective state cannot crush ethnic group **a** → unity in ethnic group → autonomy **b** → rival in ethnic group → anarchy

Figure 1. *The model for the success of ethnic conflict*

Since no single theory alone can explain the puzzles of Kurdish question, there is a need to combine theories to explain the complex phenomena. This paper attempts to introduce general theory of the success of ethnic revolt as seen in Figure 1. The theory takes the change in the International system as starting point. There is relative agreement among the scholars that changes in the international system affect domestic policies. As Kellas (1991) argues, international circumstances have a strong effect on nationalism within states. The international system is defined in this paper as the balance of power among states. The change can occur in several ways, e.g. the collapse of block of states, war, disintegration of states, or economic crisis. In this paper, these changes were the end of the Cold war, and the Gulf War.

This paper assumes that ethnic conflict is present in a country prior to the changes in the international system, but it is either repressed or not visible. All three countries, Turkey, Iraq, and Iran that have substantial Kurdish population have experienced revolts of Kurds and crushed them several times in their history. The changes in international system have given Kurds, especially Iraqi Kurds, a chance for independence. This escalates ethnic conflicts inside country as happened in Iraq and Turkey. Both the state-centered and

secessionist groups can be expected to seek and obtain external support. These developments, at the same time, escalate the interstate conflict because the other states in the system either want to take advantage of the conflict or cannot avoid it because of similar ethnic issues. Interstate conflicts in this case were between Turkey-Iraq, Turkey Syria, Turkey-Russia, Turkey-Iran. This part of the theory tests Carment & James' hypotheses.

	dominant	mixed
low institutional constraints	Ia Maximum	Ib Moderate
high institutional constraints	IIa Moderate	IIb Minimum

Figure 2. *Ethnic Group win-sets based on interaction effects*

The Figure 2 presents variations in win-sets based on interaction effects. When leaders can improve standing in their group without depending on others, that ethnic group is said to be "dominant" within the state. "Institutional constraint" means that the leaders are limited and decision-making mechanism is regulated. The win-set is minimal for high-constraint, ethnically diverse states, and maximal for low-constraints, ethnically dominant states (Carment & James, 1997, p. 201-3). In case where constraints are low, first stage win-sets are large because eschewing involvement is not costly. Elites in Type Ia cases are constrained, however, at the international level. Involuntary defection is under control because domestic political outcomes are under control. In Type Ib cases, if the military is of a different group from the majority or the elite represents more than one ethnic group, and then it is normally impolitic to pursue a confrontational, ethnic foreign policy. The exception occurs when both international and domestic benefits can be expected. If there is no risk of domestic revolt, an ethnic foreign policy is more likely (Carment & James,

1997, p. 205). For low-constraint states, international opportunities are more important than the domestic ones.

Type IIa cases (high-constraint state-dominant ethnic group), the elite is very sensitive to masses because replacement is quite possible. Elite does not lead; leaders may follow expensive foreign policy (Putnam, 1988). In type IIb (high-constraint state-ethnically diverse) cases, an ethnic foreign policy will be unlikely if and only if leaders can withstand the pressure of outbidding. The size of the stage one win-set will be the minimum among the four types. Multiparty systems should facilitate involvement in ethnic strife. To maintain support, leaders may strive to represent a single ethnic group (Horowitz, 1985).

Ethnic linkage with a group in another state does not guarantee mutual interest. When affinity in terms of language, race, and religion exists inside an ethnic group in two or more states, the anticipated connection is stronger, and it is more likely that an ethnic group will seek external support. If affinities do not converge, then the state is less likely to pursue an ethnically oriented foreign policy (Carment & James, 1997, p. 211-2). Since there is not much affinity between Syria and Kurds and between European states and Kurds, these states have involved the Kurdish issue as long as they benefit from it.

The important turning point in the process is whether the hegemon supports a specific ethnic group or not. If the hegemon supports the ethnic group, the revolt is more likely to become successful and the new international subsystem emerges. In this case, if the US had favored the Kurds, an independent Kurdish state would have been created in 1990s. The support of hegemon for ethnic group depends on several things: First, if the expected relative gains of hegemon for independence of ethnic group exceed its gains relative to status quo, the hegemon is likely to support the ethnic group. The second, if the hegemon shares the same ideology with the state, it is less likely

to support the ethnic group. In this case, the U.S did not continue to support PKK because of the long lasting alliance between the US and Turkey.

