OPERATION PROVIDE COMFORT: ORIGINS AND OBJECTIVES

Yrd. Doç.Dr. Ramazan GÖZEN*

The presence in Turkey of foreign forces (American, British, and French) deployed under the code-name of Operation Provide Comfort [OPC] has been a thorny issue not only for Turkish domestic politics but also for Turkish foreign policy. As far as the domestic politics is concerned, it caused acute divisions and crises within the coalition governments at least during the debates in Turkish Grand National Assembly [TGNA]. Similarly, it caused some disputes and tensions in Turkey's relations with its neighbours, particularly Iraq. Another problem is the duration of the OPC forces in Turkey. When they were first deployed in northern Iraq and later moved to Turkey after the 1990-1991 Gulf war to end the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, they were supposed to stay "temporarily" until September 30, 1991.[1] But TGNA has extended their stay several times since December 1991, thus making it a routine issue.

Despite their wide implications on Turkey's domestic and foreign politics because of their long stay, the deployment of these forces in Turkey has not been discussed much enough, except for the debates in TGNA at the time of the extension of their stay. Even they have not been extensive and intensive. Some sections of the Turkish society have criticised their role in Turkey and in the region. But all these criticisms remained as temporal reactions, and evaporated after the extension by TGNA.[2]

The views about their presence in Turkey can be clustered into two extreme groups. Some questioned their role in Turkey and the region in general. They disputed the objective of the OPC forces in Turkey due to their alleged abuse of Turkey's national interests. In their opinion, the OPC forces were helping the Kurds to set up a Kurdish state in the region, and thus threatening Turkey's national and territorial integrity. They also argued that in order to achieve this objective the forces were giving logistic and

---

*Head of International Relations Department of Kırıkkale University.

[1] Foreign Minister Sefa Giray's statement, **Milliyet**, 13 July 1991; and Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz's statement, **Milliyet**, 19 July 1991; and **Cumhuriyet**, 19 July 1991.

[2] A significant exception to this argument is the recently published book of Baskın Oran, **"Kalkık Horoz": Çekiç Güç ve Kürt Devleti** (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1996). The book appeared in the market after this study had been submitted to this journal.

intelligence support to the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK). Therefore, they demanded their removal from Turkey sooner than later.

On the other hand, others who supported their presence in Turkey argued that it was consistent with Turkey's national interests because of two reasons. Firstly, due to their presence in İncirlik, Turkey was able to influence United State's [US] decisions towards Turkey's fight against PKK terrorism. In other words, they contended, the US had supported Turkish policy against the PKK. As an evidence it was shown that the US was not critical of Turkey's "Steel Operation" in northern Iraq in March-April 1995. Secondly, they argued that if they were removed from Turkey, the Western countries could deploy them in an alternative place in the region. Then Turkey would have bigger problems because it would lose its leverage over the US decisions concerning the movement of the forces in northern Iraq.

It is ironic that there has not been consistency in the views of the protagonists in TGNA. During the debates in TGNA, every time the government's request to extend their stay in Turkey was accepted by a majority of the deputies of the ruling parties in TGNA. For example, deputies of Anavatan Party [ANAP], who had initially voted for their deployment, later voted against the extension of their stay in Turkey after it was relegated to the role of opposition. On the other hand, deputies of Social Democrat Party (SHP), now Republican Populist Party (CHP), who had opposed their deployment in Turkey in 1991, later voted in favour of their longer stay. These contradictory attitudes compound the ambiguities in the objective(s) of the OPC forces in Turkey.

As a result, there is a fundamental question as to whether the OPC forces have lost their original objective and whether their role has now been eroded after several changes in the global system, the regional politics, and in the countries concerned. To clarify the issue of the presence of the OPC forces in Turkey, this article will first look at the origins of Operation Provide Comfort, including its legality; and then its stated and actual objective(s).

ORIGINS OF OPERATION PROVIDE COMFORT

The Western idea of deploying a multinational force in Turkey is not new. Its intellectual origins can be traced back to the aftermath of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979. When the revolution in Iran caused serious turmoil in the Middle East, particularly in the oil-rich Persian Gulf, the Carter administration declared that the US would protect its "vital interests" in the Persian Gulf if necessary by force. Subsequently, the US administration, especially Defence Secretary Alexander Haig put forward the idea of Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) in order to protect US's "vital interests" in the region. RDF, masterminded by American strategist Albert Wholstetter, was mainly to protect the oil-rich sheikhdoms of the Persian Gulf from any hostile groups or states in the region.[3] However, the idea could not be realized during the 1980s due to some disagreements

[3]See Albert Wholstetter, "Meeting Threat in the Persian Gulf", **Survey**, Vol.25, No.2, 1980, pp.128-88 (esp. pp.161-168). See also Ramazan Gözen, **An Analysis of Turkey's Decision to Close the Oil Pipelines in the Gulf Crisis, 1990-1991: From Procrastination to Cooperation**, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Reading, March 1994, especially Chapter 6.

among NATO's European members, including Turkey and the USA, on NATO's out-of-area operations.[4] Furthermore, the deployment of such forces in Turkey would have been objected by the ex-Soviet Union and pro-Soviet countries and groups in the region. Yet, at the end of the Iran-Iraq war, the idea was still under consideration. It was reported that the deployment in southeastern Turkey of a rapid deployment force had been conceived during the negotiations to sign the Conventional Forces in Europe (the CFE) Treaty.[5] The objective of NATO's great powers was to fortify the region against unexpected instabilities, and to protect European and American interests in the Middle East, like in the case of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

The recent history of the deployment of the multinational force in Turkey can however be traced back to the latest Gulf war and ensuing developments in the region. From this point of view it is a by-product of the 1990-1991 Gulf war. It came into being after the refugee crisis at the end of the Gulf war between Iraq and the Gulf Coalition countries. After the end of the Iran-Iraq war in August 1988, it was discovered by the West that their actual enemy was not only Iran, but Iraq for two reasons: after the war, Iraq was left with an enormous military machine which had been supplied by the Western powers during the eight-year Iran-Iraq war. Worse, Iraq was now trying to improve its military arsenal with the acquisition of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. Indeed, this was a much more serious problem than Iraq having conventional weapons. The second problem which was closely connected with the first one was that Iraq had been pursuing an aggressive and revisionist foreign policy in the region. This fact was clearly proved by its invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990. Questions such as "why did Iraq invade Kuwait ?" and "would she invade another country in the region ?" will not be analyzed here.[6] However, it was clear that Iraq would remain in Kuwait if there was no opposition from the great powers. This position was a serious blow to the status quo in the region which would not be tolerated by regional and external countries.

