



DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15688/jvolsu4.2022.2.8>

UDC 94(73)1958/1960
LBC 63.3(0)63

Submitted: 26.06.2021
Accepted: 09.11.2021

THE KURDS IN THE U.S. IRAQI POLICY IN 1958–1960

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Abstract. *Introduction.* The article deals with the U.S. Middle East Policy of the Eisenhower Administration in 1958–1960 and determines the part the Kurdish Question played in it. *Methods and materials.* The study is based on the latest U.S. declassified documents, interviews, memoirs, etc. The author does the problem-chronological analysis to describe the stages of the U.S. Policy toward Iraqi Kurds during the period specified. *Analysis.* The article is focused on the U.S. diplomatic and intelligence activities aimed at developing approaches to the “communist crisis” and disagreements that arose in the expert community regarding policy decisions. The author considers the U.S. relations with their regional partners (Turkey, Israel, Iran, etc.) on the issues of the “Iraqi crisis” and the Kurdish liberation movement. The paper describes Washington’s attitude to Mullah Mustafa Barzani – the Kurdish movement leader – and the KDP activities during Iraq’s post-Revolution instability. The author analyzes and summarizes the reasons why the U.S. was reluctant to involve in the domestic conflict between Qasim’s followers, Nationalists, Nasserites, Communists and Kurds. *Results.* The article shows that the CIA and the State Department often misjudged Qasim’s relationship with the Iraqi Communist Party and the national Kurdish movement and, as a result, did not have enough time to respond to the rapidly changing political situation, thus adopting the policy of benevolent neutrality.

Key words: U.S. Middle East Policy, Eisenhower Doctrine, Kurdish Question, Mustafa Barzani, Abd al-Karim Qasim, internationalization of internal conflicts.

Citation. Sennikov A.I. The Kurds in the U.S. Iraqi Policy in 1958–1960. *Vestnik Volgogradskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Seriya 4. Istoriya. Regionovedenie. Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya* [Science Journal of Volgograd State University. History. Area Studies. International Relations], 2022, vol. 27, no. 2, pp. 90-100. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15688/jvolsu4.2022.2.8>

УДК 94(73)1958/1960
ББК 63.3(0)63

Дата поступления статьи: 26.06.2021
Дата принятия статьи: 09.11.2021

КУРДЫ В ИРАКСКОЙ ПОЛИТИКЕ США В 1958–1960 ГОДАХ

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Аннотация. Статья посвящена ближневосточной политике администрации Д. Эйзенхауэра в 1958–1961 гг. и определению роли в ней курдского вопроса. Исследование основано на вышедших в открытый доступ интервью, мемуарах, недавно рассекреченных документах различных американских ведомств и пр. Применена методология проблемно-хронологического анализа для рассмотрения основных этапов американской политики в отношении иракских курдов в рассматриваемый период. Основное внимание уделено активности и принимаемым решениям дипломатического и разведывательного ведомств США, связанных с выработкой подходов к иракскому «коммунистическому кризису», а также возникавшим в экспертной среде разногласиям по его оценкам. Автором рассмотрена проблематика отношений США с региональными партнерами (Турцией, Ираном, Израилем и др.) по существу «иракского кризиса» и роли курдского национально-освободительного движения в нем. Показано восприятие Вашингтоном лидера курдского движения Мустафы Барзани и активности курдской партии ДПК в период иракской постреволюционной нестабильности. Рассмотрены и проанализированы причины, по которым США, несмотря на негативное отношение к режиму Касема, не стали вмешиваться во внутренний иракский конфликт между сторонниками Касема, националистами-насеристами, коммунистами и курдами.

Ключевые слова: ближневосточная политика США, доктрина Эйзенхауэра, курдский вопрос, Мустафа Барзани, Абдель Керим Касем, интернационализация внутренних конфликтов.