If the hegemon does not support the ethnic group, there are two possible outcomes: First, the ethnic group is crushed by sovereign state and return to old sub system, which is the status quo. In this case, the arrest of Öcalan by the help of the CIA strengthened the Turkish state. The second outcome is that the ethnic group cannot be crushed due to the ineffectiveness of state. Iraq was very limited in her sovereignty over northern Iraq. When a non-sovereign state is not able to crush the opposition, there are also two possible outcomes: First, if there is unity among ethnic group, it is likely to keep its gains. If the Kurdish groups had kept their unity, autonomous Kurdish state in northern Iraq would have continued. Second, if there is rivalry between the elites of the ethnic group anarchy and civil war is likely the outcome. The rivalry between the PUK and the KDP during the 1990s in northern Iraq supports this point. After the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, these two Kurdish factions in Iraq managed to unify and gained de facto statehood in Iraq independent from central government.

Background of the Kurdish Issue

The Kurds are estimated to number some 20-25 million living largely in four Middle East countries: Turkey, with 10-12 million; Iran, with 5-6 million; Iraq, with 3.5 million and Syria, with 1 million. This sense of identity was reinforced by the growing sense of nationalism during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The Kurds have lived under Iranian and Ottoman empires that dominated the region's history right up to the collapse and partition of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I. The Kurds were last group to develop sense of nationalism among the ethnics of Ottoman state and stayed with it even after the World War I. The Kurds, however, were promised the

possibility of an independent state in articles 62 and 64 of the Treaty of Sevres, signed on August 10, 1920. But Kurdish state was not established. The main reason for this was the emergence of a strong Turkish nationalist state in the aftermath of the war and the subsequent suppression of Kurdish nationalist revolts in 1925, 1930 and 1937-38. There was not to be another Kurdish nationalist challenge to the Turkish rule until the emergence of the PKK in the early 1980s and especially after the Gulf War. By 1987, the PKK had become a formidable guerrilla organization that was beginning to preoccupy Ankara's domestic and foreign policies. The death toll has reached 35.000 by 1998 since the uprising of the PKK in 1984.

The Kurdish movement in Iran was also contained by a strong nationalist government in Iran during the inter-war and post-World-War-II periods. The one exception was the brief year in 1946, when the Kurds were able to establish a nationalist government in Mahabad before it fell to the victim of the emerging Cold War. It was only with the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 and during the 1980s that the Kurds in Iran were once again able to press vigorously their demands for more cultural and political autonomy.

The Iraqi Kurds' situation was substantially different from that of the Kurds in Turkey or Iran because Britain, which became the mandatory power in Iraq in 1920, supported, in varying degrees, Kurdish nationalist demands for cultural rights and local administrative autonomy. The British never advocated or supported an independent state in Iraq during the period (1920-58) when they were in control of the country. The British supported cultural and some limited political autonomy for the Kurds in Iraq mainly as a counterpoise to Arab nationalism and to the largely Sunni Arab government in Baghdad. Ever since the British were expelled from Iraq in 1958, the Kurds in the north and the Iraqi government have been intermittently at war.

It was only in the wake of the 1991 Gulf War that the Kurds in Iraq seemed to have gained an opportunity to establish an independent state or, at least, an autonomous entity federated with the rest of Iraq, as a result of Allied (U.S. and European) policies aimed at defeating Saddam Hussein. The Allied forces supported a Kurdish insurrection against his regime. Its defeat and the subsequent flight of the Kurds to the mountainous regions bordering Iran and, especially, Turkey created further support in the West for some kind of sanctuary for the Kurds in northern Iraq.