The objectives laid down in the U.N. Security Council resolutions on Iraq were mostly achieved after the Gulf war: Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was ended and Kuwait's territorial integrity was restored. Iraq's military power and weapons were largely destroyed. At the end of the war, UN Security Council adopted Resolution 686 to cease the war and Resolution 687 to oblige Iraq with several responsibilities. The latter asked Iraq to "unconditionally accept the destruction, removal, or rendering harmless, under international supervision, of: all chemical and biological weapons and all stocks of agents and all related subsystems and components and all research, development, support and manufacturing facilities; all ballistic missiles with a range greater than 150 kilometres and related major parts, and repair and production facilities." Resolution 687 also asked Iraq "to submit to the Secretary-General...a declaration of the locations, amounts and types of all items specified [above] and to agree to urgent, on-site inspection

---

[4]On the disagreements between the Europeans and the USA see William B. Quandt, "The Western Alliance in the Middle East: Problems for US Foreign Policy", in Steven L. Spiegel (ed), **The Middle East and the Western Alliance** (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982).

[5]**Cumhuriyet**, 22 June 1991.

[6]On this issue see for example, Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, **The Gulf Conflict, 1990-1991** (London: Faber and Faber, 1993).

by the UN Special Commission...of Iraq's biological, chemical and missile capabilities."[7]

The most serious repercussion of the Gulf war was of course Baghdad's declining power and authority within its own country. Now Iraq was incapable of keeping law and order, especially in its northern and southern parts. This weakness was an opportunity for the anti-regime groups inside Iraq such as the Shias and the Kurds and for those countries which had imperialist objectives in Iraq.

Aware of Iraq's complex social structure and the magnitude of the dissidents in Iraq, the then US President Bush had called on, during the Gulf war, the Iraqi dissident groups "to take matters into their own hands to force Saddam Hussein, the dictator, to step aside..."[8] It was evident that the US President did not wish to put himself and his army into risk to disrupt Saddam Hussein regime but left it to the Iraqi groups inside Iraq. Soon after the Gulf war, the Shias in the south and the Kurds in the north revolted against Saddam Hussein's authority in Baghdad. The uprisings in March 1991 brought Iraq to the brink of total collapse and overthrow of Saddam's government. As the Shias in southern Iraq gained towns, Iranian leaders expressed their support to the rebels, and called on Saddam Hussein "[to] yield to the people's will, and step down".[9]

However, Saddam Hussein had still possessed enough military power to be able to crash these uprisings. Iraq's army had been defeated, but not destroyed altogether. And this remaining army crashed the revolting Shias in the south and the Kurds in the north. This resulted in a massive exodus towards the neighbouring countries, Turkey and Iran. Turkish-Iraqi border turned to a big "tent city" with half a million refugees.

The US President also failed to come to the help of the Iraqi groups against Baghdad's use of military power. Instead, it was announced on 27 March, 1991 that it had made "no promise to the Shias and Kurds", adding that "the American people had no stomach for a military operation to dictate the outcome of a political struggle in Iraq."[10] Thus US military forces around Iraq did not shoot Iraq's helicopters which were shooting the Shias and the Kurds.[11] The US was apparently concerned by the potential Iranian influence over the Shia groups in Iraq.

From Turkey's perspective, the problem was different. In the wake of this instability in its border and its apparent economic, social, and even political implications for Turkey, the then Turkish President Turgut Özal asked the Gulf Coalition allies, particularly the US, to help Turkey cope with the refugees problem. Özal, who was under the pressure of the refugee crisis after the 1988 Khalabca massacre in Iraq, proposed to set

---

[7]United Nations Security Council Resolution 687, 3 April 1991, in Dilip Hiro, **Desert Shield to Desert Storm: The Second Gulf War** (London: Paladin, 1992), Appendix III.

[8]**International Herald Tribune**, 16-17 February 1991; **Los Angles Times**, 18 February 1991.

[9]**New York Times**, 8 March 1991; **Independent**, 8 March 1991.

[10]**Guardian**, 28 March 1991.

[11]**New York Times**, 27 March 1991.

up "security zones" in northern Iraq so as to return the refugees back to Iraq. At the beginning, the Western world was not responsive to Özal's demands. Instead, they pressurized Turkish officials to open the doors for their settlement inside Turkey. When they refused to do so, the Western world criticised Turkey. Meanwhile, the refugees who were freezing in the mountains came on the television screens throughout the world. As a result of pressures from the Western public opinion who were disturbed by the misery shown on television screens, some Western countries sent humanitarian aid to the region. But this was far less than the expectations of the refugees in the mountains. Turkey was against their long stay in the mountains. The UN Security Council then adopted Resolution 688 on 5 April 1991 to extend humanitarian aid to the refugees and to stop Iraq's repression of its people.[12] The Resolution also conceded to set up facilities in northern Iraq for the returning refugees. Thus as the refugees returned to their homes in northern Iraq, UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) set up camps for them.

In addition to that, Turkey and the Western countries decided that this was not enough. Alongside the humanitarian assistance, a multinational force had to be sent to northern Iraq for the protection of the refugees in the camps from Baghdad's attacks. It was thought that the returning refugees could be accommodated and protected in the "safe havens" in northern Iraq. Following a speedy telephone diplomacy between Özal and Bush, a multinational force of 16.000 troops contributed by the US, the United Kingdom (UK), France, the Netherlands and Italy were deployed to protect the "safe havens" in Zaho in northern Iraq. This was called Operation Provide Comfort I. However, the US was not thinking of staying longer inside Iraq due to its fear that the US troops might be a party in a civil war between the groups in Iraq. Soon the US decided to withdraw its troops from northern Iraq to an alternative place, possibly to a country where the facilities were available to maintain regular flights over Iraq.

Turkey became the alternative place for the forces. By the mid-July of 1991 the forces of OPC were moved to three military bases in Turkey. Operation Provide Comfort in Turkey, now called OPC II, was composed of land forces in Silopi, air forces in İncirlik, and logistic forces in Batman. The land forces of around 2500 American, British, French, and Turkish troops which were initially deployed in Silopi in southeastern Turkey were later removed by the Turkish government in September 1991. The logistic support center which was initially based in Batman were also removed in September 1991. Around 50 US, British, French, and Turkish aircrafts are still deployed in İncirlik air base. A Military Command Center which had been previously established in Zaho is still part of OPC II. Furthermore, *USS Forestal* aircraft carrier in the Mediterranean sea is thought to be the part of the forces in case of need.