Цитирование. Сенников А. И. Курды в иракской политике США в 1958–1960 годах // Вестник Волгоградского государственного университета. Серия 4, История. Регионоведение. Международные отношения. – 2022. – Т. 27, № 2. – С. 90–100. – (На англ. яз.). – DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15688/jvolsu4.2022.2.8>

Introduction. After the start of the Cold War, the U.S. Administration sought to strengthen and secure their positions in the Middle East [32, p. 301]. This region played a significant role in U.S. Foreign Policy because the world's largest reserves of hydrocarbon resources concentrated here. The U.S. economic interests (both public and private) pushed the American leadership to an active regional policy, ousting competitors, and expanding existing positions. Having established cooperation with London, Washington considered the growing Soviet influence to be the main threat to its strategic interests in the region. The “Eisenhower Doctrine”¹ of 1957 served as a political basis for supporting the Middle Eastern countries. The American leadership relied on the pro-Western regimes of Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq [31, p. 405]. The USA was forced to face the dilemma of the subjectivity of the Kurds, due to their lack of a national state and the division between the four designated states. The Kurdish national liberation at whole movement was seen as one of the destabilizing factors. It is believed that the focus of the movement leaders on the USSR determined the anti-Kurdish trend in Washington's foreign policy for a long time ahead [30].

The Kurdish Question in the U.S. foreign policy is one of the under researched contemporary historical topics. However, studying the development of Washington's approach to the Kurdish movement is an urgent scientific task. The article aims at clarifying the motives and characteristics of the U.S. Government (USG) policy on the Kurdish issue in Iraq after the 1958 Revolution. This problem seems to be relevant and scientifically significant from the point of view of the genesis of the U.S. Middle East policy in the 1950–1980s, which had an impact on the political processes in this region in the first decades of the 21st century. This topic is also essential in understanding for logic and decision-making principles of the Eisenhower Administration in relation to the Kurdish movement divided by the borders of four states.

Methods and materials. The article adopts a problem-chronological approach which allows analyzing the development and stages of the U.S. Policy on the Kurdish Question in 1958–1960s. A wide range of sources was used: the documents of the U.S. State Department (Foreign Relations of the United States), the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the National Security Council (NSC), and interviews with eyewitnesses.

The Soviet historiography for the 1950s was mainly focused on the positive dynamics of the internal political development and interethnic relations in Iraq. In this regard can be mentioned studies by M. Gasratyan, Sh. Mgoi, and A. Fedchenko which are devoted to the United States and their attitude to the Kurdish problem in the Middle East [6; 10; 20; 21].

As for modern Russian historiography, the studies by O. Zhigalina, M. Lazarev, S. Minasyan, N. Stepanova investigate the Kurdish issue and the role the American factor has played in it [15; 22; 27; 33]. The article by A. Urazov is worth special mention; it provides a scrupulous analysis of Washington's reaction to the Iraqi Revolution of 1958 and the first reaction of the Eisenhower Administration to Abd al-Karim Qasim regime [28].

In Western historiography, the Kurdish Question is mainly studied in the context of the U.S. – Soviet confrontation during the Cold War period. There are some studies on the history of the Kurds done by American and British historians (M. Gunter, D. McDowall, M. Charountaki, E. O'Ballance and Y. Voller) which address the American factor (see: [3; 12; 18; 23; 29]). The American-Lebanese historian L. Meho carried out a study analyzing a lot of sources on the Kurdish Question in U.S. Foreign Policy [14]. The monographs by B. Gibson and H. Ali dealing with the Kurdish issue in the American policy within the specified time framework also deserve special attention [1; 11].

Analysis. On July 14, 1958, a coup took place in Iraq which led to overthrow of the monarchy; as a result left-wing nationalist forces

came to power led by Brigadier Abd al-Karim Qasim and Colonel Abd al-Salam Arif [25, p. 357]. The Brigadier headed a new government composed of Nasserites (advocates of pan-Arabism ideology of Gamal Abdel Nasser) and members of various left-wing groups (Ba'athist, communists, etc.). The Cabinet issued anti-Western slogans and proclaimed a course seeking rapprochement with Egypt [28, p. 92]. The first country to recognize the Qasim government was the United Arab Republic (UAR – a union of Egypt and Syria). It was followed by the socialist-orientated countries, including the USSR [24].

For the Eisenhower Administration, both the coup and the subsequent change in the new Iraqi policy towards the Soviet Bloc came as a surprise [28, p. 93]. The White House interpreted subsequent events as evidence of the growing Soviet threat and they were called the “Iraqi Crisis” (or “the Communist Crisis in Iraq”) [14, p. 434]. A Special Committee on Iraq (SCI) was created at the initiative of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, which was headed by his deputy William M. Rountree [14, p. 435]. It included representatives of the Defense Ministry, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), the Information Agency (USIA), the CIA and the NSC.