The Change in the International System

With the end of the Cold War and the Gulf War, the 1990's witnessed various ethnic groups that pushed for independence. Beginning in the former Soviet republics and the Eastern European states, this domino effect had gained momentum virtually throughout the world. For the Kurdish case, the 1990's seemed to be important in the sense that the 'Kurdish Question' became internationally important with the revolt of Kurds against Saddam regime in Iraq and the peshmerga migration to Turkey after the 1991 Gulf War. Most of the books on the 'Kurdish issue' thus during this period, were mostly exclusively concentrated on the specific conditions of the 1990's (Ciment, 1996), (Gunter, 1997), (Olson, 1996). These two specific conditions of the 1990's - the consequences of the fall of the Soviet Union and the Gulf War- raises two sets of research interest in the Kurdish issue.

The End of the Cold War

The Kurdish issue became more visible especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The fall of the USSR was an 'awakening force'. As Barkey (1996) argued that the transformation of international political balances after the

aftermath of the Soviet Union's collapse has reignited some of the long-dormant ethnic tensions around the globe. Iraq and Turkey were not exceptions.

On the other hand, the 1990's brought about opportunities to help the Kurds to express their dissatisfaction as well as their request for broader participation. One of these opportunities was the establishment of the pro-Kurdish political party in Turkey, in a more democratic environment. The other was the so called the 'domino effect of nationalist disintegration.' In the post-Cold era many new entities joined to the global system. According to Lind (1994), Kurds were among these ethnic groups who recognized the fact that if the world survived the rapid expansion of the number of UN member states from 52 in 1946 to 183 in 1994, surely it can survive a more incremental expansion by a dozen or two more.

The First Gulf War in 1991

The second change in international system that affected Kurdish nationalism of the 1990's is the Gulf War. The mass migration of Iraqi Kurds who were fleeing away from the wrath of Saddam helped internationalize the Kurdish issue. Pressed between Turkey, Iran, and Iraq, the Kurds taught the world that unless ethnic groups are not protected they are subject to discrimination, forced migration, and oppression. The Gulf War not only led to the growth of the Kurdish population within Turkey, but also caused a vacuum of authority in Northern Iraq. The absence of authority coupled with the diminishing Soviet threat after the end of the Cold War increased the priority of such separatist Kurdish groups in Northern Iraq and Turkey.

Effects on the Kurds of Turkey

The Gulf War, as an international factor that shaped the contemporary Kurdish issue, had tremendous impact on the Turkish domestic policy. The Gulf War gave Kurdish separatists and nationalists a new opportunity. The Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) intensified its violent struggle and terror in Turkey. Many authors who have a scholarly interest in Turkey's Kurdish issue agree that the 1990's "are a period when the Kurdish nationalist movement has mounted its biggest challenge to the Turkish state in the twentieth century." (Olson, 1996, p.2). On the one hand, the Turkish government responded with repression. Kurdish terrorist attacks and tribal and factional strife, relocation of Kurdish and military attacks on Kurdish bases in Iraq have escalated into an all-out war. On the other hand, this period opened the way for more liberal policies that brought more cultural autonomy to the Kurds of Turkey. Gunter (1996, p.62) argues that for the Turkish government, "the PKK insurgency itself, the 1991 Gulf War and the ensuing mass exodus of the Iraqi Kurds from the wrath of Saddam acted as a catalysts to" this new policy mentality.

The Iraqi exodus signaled that Turkey should prevent its Kurdish minority from cooperating with their fellow ethnics in Iraq. Turkey also wanted to use the occasion to be in a controlling position of the regions, while at the same time, to get the sympathy of the West for being the caretaker of the Iraqi Kurds. This intention of the Turkish state resulted in "contradictory policies" on the side of the Turkish government that is recognizing the autonomy of the Kurds in Iraq while denying the same to its own Kurds. Moreover, in the Turkish case, even though the policies of Özal meant the liberalization of the environment, it never meant the disappearance of the overlord. In fact Özal's liberal policies were followed by a new state of emergency in the Kurdish-populated South-East Anatolia.