LEGALITY OF THE OPC II FORCES IN TURKEY

The legality of OPC II forces deployed in İncirlik air base can be analyzed from four perspectives in order to answer the question on what basis the forces have been present in Turkey. The first perspective is the UN perspective. Some argued that the presence of the OPC II forces was legalized by UN Security Council Resolution 688 which was adopted on April 5, 1991. However, the Resolution does not mention

[12]Irfan C. Acar, **Dış Politika** (Ankara: Sevinç Matbaası, 1993), pp.55-56.

formation or deployment of any military forces inside or outside Iraq. It condemns Iraq's repression of the civilian people, and "appeals to all Member States and to all humanitarian organisations to contribute to [the] humanitarian relief efforts." But this "contribution" does not mean a deployment of military forces inside or around Iraq. Besides, there was no consensus among the Security Council members on the type of the contributions: the idea to create a "security zone" in northern Iraq was rejected by the Soviet Union, China and Iraq. Despite these objections, the US, France, the United Kingdom, Italy and the Netherlands went on deploying the OPC I forces inside Iraq in May 1991.[13] Hence if the issue had been brought to the UN Security Council for approval, it would have been vetoed by the ex-Soviet Union and China.

The deployment in Turkey and activities in Iraq of OPC II also contravenes not only Article 2, paragraphs 4 and 7, of the UN Charter, but also UN Security Council Resolution 688 itself because of its violation of Iraq's sovereignty over its southern and northern parts. Since the beginning of the debacle in 1991, Iraq has been unable to exert its power in the area above the 36th parallel and below the 32th parallel. Iraq's territory has been *de facto* divided into three regions, curbing Baghdad's sovereignty inside its own country. These demarcations were unilaterally declared by the United States, France and the United Kingdom, whose decision had been based on their own interpretation of Resolution 688. With this interpretation of Resolution 688, they sent troops to northern Iraq for the protection of "safe havens" to provide supplies to Kurdish refugees.[14] Although UN Security Council Resolution 688 asks the member countries and the humanitarian organisations to "contribute to...humanitarian relief efforts",[15] the Resolution does not ask the member countries to fly over northern Iraq because this would be against the wording of the same Resolution saying that: "reaffirming the commitment of all Member States to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Iraq and of all States in the area." Not surprisingly, Iraq has objected to the activities of OPC II, viewing it as an intervention in its internal affairs, and violation of its sovereignty. Under these circumstances, according to the UN Charter, these forces cannot be sent to Iraq. Regardless of the fact that Baghdad had repressed its people in the north and the south, this usurpation from Baghdad of sovereignty is not compatible with the UN principles. This is also in contradiction with the basic principle of international law, that is the non-intervention in states' internal affairs.

Some argued that for humanitarian purposes, intervention can be made against illegitimate regimes and against criminal actions.[16] But this kind of interpretation of international law may create arbitrary actions in international politics. There are no world-wide rules and principles, nor consensus, on "what are the human rights ?", "on

---

[13]Kemal Kirişçi, "Huzur mu Huzursuzluk mu: Çekiç Güç ve Türk Dış Politikası", in Faruk Sönmezoğlu (ed), **Türk Dış Politikasının Analizi** (İstanbul: Der Yayınları, 1994), p.279. And **Milliyet**, 6 July 1991.

[14]Dilip Hiro, **Desert Shield to Desert Storm: The Second Gulf War** (London: Paladin, 1992), p.410.

[15]United Nations Security Council Resolution 688, 5 April 1991.

[16]For example, Lori Fisler Damrosch and David J. Scheffer (eds), **Law and Force in the New International Order** (Oxford: Westview Press, 1991), Part Three. See also Michael Mandelbaum, "The Reluctance To Intervene", **Foreign Policy**, No.95, Summer 1994.

which conditions human rights are deemed to be violated ?", and "which are the illegitimate regimes and criminal actions ?" The difficulty in answering these questions often leads to double-standard behaviours in international politics. Those Western powers who intervened in Iraq's internal affairs by launching OPC I and II were not so sensitive and active for more than three years to much worse human rights violations in Bosnia. They did not even consider to create an 'operation provide comfort force' to prevent the Serbian massacre of Bosnian people. On the contrary, and in contradiction to the arguments for intervention, the UN Security Council members argued for a long time that the war in Bosnia was a civil war, which was not a matter for external powers. The contradiction between the West's quick intervention to protect the Kurds within Iraq and the West's slowness to protect the Bosnians within Bosnia-Herzegovina can be explained only by their conception of national interests and objectives in the two cases.

Nor was its deployment in Turkey based on any of the UN Security Council resolutions on Iraq. It had not been approved by the ex-Soviet Union, then a member of the Security Council.[17] The transfer of OPC I air forces from Zaho to İncirlik was decided by the US on June 25, 1991,[18] contingent upon Turkey's approval. Then the negotiations began. During his visit to Ankara in early July, US Defence Undersecretary Paul Wolfowitz hoped that the forces would be deployed in Turkey.[19] It did not last long to reach an agreement on the deployment of the forces in Turkey.[20] The Turkish government approved the deployment of OPC II in Turkey. And this was done without an assent from TGNA, but with a government decision which was based on TGNA Legislation 126 dated January 17, 1991. But this also needs a critical analysis as to whether it is constitutionally legal.

Thus, the second perspective of the legality question is the Turkish Constitution. To make its decision constitutionally right, the Mesut Yılmaz government based their deployment in Turkey on TGNA Legislation 126.[21] On this basis, the government decided by a decree on July 18, 1991 to deploy the forces in Turkey.

However, Legislation 126, which was adopted on January 17, 1991, that was the day to start the Gulf war against Iraq, cannot be a legal basis for the deployment of the OPC forces in Turkey. Legislation 126 had given mandate to the Akbulut government to "dispatch Turkish Armed Forces abroad and to station and use foreign armed forces in Turkish territory".[22] This mandate was given in order to support UN Security Council Resolution 678 "to use all necessary means against Iraq". In other words, this was granted to the Turkish government at the critical time of war against Iraq, and as a preparation for an unexpected attack from Iraq. On this basis, NATO air forces in İncirlik

---

[17] **Milliyet**, 6 July 1991.

[18] Hiro, p.418.

[19] **Hürriyet**, 3 July 1991.

[20] **Hürriyet**, 4 July 1991.

[21] Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz's announcement, **Milliyet**, 19 July 1991; and **Cumhuriyet**, 19 July 1991.

[22] **TBMM Resmi Gazete**,17 January 1991, No.20758; and **TBMM Tutanak Dergisi**, Term.18, Vol. 55, 66th Session, p.328.

and in southeastern Turkey were used against Iraq. Thus it was strictly concerned with the war conditions only.

But the refugee crisis, which started after the end of the Gulf war, was dealt with by Resolution 688 long after the war. Therefore Legislation 126 cannot be a background for the deployment of the OPC II forces and for the following legislations. For the *raison d'etre* of their deployment in Turkey is not the Gulf war, but the refugee crisis after the end of the Gulf war. Otherwise, this connection would mean that Turkey has been preserving the war conditions against Iraq. Indeed, according to some international lawyers, this meant the continuation of the declaration by Turkey of war against Iraq.[23] But this is not the case because after the liberation of Kuwait from Iraq's occupation, the war is over. The developments after the cease-fire agreement on February 28 constitute a new situation whose legal bases can be found only in UN Security Council Resolution 688, which, as mentioned above, makes no request for such forces.