The Americans considered the return of the Kurdish leader Mullah Mustafa Barzani to Baghdad in October 1958, who had been in exile in the USSR since 1946, as evidence of strengthening of the Soviet presence in Iraq [11, p. 9]. The American government regarded the “Red Mullah” and his supporters as Soviet influence carriers: Barzani participated in the revolt against the governments of Iraq and Iran in the 1940s, and he was hostile towards Turkey where the Kurdish people were suppressed [8, p. 345].

The U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Waldemar J. Gallman (from November 3, 1954 to December 14, 1958) wrote in his letter on the situation in Iran as of October 14 about the Kurdish Threat to Iraqi stability and the danger of recruiting the Kurdish leaders by Russians and Nasserites [8, p. 346]. Gallman reported that Qasim was not an advocate of the communist ideology, and that the communist forces did not become stronger as a result of the struggle for power in August – September 1958 (one of the intermediate results of which was that the Ba'athists and Nasserites

left the government) [8, p. 347]. Taking into account the tolerant attitude of the new government to foreign oil companies, primarily to the Iraq Petroleum Company (27.5% of the stock owned by Americans), Washington took a wait-and-see approach [11, p. 10; 28, p. 97].

The leaders of Turkey and Iran insisted on seeing the Kurds as a threat to the region stability. At a meeting with President Eisenhower on June 30, 1958 (a few weeks before July 14 Revolution), the Iranian Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi expressed his concern about Cairo radio broadcasts appealing to Nasser “to fight for Free Kurdistan” [8, p. 566; 14, p. 438]. According to the Shah, the USSR supported these radio propaganda broadcasts, and the Soviet weapons delivered to the UAR army could be used by the “Kurdish volunteers” who were concentrated in Syria [8, p. 568; 14, p. 439]. Suat Hayri Ürgüplü, the Turkish Ambassador, told the State Department officials in Washington on July 19 that the Turkish authorities were alarmed about Nasser’s collusion with the Kurds after the coup in Baghdad [25, p. 357].

At the July 20 meeting with Edward T. Wailes, the American ambassador to Iran, Shah spoke in favor of cooperation between the United States, Turkey and Iran with the Iraqi tribes, including the Kurds. It would help to win them over to their side [1, p. 55]. In August, Teymur Bakhtiar, head of the Iranian Organization of National Security and Information (SAVAK), passed information to the American intelligence that the United Arab Republic was ready to help the Kurds create the independent state expecting their loyalty in return [25, p. 357]. The Americans welcomed the information, but considered the possibilities of UAR cooperation with the Kurds limited [8, p. 569].

After the Republic was proclaimed, Prime Minister Qasim tried to restore the relations with the Kurds. The Interim Constitution (July 1958) declared Iraq a homeland for the Arab and Kurdish peoples. The Kurdish Political prisoners were released, including Sheikh Ahmed, the elder brother of Mustafa Barzani. The Kurds were included in Qasim’s government [18, p. 300]. It was important for the General to ensure the support of the uncontested Kurdish leader, Mustafa Barzani, in order to prevent revolts in Northern Iraq. Mustafa Barzani, in turn, having

returned from exile, hoped to strengthen his own influence in Iraqi Kurdistan. The faction struggles within the Kurdistan Democratic Party meant that Qasim's support of Mustafa Barzani could strengthen his authority [33, p. 129].

On November 4, 1958, the NSC issued a Directive which identified U.S. policy objectives in Iraq as: a) maintaining friendly relations; b) acquiescing to Iraq's eventual withdrawal from the Baghdad Pact; c) giving sympathetic consideration to the continuance of "limited amounts" of military assistance; and d) encouraging friendly "elements" in Iraq, while avoiding identification with "specific individuals and political issues" [8, p. 197].

There was no consensus in the U.S. government regarding the Qasim regime. The committee on Iraq was divided into two camps: some committee members believed that the communists had gained enough strength, and soon the United States would have to face a "highly unfriendly communist government" [16; 17]. The others were sure that Qasim remained powerful enough to keep the communists in check [1, p. 59; 5, p. 102; 11, p. 12].