Escalation of Interstate Conflicts

During the 1990s, Turkey's relations with its neighbors and with the world have mostly been determined by the PKK terrorism. With the weakening of Iraq and the creation of a partially protected Kurdish zone in the north, the PKK has made Iraq a main base of operations against Turkey. Turkey and Iran have virtually partitioned northern Iraq into respective spheres of influence. Turkey supported the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Iran supported the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). The Kurdish factions fought with each other. Turkish forces had entered northern Iraq several times to try to crush the PKK with local support from the KDP, while Syria backed the PKK. The intra-Kurdish fighting allowed Iraq to reestablish its influence in the northern Kurdish zone and undermined the American effort to create a Kurdish zone independent of Saddam Hussein. Turkey's relations with Syria were strained by Syrian support for the PKK and by boundary disputes. Turkey implied to divert the Euphrates water supply and developed ties with Israel to forestall Syrian support for the Kurds. Turkey's relations with Russia are also constrained by the Kurdish issue. Russia sponsors conferences of exiled Kurds as a warning against Turkish intervention in Chechnya and the former Soviet republics.

Turkish repression of the Kurds had important political consequences in Europe as well. Although Turkey was a member of the European Customs Union, and 52 percent of Turkish exports and 44 percent of its imports linked it to the European Union, Turkey had been refused to full membership in the EU. Although the United Kingdom tended to overlook Turkish policy toward the Kurds, other European governments often criticized Turkey's undemocratic constitution and so-called human rights abuses. Greece especially resisted Turkish participation, and Germany feared opening up to Turkish labor migration. There might have also been an unspoken reluctance to accept a

Muslim country as part of Europe. The Turkish modernist dream of integration into Europe was thwarted by its responses to the Kurdish issue (Lapidus, 1998). In the following sections I look at the escalation and termination of the conflict- if it is terminated- in the light of the theory and how the PKK terror shaped Turkey's relations with its neighbors. Turkey was a **Iib** type of state in their classification considering win-sets because of multi-ethnic structure and democracy.

Turkey- Syria Relations

The emergence of Kurdish issue in Turkey and the intention of the Kurds to create an independent state in northern Iraq caused Turkey and Syria to conclude a series of national security agreements. But all failed because of Syrian defection with the hope of solving the water issue. Only the imminent threat of using force led Syria to give up its support for Kurdish terrorist organization, PKK.

The theory explains well the way Syria has acted in the Kurdish issue. Syria is a **Ia** country according to the theory. As explained in the theory section, this kind of state has a dominant ethnic group and low institutional constraints. It fits the description of Carment and James; "States dominated by a single ethnic group produce redistributed policies that aim to enhance the position of one faction at the expense of the others." (Carment & James, p 201). Syrian state was dominantly Arab and was single-handedly governed by Asad who depended on small Alleviate elite. This meant that there were few constraints on Syrian leader on the Kurdish Issue. Syrian first stage win-sets were large. He was constrained only at the international level, pressure from the Turkey, Israel, and the US. He had a full support from Arab league on the Kurdish issue. Therefore, Asad used his PKK card to force Turks to give concessions on the

water and border issues. Since there were no ethnic affinities between Syrians and Kurds, it was not costly for Asad to give up his support for the PKK in the face of the possibility of war.

Until the First Gulf War, Turkey-Syrian relations had been dominated by three major concerns. The first one was that Syria did not accept the Turkey's 1939 annexation of Alexandratta (Hatay). The second major problem between the two countries was the already growing concern over the distribution of the down flow of the Euphrates from Turkey to Syria. The differences over water grew in the 1970s and 1980s as Turkey continued to build a series of dams and irrigation projects, which was called the Southeastern Anatolia Project. During the construction of the dams, Turkey generally kept the down flow of the Euphrates to Syria at around 500 cubic meters (cm) per second, except during periods when it was filling the dams' reservoirs. During such times, tension generally rose between the two capitals (Olson, 1997, p.10).

The third major problem in the late 1960s and 1970s was Syria's policy of granting asylum to Kurdish and Armenian terrorist groups (Bölükbaşı, 1991). In 1980 Syria gave sanctuary to Abdullah Öcalan, leader of the PKK. This development had continued to dominate relations between the two countries right up to the October 1998. Because of its grievances over Hatay, the water question, and probably because of some intelligence cooperation between Turkey and Israel, Syria decided to shelter and supported the PKK (İmset, 1992). The situation had become serious enough that Turkey and Syria signed a security protocol to solve the problems between two countries. In 1987 Prime Minister Turgut Özal himself went to Damascus to conduct the negotiations. The 1987 protocol, however, resulted only in a temporary alleviation of differences. Syria continued to aid PKK activities right up to the Gulf War in 1991, and Turkey continued to restrict the down flow of the Euphrates (İmset, p, 174- 178).