Subsequently, the Mesut Yılmaz government made two more decisions concerning the presence of the OPC II forces in Turkey: in September 1991 to extend their stay for another three months; and in December 1991 to extend it for another six months. These decisions were also made without any assent from TGNA. Therefore the implementation of these decisions made by the Yılmaz Government was not constitutional: the Mesut Yılmaz government should have sought a new legislation from TGNA for their deployment in Turkey, and all of these decisions should have been approved by TGNA, according to Article 92 of the 1982 Turkish Constitution.[24]

The following Demirel-İnönü government continued to extent their stay in Turkey. Unlike the previous government, the new government(s) sought parliament's approval for the extension of their stay for six-months periods. With legislations No.180 on 28 June 1992, No.206 on 26 December 1992, No.245 on 26 June 1993, No.279 on 30 December 1993, No.325 on 16 June 1994, and No.353 on 30 December 1994,[25] TGNA gave the assent required. However, there can be seen similar problems in these legislations as far as their legal basis is concerned. Each of these legislations is relied on TGNA Legislation 126. And this legislation is not a right basis for the OPC II forces, as noted above.

The third perspective on the legality question is the NATO context. NATO officials stated that the objective of the presence of the OPC II forces in Turkey was to protect the Kurds, and this was not one of the responsibilities of the NATO Alliance.[26] Since the Middle East region is an 'out-of-area' it cannot be concerned with the problems in the region. This was conceded by the US representatives. As Pentagon spokesman Pete Williams said the forces were not under NATO command.[27] Furthermore, Germany, tough a member of NATO, is not a part of the OPC II. Furthermore it has always been

---

[23] **Cumhuriyet**, 21 July 1991.

[24] **1982 Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Anayasası**, (İstanbul: Kayı Matbaacalık, 2nd print).

[25] **TBMM Resmi Gazete**, Nos: 21268, 21447, 21619, 21804, 21962, and 22157, respectively.

[26] **Cumhuriyet**, 13 July 1991.

[27] **Milliyet**, 14 July 1991.

against the use of its arms and troops outside NATO context. Its attempts to impose military sanctions on Turkey stemmed from its allegations that German weapons were being used in out-of-area operations, and against the Kurdish people in the area. Besides, France, though outside the military wing of the NATO Alliance, is one of OPC II countries. Moreover, in its letter to the participant countries- the USA, the UK, France, the Dutch, Belgium and Italy-, the Turkish government declared at that time that Turkey would allow the use of bases in İncirlik and Batman for non-NATO objectives.[28]

The argument that NATO can support Turkey against threats which may come from the 'out-of-area' of the NATO Alliance, that is from the Middle East, is a considerable one. According to the argument, Turkey have deployed the OPC II forces in Turkey as a deterrence to threats from Iraq. But even this is not a strong basis: There are differences of opinion between Turkey and its NATO allies on the source of threat and threat perception. For example, Turkey views PKK terrorism as a threat to its national and territorial integrity. It has been fighting against this threat for more than a decade. But on this issue, the NATO Allies, particularly Germany, have different considerations. Some of them view Turkey's fight against the PKK as a violation of human rights and democratic principles and so on. As a result, OPC II operations in northern Iraq may not be serving Turkey's struggle against PKK terrorism.

Finally, as far as the Turkish-US strategic relationship is concerned, it may be argued that it is based on the Defence and Economic Cooperation Agreement (the DECA) signed between Turkey and the US in 1980. But this argument is also without any foundation because the DECA is also made within the NATO context.

Consequently only basis for the deployment of these forces in Turkey is a political consensus between Turkey and the US, the UK and France. In the view of these weaknesses in its legality, it can be argued that OPC II represents a new situation in Turkey's relations with the West after the Gulf war and after the end of the Cold War. This new situation can be called as 'Eurasian Security Consensus' between Turkey and the West. That is concerned with the new challenges in the three regions: the Caucasus and Central Asia, the Middle East and the North Africa, and the Balkans. The new situation in Turkish-Western relations is not based on the old legal foundations. There is no new legal basis either. OPC II which is closely tied to the post-cold war developments is waiting for a new legality. And the longer stay, or removal, of the OPC II forces is closely tied to the objectives of Turkey, the US and other Western countries, and to their expectations from OPC II to achieve their objectives. In other words, participant countries have different objectives and expectations from OPC II. The ambiguity in the successive extensions of the stay of the OPC II forces in Turkey can be lightened by an analysis of the objectives of the participant countries in the light of changes particularly in the region since their first deployment in 1991.

REPERCUSSIONS OF OPC II

The main objective of OPC II was stated to be a deterrent force so as to prevent the repeat of the refugee crisis as happened in 1988 and 1991, as explained above. By challenging Iraq's use of power over its country, OPC II was to deter Iraq from attacking

[28] **Cumhuriyet**, 24 July 1991.

its people in the north especially. However, it can be argued that this objective has already been blurred by subsequent crises and problems in the area. First of all, it influenced the behaviours not only of Iraq and Turkey, but also of the Kurdish groups in the region. It played a decisive role in changing the behaviours of the Kurdish groups when the latter suspended their relations with Baghdad after the Gulf war. After the war Jelal Talabani, a Kurdish leader, seemed to restore his relations with Baghdad and to gain an autonomous status inside Iraq. The meetings between Talabani and Saddam Hussein were to produce an agreement. But suddenly, the negotiations were halted, followed by the deployment of OPC I in Iraq and OPC II in Turkey. The Western intervention blocked the relations between Baghdad and the Kurds. From then on, the Iraqi Kurds sought to have support from the Western countries to set up a Kurdish state in northern Iraq. When some groups in the West encouraged them to have an independent state in the region, they looked for it, stating their reluctance to restore relations with Baghdad.

However, their quest for an independent state is opposed by the regional countries in particular. Turkey, Iran and Syria declared their opposition to a Kurdish state in the region, and their policy to maintain Iraq's territorial integrity.[29] Turkey time and again intervened both militarily and politically in the developments in northern Iraq. In the view of Turkey's interventions and economic sanctions on Iraq, the Kurdish groups in the north understood that they were dependent on Turkey for the flow of food, medicine, and other essentials. In other words, they came to realize that Turkey was a life-line for them.