During the Gulf War, Turkey and Syria were allied temporarily in the U.S.-led coalition against Iraq. This alliance, however, did nothing to resolve the differences between them concerning the PKK and water. But the Gulf War provided the environment for another security protocol between the two capitals. The April 1992 security agreement defused the tension between the two countries but was short-lived. After a brief respite, PKK activities emanating from Syria resumed with attacks on targets in Turkey. Damascus could not give up the Kurdish card, and Ankara continued to play the water card. Syria had to give up her Kurdish card when an international result of her act was costly. The odyssey that culminated in Ocalan's capture was still somewhat obscure but this much seemed clear: after Turkey threatened to go to war with Syria last October, PKK bases in that country were finally closed and Öcalan was expelled.

Turkey-Russia Relations

Russia is a **Ib** type country according to the theoretical analysis. Russia is one of the ethnically diverse countries in the region and the institutional constraints are low due to the weakness of institutions in transition period. In these types of cases, the country does not follow ethnic foreign policy except when both international and domestic benefits can be expected. The first stage win-sets of these types of countries are moderate. The only benefit for Russia would have been to convince Turkey not to support Turkic and Muslim population in Caucasus. Turkish leaders had strong domestic pressure to support the Turkic and Muslim people of Russia because Turkey has substantial voters of Caucasian decent who care great deal about their ethnics. So Russia supported the PKK to prevent this, and became successful. Since, as in the

Syrian case, there was no affinity between Russians and Kurds, thus it was easy for Russian leaders to give up their Kurdish card.

There was no doubt that the challenge of the PKK and of the Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkey had restricted severely Turkey's ability to play a strong role, even diplomatically in the Balkans,(especially in the Bosnian conflict) in Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Turkey wished to reduce Russian military and political presence in the Caucasus and in Central Asia and Azerbaijan. The great challenge of the PKK and Kurdish nationalism and the costs of suppressing them greatly affected Turkish relations with Russia. Russian leaders were acutely aware of the fear of Turkish officials that Russia would have recognized the Kurdish Parliament in Exile (KPE) and allow Kurdish nationalists to establish offices in Moscow and other cities of the CIS. Russian recognition of the KPE would have opened the floodgates to a number of other countries, especially in Europe, to recognize the KPE. As of the summer of 1995, only the Netherlands had recognized it. If, in the wake of Russian recognition of the KPE, other European countries had followed the suit, the whole spectrum of Turkey's complex relations with Europe would have been further complicated. Turkey wanted to avoid this occurrence at all costs. The quid pro quo of Russian non-recognition of the Kurdish Parliament in Exile was Turkish non-interference in Russia's war against Chechnya.

Chechnya's Declaration of Independence in autumn of 1991 provided an excellent opportunity for Turkey to lessen the presence and authority of Russia in the Caucasus, but it was unable to take advantage of it because of its war against the PKK and Kurdish secessionist movements and their challenge to the Turkish state. At the end of 1995, Russia was able to use the "Kurdish card" much more effectively against Turkey than Turkey was able to use the "Chechen card" against Russia (Olson, 1996b). Russia gave up using its

Kurdish card against Turkey and refused to give asylum to the PKK leader, Öcalan, when he was forced to leave Syria. He went to Russia, but the Russian officials told him that he could not stay in Russia.

Turkey-Iran Relations

Iran can be considered a **IIB** type of case in terms of win-sets. Iran had substantial Kurdish and Turkic population and institutionally was quite constrained because of the relatively free elections. Between 5 and 6 million Kurds lived in Iran, accounting for close to 10 percent of the population (Hassanpour, 1994). Turkey-Iranian relations have improved overall since the First Gulf War in 1991. Their shared preferences against the growth and spread of Kurdish nationalism have been important factor in their relations despite ideological and strategic differences about the Caucasus and Central Asia. As a result, several national security agreements were signed not to support each other's terrorist groups, the PKK and Mujahidin-i- Halq, after the Gulf War.

Since both countries have Kurdish issues, an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq would have been a disaster and challenge to both states. The lack of sovereignty in northern Iraq led this two states compete for influence. Two largest Kurdish nationalist groups, the KDP and the PKU, respectively, drew closer to Turkey and Iran as the result of their internecine fighting (Olson, 1996c). Concerning close relations between the KDP and Turkey and existence of Turkish troops in the KDP control territory, the PUK invited some Iranian troops to area under its control.

The United States' Kurdish Policy

The confusion of American purposes and methods contributed to create the chaotic situation in northern Iraq. During Operation Provide Comfort, the

U.S. helped out the Kurds in Iraq, but did not support the PKK in Turkey. The reason for this was that Turkey is a NATO ally, while Iraq was one of the US's worst enemies. By helping out the Kurds, the United States would have been sided with enemies of Turkey, which could have created problems that the U.S. government did not want to deal with. This type of situation did not exist in Iraq, however, since the U.S. was not on friendly terms with Hussein's regime. The Clinton administration identified Turkey as the new "front-line state" in global conflict. It was the major crossroads of the religious, social and nationalist fractures of new-era politics, and gateway to the oil fields of Central Asia, Iraq and the Persian Gulf. Turkey counts (Hoagland, 1997).

As far as the United States was concerned, Kurdistan probably should not exist. The US officials realized that there is no way to make the Kurds strong enough to threaten Saddam without rekindling Kurdish interest in independence, something that would be unacceptable to Turkey and to many of the US's Arab friends. The U.S. policy was to help the Kurds enough to keep Saddam down. Official American money intended to finance peacekeeping had been flowing to the PUK and its opponents the KDP, led by Massoud Barzani, who allied himself with the Baghdad regime of Saddam Hussein. This policy encouraged the Kurds to act against Saddam and against each other at the same time which left them vulnerable to central government forces.

The US government had supported Iraq's territorial integrity during the 1990s even though Iraq's break-up would have probably eliminated Saddam and the threat posed by a rogue Iraq. Splitting Iraq would have stimulated all sorts of fighting among Iraqis, between Iraqis and their neighbors, and among those neighbors. All this upset would have benefited Iran, which could have then emerged as the single strongest local state. (Naas, 1997)

The Turks were tired of the vacuum that the United States let develop in northern Iraq, a U.S. protectorate after the Gulf War. They were also understandably upset about the heavy financial sacrifices the long U.S.-led economic blockade on Saddam had imposed on them. Frustrated and confused about U.S. goals, the Turks followed policies that resulted in both Kurdish groups reconciling with Saddam, who resumed operational control of the north (Hoagland, 1997).