In addition, Turkey, which has close eye on the developments in the area, tried hard to block any support to the Kurds from outside, be they governments or non-governmental organizations, and to manipulate the relations between the Kurdish groups in the area, and to unite them against the PKK. In the wake of Turkey's heavy engagement with the region, Talabani became convinced that they could hardly set up an independent state in northern Iraq. He said that this was not something that could come about without the support of Turkey, Iran and Syria. He said if these three countries closed their borders to an independent Kurdistan, such a state could not survive. He returned back to the beginning: "We are struggling to establish a united, democratic, pluralist, parliamentary and federated Iraq. We are not separatist. We are the Iraqi Kurdistan democratic movement."[30] He implied that they would eventually restore relations with Baghdad. But this is an ambiguous stance, indeed, produced partly by the encouragement given by the Western countries and partly by the presence of the OPC II forces in Turkey. Thus the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) led by Mesud Barzani and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) led Jelal Talabani do not have a clear and explicit objective and a consistent policy about the future of northern Iraq.

As a result, a power vacuum emerged in northern Iraq above the 36th parallel, which is regularly monitored by the OPC II aircrafts. The control over Iraq created new problems both in northern Iraq and in Turkey. As a result of restrictions on Iraq's sovereignty, the regional *status quo ante* was eroded. The conditions in Turkey and Iraq changed so much that the pre-Gulf war period could never be seen again.[31] The objective

---

[29]For instance, **Turkish Daily News**, 23 August 1994.

[30]Talabani's views in **Turkish Daily News**, 23 March 1995.

[31]Graham Fuller's observation mentioned in Kirişçi, p.288.

to protect the Kurds from Baghdad's military attacks created, albeit unexpected, an area in which no rule and order existed. There emerged a "no man's land" controlled by neither Iraq, nor any of other regional countries, nor by the Western countries. Nor was it controlled by the people of the region. Consequently, there emerged an intra-societal conflict, in Iraq, with its international dimensions. [32]

This conflict not only prolonged the power vacuum in the region for an unforeseeable future, but also generated an opportunity for the PKK to have shelter in the authority vacuum. The PKK, having found a place in the power vacuum, launched more attacks against the Turkish territory. As a result, the PKK terrorism sharply increased tensions in the area.[33] The daily killings in southeastern Turkey reached to the point of a guerilla war between the Turkish Armed Forces and the PKK terrorists. This war cost Turkey much, with 7 billion dollars spent for the war in 1994, apart from a great number of losses of people.

OPC II also overshadowed Turkish-Iraqi relations. Before the Gulf war, these two countries used to cooperate against the Kurdish guerilla groups in both countries.[34] But after the war, while Turkey deployed the OPC II forces in İncirlik, giving the control of the area to the multinational force, Iraq was put under control of the UK and the US. Since then Turkish-Iraqi relations have been cut off. The most important aspect of this has been the closure of the oil pipelines for six years. During this period, there were some attempts by both side to resume the flow of oil through the oil pipelines, but this was not possible due to the UN Security Council resolutions on Iraq.[35] Another aspect of the deteriorating Turkish-Iraqi relations is the Turkish foreign policy towards the northern Iraqi problem. There seems a "contradiction" in Turkey's objectives towards the problem of northern Iraq.[36] Turkey established relations with Barzani and Talabani in an attempt to collaborate them against the PKK in northern Iraq. But Turkey's rapprochement to the Kurds was objected by Iraq because it was seen as an "intent on violating Iraqi sovereignty."[37] Iraq viewed Talabani and Barzani in the same way as Turkey viewed the PKK. Iraq also condemned Turkey's military operations in northern Iraq for violating Iraq's sovereignty and intervening in Iraq's domestic affairs. This created friction, not rapprochement, in Turkish-Iraqi relations. In sum, Turkish-Iraqi relations came under the administration of the UN Security Council in particular.[38]

---

[32] Although both Talabani and Barzani are originally Peshmerges, in the early 1960s Talabani left the KDP, and established the PUK with an alliance of communists and other anti-Baghdad groups in the country. The main cause of this separation has been individual ambitions. Gerard Chaliand, **The Kurdish Tragedy**, translated by Philip Black (London: Zed Book Ltd., 1994), p.60.

[33] Philip Robins, "The Overland State: Turkish Policy and the Kurdish Issue", **International Affairs**, Vol.69, No.4, October 1993.

[34] **Ibid.**

[35] **Turkish Daily News**, 29 August 1994; 24 April 1995.

[36] Sedat Ergin, "Breakdown of Çiller's Visit to the US", **Hürriyet**, 23 April 1995; also appearing in **Turkish Daily News**, 24 April 1995; and Robins, p.674.

[37] **Turkish Daily News**, 24 April 1995.

[38] **Turkish Daily News**, 17 April 1995.

In the wake of the above problems, it can be concluded that the presence in Turkey of the OPC II forces created unexpected, mostly negative, consequences for Turkey, thus creating misgivings over its original objectives. Did it now become an instrument for both the Western countries and Turkey to achieve their wider objectives in the post-cold war era ? Particular attention should be paid to the interests of the US and Turkey. The following discussion will dwell on the objectives of the US and Turkey in maintaining these forces in Turkey. In other words, it will examine how useful it is for national objectives of the participant countries concerned.

OPC II as an Instrument for US's Other Objectives ?

There is little doubt that the US has several interests in the Middle East, ranging from having free access to the oil resources of the region to supporting pro-American groups and states in the region. The discussion of these interests is not a subject of this study. However, there are some specific developments in the area in relation to OPC II. These developments encourage us to ask how the US enhances its gains from these developments by maintaining the OPC II forces in Turkey

As a result of enormous changes since its deployment in Turkey, some observers questioned the stated role of OPC II, and argued that it was an instrument for the US's undeclared policy to set up a Kurdish state in the region. Former Turkish Ambassador Şükrü Elekdağ argued that it contributed to the emergence of the nucleus of a Kurdish state. Thus it was against Turkey's national interests to keep these forces in İncirlik. On the contrary, he argued, Turkey's interest as well as Iraq's, would require its removal from Turkey and restoration of Turkish-Iraqi relations.[39] Uğur Mumcu argued that the main reason for the rise of the PKK in Turkey and in the West was the presence of OPC II.[40] He also asserted that the main objective of OPC II was to set up a federal Kurdish state, and then to protect this state. He concluded that this was to activate Article 64 of the Serves Treaty. Mumcu predicted that by manipulating the Kurdish groups in the region the West would wish to control the rich oil fields of Mosul, Kirkuk and Sulemania in Iraq.[41] Former Turkish President Kenan Evren went further, and argued that OPC II, which was claimed to have protected the Kurds in northern Iraq, might also attempt to protect the Kurds in southeastern Turkey. Alternatively, the Kurdish people in Turkey might ask the forces to protect them, leading to its intervention to Turkey's domestic problems. Evren also implied that the forces might deteriorate Turkey's already problematic relations with its neighbours.[42]

On the alleged US support to the separatist groups in the region- the KDP, the PUK, and the PKK-, İsmail Cem argued that OPC II generated a large operational area for the separatists in northern Iraq. This helped them to increase their attacks to Turkey. Thus, Cem argued, Turkey was making its foreign policy towards Iraq in line with the

---

[39]Şükrü Elekdağ, "Güneydoğuda Düşük Düzeyli Savaş", **Milliyet**, 2 August 1992. In May 1992, elections were held in northern Iraq to form the Kurdistan Parliament. In October 1992, the Kurdish Federal State was declared in northern Iraq. Acar, pp.56-57.