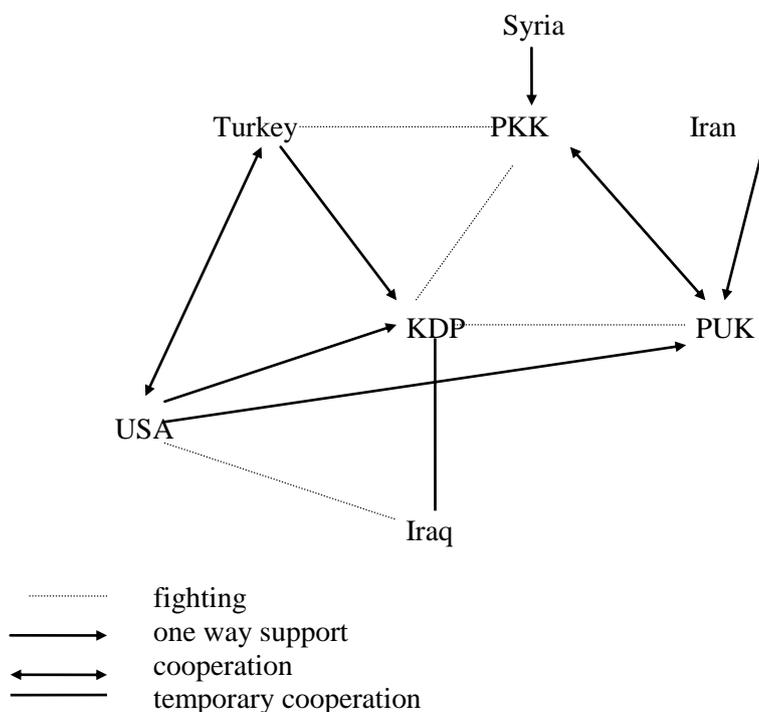


Figure 3. *Relations between States and Groups during the 1990s.*

Inter-Kurdish Group Rivalry: KDP-PKU-PKK struggle

The Kurds controlled northern Iraq since shortly after the Persian Gulf

War in 1991 but the region was split into two rival zones. The PUK clashed with rivals from the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in December 1994. There were several reasons: First, they were unable to reach agreement as to the distribution of the power and attempting to consolidate their respective political and territorial positions before the UN-proposed elections in the spring or early summer of 1995. By March 1995, the KDP pushed the PUK almost completely to the south of 36th parallel.

The second reason for the clash between the KDP and the PKU was that they hold different views on how to deal with the conflicts. The KDP, led by Masoud Barzani, sought limited political autonomy within Iraq. Interestingly, many Kurds would have accepted being a state of Iraq, holding some autonomy, provided that Hussein was removed from power, a democracy was installed, and the Kurds were treated as equals. This meant that some of the Kurds did not believe it is absolutely necessary that they had their own state, only that they were recognized as equals by the Iraqi government. On the other hand, Jalal Talabani's PUK said that the Kurds should hold out for more political concessions from Iraq. It was possible that they would try to use guerrilla warfare tactics to frighten the Iraqi army into meeting its demands.

The Turkish government was no longer neutral in the intra-Kurdish conflict. It began to support and cooperated with the KDP to fight with the PKK because of the KDP control the Iraqi-Turkish border. The PKK attacked the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) in northern Iraq on August 25, 1995, as a result of its unhappiness with the results of the first Drogheda (Dublin) conference and because of its cooperation with the Turkish government. The KDP accused Talabani of getting support from the PKK (US mulls aid for Iraqi Kurds, 1997).

Meanwhile, Turkish sources in Ankara said that Turkish military units, which planned to withdraw from the northern Iraq, decided to stay there in order

to assist Barzani's forces. Talebani's PUK forces, which pledged to keep fighting till Barzani was subdued, were supported by Iran. (Fierce fighting between Kurd factions despite US, British, and Turkish efforts, 1997). Since the end of the First Gulf War in 1991, Baghdad was more inclined to support the PUK of Jalal Talabani than Massud Barzani's KDP because of the latter's close relations with Turkey. But the possibility of extending an Iraqi presence through agreement with the KDP would fulfill Baghdad's objective of reasserting its presence in northern Iraq.

Conclusion

This paper tried to explain how the Kurdish issue shaped the international subsystem in the Middle East during the 1990s. I proposed a theory of the success of the ethnic revolts, and applied to the Kurdish question. The change in the international system (the end of Cold war, the Gulf War) has created opportunity for ethnic groups (Kurds in Iraq and Turkey) to become independent. This has created power vacuum and disorder in Iraq and Turkey. This also escalated the interstate conflicts in the region between Turkey and Iraq, Turkey and Syria, Turkey and Russia, and Turkey and Iran.

I argued that the support for ethnic group by a hegemon was necessary for the success of the ethnic revolt. Had this happened, the new international subsystem would have emerged (if the US had favored for the Kurdish state). If the hegemon does not support (because the US is ally of Turkey), there are two possible outcomes: Either ethnic group is crushed by state and return to old sub system (in Turkey, arrest of Ocalan by the help of the US). This, however, does not mean the problem is solved. If ineffective state is not able to crush the revolt, as in Iraq's lack of sovereignty over northern Iraq, there are also two possible outcomes. If ethnic group can maintain the unity, it will keep the gains

(if Kurdish groups had kept their unity , autonomous Kurdish state would have continued in the northern Iraq). Otherwise anarchy and civil war (situation in the northern Iraq in1990s). Without the support of a large powerful nation such as the U.S., the Kurds will probably never establish an independent Kurdish state. The Kurds do not have enough military power to fight off the Turks and Iraqis without help. The Iraqis and Turks would not be willing to give up their economically important territory to Kurds.

Bibliography

- Aybet, G.(1994). *Turkey's Foreign Policy and Its Implications for the West: a Turkish Perspective*, London: Royal United Services Institute for Defense Studies.
- Bölükbaşı, S. (1991). "Ankara, Damascus, Baghdad, and the Regionalization of Turkey's Kurdish Succession," *Journal of South Asian and Middle East Studies*, v.14, no.4, pp. 15-36.
- Barkey, H. J. (1996). "Under the Gun: Turkish Foreign Policy and the Kurdish Question" in Robert
- Olson, ed. *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement in the 1990s: Its Impact on Turkey and the Middle East*. Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky.
- Carment, D., P. James. Eds.(1997), *Wars in the Midst of Peace: The International Politics of Ethnic Conflict* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh,.
- Ciment, J.(1996). *The Kurds: State and Minority in Iraq and Iran*. New York: Facts on File, Inc.
- “Fierce Fighting Between Kurd Factions Despite US, British, And Turkish Efforts” (1997, October 16) *ArabicNews.com*.
- Gilpin, R. (1987). *The Political Economy of International Relations*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press,

- Gunter, M. M.(1997). *The Kurds and the Future of Turkey*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Hassanpour, A.(1994). "The Kurdish Experience" *Middle East Report*. Vol.24, No.4. pp. 2-7, 23.
- Horowitz, D. (1985). *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkley: University of California Press.
- Hoagland, J. (1997). "Before Turkey Joins Europe" *The Washington Post*, Nov. 2.
- Ismet G. I.(1992). *The PKK: A Report on Separatist Violence in Turkey (1973-1992)* Ankara: The Turkish Daily News Publications,
- Kellas, J. G. (1991). *The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Keohane, R. O. (1984). *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Lapidus, I. M.(1998). "The Kurdish Nationalist Movement in the 1990s" *ORBIS*, v.42 n.4, p.619(13)
- Lind, M. (1994). "In Defense of Liberal Nationalism", *Foreign Affairs*, v. 73, n. 3, pp. 87-99.
- Mcdowall, D. (1992). *The Kurds: a Nation Denied*. London: Minority Rights Group.
- Haass, R. N. (1997).*The United States and Iraq: A Strategy for the Long Haul*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institute Press .
- O'balance, E. (1996). *The Kurdish Struggle, 1920-94*, Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's Press,
- Olson, R., ed. (1996a). *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement in the 1990s: Its Impact on Turkey and the Middle East*. Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky.

- Olson, R (1996b). "The Kurdish question and Chechnya: Turkish and Russian Foreign Policies since the Gulf War" *Middle East Policy*, March 1996 v.4 n.3 p.106(13)
- Olson, R (1996c). "The Kurdish Question and Turkey's Foreign Policy toward Syria, Iran, Russia, and Iraq since the Gulf War". Robert Olson, ed. *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement in the 1990s: Its Impact on Turkey and the Middle East*. Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky.
- Olson,R. (1997). "Turkey-Syria Relations Since the Gulf War: Kurds and Water." *Middle East Policy*, v.5 n.2, p.168(26).
- Putnam, R. D.(1988). "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The logic of Two-Level Games." *International Organization*, 42: 426-60.
- Stack, J. F. Jr.(1997). "The Ethnic Challenge to International Relations Theory" in *Wars in the Midst of Peace*. Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press.
- "US mulls aid for Iraqi Kurds" (1997, June 30) *ArabicNews.com*
- Watson, A.(1992). *The Evolution of International Society: A Comparative Historical Analysis*. London: Routledge.
- Yassin, B. A. (1995). *Vision or Reality? : The Kurds in the Policy of the Great Power*. Lund, Sweden : Lund University Press.