[40]Uğur Mumcu, "Belliydi...", **Cumhuriyet**, 31 August 1992.

[41]Uğur Mumcu, "Çekiç Güç...", **Cumhuriyet**, 20 December 1992.

[42]**Milliyet**, 27 August 1992.

Western interests.[43] Oktay Ekşi claimed that OPC II's operations helped not Barzani and Talabani in northern Iraq, but the PKK of Abdullah Öcalan in Turkey. In the midst of the debate in Turkey on whether Iraq be fragmented, *Apo* was building his Kurdish state, he said. Ekşi concluded that Turkey was facing a Western conspiracy to rejuvenate the Serves Treaty.[44] Some argued that the forces were not against Saddam Hussein but against Turkey because they were paralysing the activities of Turkish Armed Forces in the area.[45] According to Kirişçi, OPC II helped the PKK by strengthening the Kurdish nationalism.[46]

At this point it must be pointed out that there is a methodological problem in the above claims. These views reify the United States as a single body. Yet, reification of states as such may produce misleading evaluations and conclusions on the foreign policy of a country. A state's foreign policy is made by a combination of forces inside the country, and each of which may have different considerations. The US foreign policy is made by the US administration, but greatly influenced by other interests in the United States. To ascertain a country's foreign policy, one has to make distinction between its foreign policy decisions and actions.

When evaluating the US foreign policy, one must carefully analyze its decisions and actions towards northern Iraq. When looked at the US decisions and actions, there is no clear evidence that the US administration looks for a Kurdish state in the region. That does not overlook the fact that there may be some interest groups in the United States and even within the US administration who may have sympathy for a Kurdish state. But their views do not appear prevalent on the US foreign policy towards northern Iraq. The evidence for this argument can be found in US's decisions and actions regarding the Kurdish state.

As far as the US decisions were concerned, the above claims were repeatedly denied by the US officials at various levels. US Secretary of State Undersecretary Strobe Talbot, for example, reiterated that the US did not look for a Kurdish state in the region, but was keen to protect the Kurdish people in northern Iraq. Thus it was no secret that the US was in close touch with the PUK and the KDP of Iraq. But Talbot argued that while the US administration viewed the PKK as a terrorist organisation, it believed that only the Iraqi Kurds could prevent PKK's growth in Iraq and its infiltration into Turkey. Therefore the US attempted to play a middleman role to cease fire between the Kurdish groups in Iraq.[47]

As for the US actions in the region, the US administration did not denounce Turkey's military operations in northern Iraq. For instance, in Turkey's military operation in northern Iraq in April 1995, called "Steel Operation", the US administration 'understood' Turkey's worries about the PKK terrorism and its operation, unlike, for

---

[43]İsmail Cem, "Güneydoğu gerçekten 'yerinde' duruyor mu ?", **Sabah**, 23 August 1992.

[44]Oktay Ekşi, "Davul mu çalalım ?", **Hürriyet**, 22 August 1992.

[45]Quoted in **Cumhuriyet**, 17 July 1991. Similar arguments are expressed by Bülent Ecevit, leader of the Democratic Left Part, **Hürriyet**, 16 July 1991.

[46]Kirişçi, p.288.

[47]**Turkish Daily News**, 13 April 1995; **Hürriyet**, 27 July 1995.

example, several European countries.[48] However, the US administration also requested that Turkey should withdraw sooner, and respect human and civilian rights during the operation. Consequently, Turkey's military actions in northern Iraq improved Turkey's authority in the area and over the Kurdish groups. This outcome did not increase the possibility of a Kurdish state in the area, but enhanced Turkey's influence over the Kurdish groups in the area, at least for some time.

Then in the view of its support to Turkey's military operations, the US's objective has not been to protect the Kurds, nor to divide Iraq. But its main objective is to control two countries in the region within the context of its policy of "dual containment." In other words, OPC II could be seen as an instrument of US foreign policy to contain Iraq and Iran.[49] Connected to the Dual Containment policy is the "Defence Counter-Proliferation Initiative" of the Clinton administration. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is seen as the most pressing long-run issue in international security for the US because these weapons can be the great equalizers of international relations. Due to its great importance for the US, it is seen as one of seven categories for the possible use of force by the US.[50] In other words, the US can use force to ensure that nuclear weapons are not possessed by the "backlash states."

It is difficult to predict whether and, if ever how, OPC II forces can be used against Iran. But US administration's declaration of economic sanctions against Iran can be seen as a step in the containment of this country within the context of the dual containment policy. And there can be several reasons for the containment of Iran, which is beyond the scope of this article.[51] But it must be pointed out that the US administration pursues a policy to contain Iran's influence in the Gulf region.

The second country in the "dual containment" policy is indeed Iraq which is now encircled from the south and the north. As far as the north is concerned, there can be shown direct and indirect factors in the containment of Iraq. While OPC II has acted as a direct military and political threat against Iraq, the KDP and the PUK in northern Iraq have played an indirect role, acting as a 'fifth column' against Baghdad's authority. The US administration asked these groups not to establish relations with Baghdad, but to unite among themselves. And the objective was to discipline Saddam Hussein's regime to

---

[48] **Turkish Daily News**, 29 March 1995. Compare US attitude with that of Germany, **Turkish Daily News**, 30 March 1995.

[49] On the "Dual Containment" see: Anthony Lake, "Confronting Backlash States", **Foreign Affairs**, Vol.73, No.2, March/April 1994, 45-55. And F. Gregory Gause III, "The Illogic of Dual Containment", **Foreign Affairs**, Vol.73, No.2, March/April 1994, 56-66.

[50] The seven categories are: meeting the alliance obligations; promoting counter-proliferation; protecting key allies threatened with internal disorder; protecting individual Americans; supporting democracies abroad; interdicting drugs and countering terrorism; assisting peacekeeping and peace enforcement. For more details on these points see Charles William Maynes, "Relearning Intervention", **Foreign Policy**, No.98, Spring 1995.

[51] For a short analysis of this point see Ramazan Gözen, "Why is the Middle East warming again ?", **Turkish Daily News**, 27 May 1995: and Edward G. Shirley, "The Iran Policy Trap", **Foreign Policy**, No.96, Fall 1994.

the point that Iraq could never rise again as a threat to the American allies, particularly oil rich countries and Israel. This could be achieved only by disarming Iraq as mentioned above. In this process, the first requirement was to prevent other countries, including Turkey, from establishing close relations with Baghdad.[52] OPC II could thus be seen one of the most important obstacles in improving the Turkish-Iraqi relations.

The second requirement is to use constant pressure over Iraq, so that it yields to US-UK pressures. The US and the UK are adamant that Iraq be fully disarmed as was stated by UN Security Council Resolution 687. As long as this process continues, the problem of Iraq is bound to prolong. The removal of the sanctions and the restoration of Iraq's full sovereignty are closely tied to Baghdad's dismantling of its nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, and ballistic missiles programs as well as to Baghdad's acceptance of a long-term monitoring regime over its territory.[53] Thus Iraq's declaration in December 1994 to recognize Kuwait's territorial integrity was not seen enough to lift the sanctions.[54] The UN Security Council Special Commission on Iraq maintained that there were some more works to destroy Iraq's weapons. Ambassador Madeleine Albright of the US and Britain's Sir David Hannay both told that "Iraq still had a long way to go to fulfil its obligations."[55]

On the question of permission to Iraq for oil sale, there was a division in the UN Security Council on the removal of the sanctions to Iraq. Whereas the US and the UK were against the removal of sanctions on Iraq, other veto members, France, China, and Russia favoured gradual removal of the sanctions.[56] But Iraq refused partial removal of the sanctions, declining to accept the UN Security Council decisions to allow Iraq to sell $2 billion worth of oil under the UN inspection. Iraq feared that it put limitations on its sovereignty.[57] But after long negotiations between the UN and Iraq, they signed an agreement to allow Iraq to sell $2 billion worth of oil for the purchase of food and medicine. But this agreement gave Iraq only a "conditional sovereignty."

OPC II can also be seen as a supplementary force for the UN Security Council Special Commission which inspects Iraq's weapons, technology and potential military power. It was thus argued that OPC II may be used to strike Iraq's nuclear facilities to help the UN's inspection team.[58] It was also reported that while the UN's inspection team were searching for nuclear weapons technology in Baghdad, the OPC II aircrafts

---

[52]US Defence Undersecretary Strobe Talbot argued that Ankara should not rely on Saddam Hussein's administration but instead wait for the creation of a new and democratic regime in Iraq. **Turkish Daily News**, 12 April 1995. He also said that the UN Security Council sanctions against Iraq must be maintained. Turkey is benefiting from that. Otherwise Turkey will lose. **Turkish Daily News**, 13 April 1995. It was reported that Demirel-İnönü government's attempt to send an ambassador to Iraq was prevented by an US intervention. **Milliyet**, 22 July 1992.

[53]**Turkish Daily News**, 15 September 1994; and 13 July 1995.

[54]**Milliyet**, 11 December 1994, and 15 December 1994.

[55]**Turkish Daily News**, 13 July 1995.

[56]**Turkish Daily News**, 16 September 1994.

[57]**Turkish Daily News**, 13 September 1994; 17 April 1995; 20 April 1995.

[58]**Cumhuriyet**, 18 July 1991. And **Milliyet**, 19 July 1991.

made 40 sorties, and AWACS deployed in Turkey made 7 reconnaissance flights, over northern Iraq.[59]

Turkey's Interests in OPC II

The prime objective of Turkey is to prevent the emergence of economic, social and political problems, as resulted from the refugee crisis in 1988 and 1991. Worse, a refugee crisis might have adverse effects on Turkey's territorial integrity because of its political ramifications over the separatist groups in the area. Therefore, Turkey is keen to preserve the current borders, including Iraq's territorial integrity. A divided Iraq would be detrimental to Turkey's interests. Turkish foreign policy towards Iraq after the end of the Gulf war has been based on this objective. Turkey have pursued a policy both with its neighbours and with the Western countries to maintain Iraq's integrity. Turkey's multilateral diplomacy has aimed to prevent a Kurdish state out of a divided Iraq by exerting influence over the Western world, i.e. the US, the UK and France. In the words of the Turkish Foreign Ministry, if Turkey expelled the forces, the Western states might move them to alternative places such as Syria or Cyprus, or to northern Iraq. In this case, the possibility of establishing a Kurdish state in northern Iraq would increase. It was argued that the presence in Turkey of OPC II generated influence by Turkey on the Western countries' policies. Although it was a risky situation, it was stated, it was the best of all options Turkey had.[60]

Connected to this objective is the fight against the PKK terrorism both inside and outside Turkey, be it in northern Iraq or in Western countries. Alongside the military operations against the PKK inside Turkey, Turkish military forces launched three major cross-border operations in northern Iraq since the end of the Gulf war.[61] Turkey's fight against the PKK would encounter bigger problems if Turkey removed OPC II from Turkey. Turkey had received support from the US on these operations in return for Turkey's support for US foreign policy in the region.[62]

The presence in Turkey of OPC II could also be seen as an instrument to secure US support for Turkish foreign policy in the Balkans, the Caucasus, and Central Asia.[63] One of the critical issues in the Balkans for Turkish foreign policy is the Bosnian crisis. Erdal İnönü, the Deputy Prime Minister of the Coalition Government in 1992, argued that when Turkey demanded from the Western countries to set up a multinational force to stop war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Turkey's action to expel the OPC II forces would not be

---

[59] **Cumhuriyet**, 9 July 1992.

[60] **Sabah**, 23 May 1992.

[61] On 6 August 1991, 16 October 1992, and 20 March 1995. For details see **Turkish Daily News**, 21 March 1995.

[62] Taha Akyol, "Çekiç Güçten destek", **Milliyet**, 3 July 1992.

[63] For Turkey's position in these regions see: Fahir Armaoğlu, "Değişen Dünyada Balkanlar ve Türkiye", and Cengiz Çandar, "Değişmekte Olan Dünyada Türkiye'nin Bağımsızlığını Kazanan Yeni Türk Cumhuriyetlerle İlişkileri", in Sabahatin Şen (ed), **Yeni Dünya Düzeni ve Türkiye** (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayıncılık, 1992); and Graham E. Fuller and Ian O. Lesser (eds), **Turkey's New Geopolitics: From the Balkans to Western China** (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993).

possible.[64] Upon Turkey's demand, a 1500 personnel Turkish peace forces were sent on 4 August 1994 to Bosnia-Herzegovina under the UN flag as peace-keeping forces in Zenica.[65] Indeed, the Turkish forces were sent to Bosnia despite the Serbian opposition to Turkey, but by the support of the Western countries in the UN. Thus Turkey's influence in the United Nations was also said to have increased.[66]

However, this did not mean that the US had given the same support to Turkey as Turkey had done for the US policy in the Middle East. First of all, these forces were not enough to stop the war in the Balkans. It was only a symbolic force, and far from being a deterrence for the Serbian aggression. There was a need for a bigger deterrent force. On this issue, Turkey's repeated demands from the US and other NATO Allies to stop this aggression were not given a satisfying reply. The US and the European Union countries remained reluctant in showing their power against the Serbs, as they had done against Iraq by OPC II. One of the causes for their reluctance was the Russian-Serbian cooperation in the Balkans. The view that after the end of the Cold War Russia was withdrawn from the Balkans[67] was denied by the apparent support by Russia to the Serbs in the Balkans. Despite that, the US did not wish to stand against Russia in the Balkans for the sake of its interests in Russia. The issue of Russian reforms and nuclear arms have been two important reasons for the US to closely watch over Russia. Turkey's demands were thus sacrificed by the US's appeasement policy towards Russia.

Another important foreign policy issue for Turkey is the crisis in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emancipation of the Turkish states in the region, Turkey and the US have co-acted to integrate these countries into international system. Turkey has been seen as a model country for the Turkish states in Central Asia.[68] In this process, Turkey is not alone, but competed with several other countries, the most important of them is Russia. Despite the end of the Cold War, Turkey's cold war with Russia has not come to an end. As Russia intends to keep its influence over its "near-abroad" neighbours, particularly in the Caucasus and Central Asia, it maintains its intervention in military, political and economic affairs of the region,[69] concurrent with the Turkish involvement in the region. Thus there is a clash of interests between Turkey and Russia on several issues such as the Bosnian war, the Chechnyan war, security and economic issues in Caucasus, and the Russian support for the PKK.[70] The most visible competition in military-political sphere is seen in the local

---

[64] **Milliyet**, 23 June 1992.

[65] **Newspot**, 19 August 1994.

[66] Fatih Çekirge, "Bölge değil dünya ülkesi", **Hürriyet**, 20 December 1992.

[67] Armaoğlu, pp.125 and 126.

[68] Çandar, p.137.

[69] See Thomas Goltz, "Letter from Eurasia: The Hidden Russian Hand", **Foreign Policy**, No.92, Fall 1993; and William C. Bodie, "Threats from the Former USSR", **Orbis**, Vol.37, No.4, Fall 1993.

[70] See Oya Akgönenç Mughisuddin, "Türkiye'nin Rus Dış Politikası: 1990 Sonrası Gelişmeler ve Bu Gelişmeler Çerçevesinde Dış Politika Tercihleri", in **Yeni Türkiye**, Turkish Foreign Policy special issue, No.3, March-April 1995; and Graham E. Fuller, "Turkey's New Orientation", in Graham E. Fuller and Ian O. Lesser (eds), **Turkey's New**

conflicts in the Caucasus region such as the Azerbaijan-Armenian conflict. Russia, with a standing military force in the region, tries to intervene in these conflicts so as to increase its influence in the so-called "near-abroad". Russia demanded to amend the Conventional Forces in Europe (the CFE) Treaty, so that it could maintain its troops in its southern region. This was rejected by Turkey, asking the allies to ensure that Russia must abide by the terms of the CFE Treaty.[71] In economic issues too, there is a competition between the two sides. Although there has been an improvement in bilateral Turkish-Russian economic relations, the same cannot be said about the use of the oil resources of the region. Russia intends to continue to use the economic resources of the region for its own benefits. The exploration and export of Azerbaijan's oil resources is the most critical issue. There are two dimensions on this issue. The first is to participate in the international consortium to extract Azeri oil, in that Turkey has been able to increase its share from %1.75 to %6.75 in the Western-dominated Consortium. This has been possible by the support of not only the Azeri government but also the Western governments and seven oil companies of the Consortium. The second dimension is the route of the pipelines to carry Azeri oil. On this dimension, the US administration declared its support for the Turkish project to traverse the oil pipelines through Turkey, i.e. from Caspian Sea of Azerbaijan to Turkey's Ceyhan port in the Mediterranean sea.[72] This also showed the extent of the US support to Turkey against Iran whose five percent share in the Consortium was dropped by the Western pressure on the Azeri government. Within the "dual containment" policy of the US, Turkey was favoured against Iran in the region.

Some argued that there was a competition and conflict between Turkey and Iran over the Caucasus and Central Asia.[73] If this view intends to play Turkey against Iran within the context of US's dual containment policy, it would have little chance to achieve: as it was seen in Turkey's inaction to the US attempt to impose sanctions on Iran, Turkey looked rather reluctant to play against Iran. Thus there could be little possibility for the use of OPC II against Iran, as long as Iran did not fall into the same trap as Iraq did when it invaded Kuwait on August 2, 1990.

CONCLUSIONS

There can be made four conclusions. Firstly, OPC II went beyond its original objective which was to protect the people of northern Iraq. Its presence in Turkey created unexpected consequences, not only for Turkey but also for the region as a whole. As a result, its original objective became ambiguous. Secondly, it has become an instrument for the Western countries to achieve their objectives over Iraq, that is to keep control over Iraq and the region. Thus its duration is tied to Iraq's full disarmament and to the changes in Iraq. Thirdly, it is also used as an instrument by Turkey to achieve its wider foreign policy objectives in other issues. From this perspective, the presence in Turkey of the OPC II forces is only a symbolic force for the Turkish government to receive US

Geopolitics: From the Balkans to Western China (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), esp. pp.66-91. **Turkish Daily News**, 21 July 1995.

[71] For example, **Turkish Daily News**, 20 April 1995.

[72] **Newspot**, 24 February 1995.

[73] For example, Fuller, pp.65-66 and 74-76.

support. Fourthly, furthermore, OPC II represents a new issue in Turkish-American relations in the post-cold war era. Its presence in Turkey is not based on legal documents but on political considerations of both Turkey and the Western states.

The question as to how long OPC II forces will remain in Turkey depends on changes in Turkish domestic politics and in the Middle East politics, particularly in Iraq. It appears that the US will continue to contain Iraq as well as Iran until these two countries, may be others as well, come to terms with the US policy. Turkey, too, is a player in this game of regional balance of power. Turkey has been playing a pro-Western role in the region against Iraq and Iran. And the presence in Turkey of the OPC II forces is an aspect of this role.

Recently the DYP-ANAP coalition government proposed the US Administration to make some modifications on the operations of the OPC II forces. But it did not ask the removal of the OPC II forces from İncirlik air base. Its operations in İncirlik will continue as before. But in the view of the aforementioned repercussions of OPC II, the coalition government proposed to move Military Command Center from Zaho in northern Iraq to Silopi in Turkey.[74]

[74] **Turkish Daily News**, 1 June 1996; **Milliyet**, 1 June 1996; **Yeni Yüzyıl**, 1 June 1996.