In December, Rowntree as the head of the committee went to the Middle East Tour (Egypt – Syria – Iraq). Arriving in Baghdad on December 14, he was met by a hostile crowd demanding the American emissary to "go home" [13, p. 34]. Rowntree's meeting with Qasim did take place, and the State Department spokesman tried to persuade the Prime Minister that the USG was not plotting a counter-revolution, which the communists accused them of, and he heard in response that the Iraqi leader intended to maintain friendly relations with Washington [13, p. 35].

Upon his return from the trip, Rowntree wrote a memorandum in which he admitted the growing communist threat in Iraq, but he emphasized that it was impossible to say for sure whether Qasim was a communist [8, p. 368]. Nevertheless, Washington was interested in replacing the current regime with a more moderate, even Nasserites one [8, p. 369].

On December 23, the White House hosted the NSC meeting which was attended by Eisenhower, Vice President Nixon, CIA Head Dulles and Secretary of State Deputy Christian Herter. Taking into account the Rowntree memorandum and the CIA's forecasts, the U.S.

administration analyzed the prospects for solving the "Iraqi Problem". In particular, it was suggested using the Egyptian factor and Nasser's dissatisfaction with Iraq leaning to communism [8, p. 374]. Ultimately, Washington hoped to make Nasser and Qasim confront each other [28, p. 98]. The Eisenhower Administration, however, did not want to get involved in the "Iraqi Crisis" and "speed up the process". The intelligence officers were instructed to track actions of all political groups and summarize information about possible plots against Qasim. The diplomats were advised to continue adhering to the NSC directive of November 4 [8, p. 375].

The existing situation worked in favour of Moscow. In addition to the fact that the left-wing regime criticized the Western imperialism, the USSR had acquired an economic counterparty capable of paying for the supply of goods under bilateral trade agreements. The Soviet leaders did not seek to increase the communist influence in the Iraqi government and did not insist on recognition of the Kurds independence [11, p. 12].

The United States, however, saw the state of affairs in Iraq from quite an opposite angle. They believed that the Iraqi communists under the Kremlin leadership pursued destabilization policy and forced the Qasim government to fight against nationalists and Nasserites [8, p. 353, 363–364, 368–369]. The Kurds played an intermediate part in this game diverting the nationalists' attention from the growing communist influence. Qasim had to maneuver between different groups either getting closer to the communists, or starting persecutions against them. However, Washington failed to see the Iraqi leader's pragmatist policy; they did not take his conflicts with the communists and the Kurds seriously.

Another event took place in January 1959, which fit into Washington's black-and-white vision of the situation in Iraq. At the congress held by the KDP Politburo, a pro-Communist Hamza Abdullah was elected a new General Secretary. This made it possible to overcome the conflict between the KDP and the ICP: the Kurds abandoned their idea of struggling for independent Kurdistan in exchange for the ICP consent to support the autonomy aspiration [33, p. 132]. The political cooperation between the communists and the Kurds, enshrined in the cooperation of forces statement, was aimed against the nationalists, but could result in working

against Qasim [25, p. 360]. According to Dulles, the Russians were trying to influence through the Kurds and Iraq [1, p. 59].

The Soviet-Iraqi relations developed in this context. On February 6, Moscow and Baghdad adopted an extensive technical assistance program. This event on February 7 immediately caused another crisis in Iraq. Six ministers with nationalist pro-Nasser views left Qasim's government to show their disagreement with the establishment of foreign influence [7, p. 378]. The Prime Minister agreed to their resignation without trying to negotiate it, which on the one hand, strengthened the position of the ICP, but on the other hand, led to a new round of confrontation with Egypt.

On February 17, the CIA issued a report to assess the approach the United States and its allies took to the Iraqi issue [8, p. 161]. The report said that the British government got too involved in confrontation with Nasser and disregarded Qasim's pro-communism attitude. It was noted that Israel, like Great Britain, had concern about Nasser's activities and opposed the U.S. – Egyptian rapprochement. The CIA was uneasy about inconsistency and lack of coordination in allies' activities in the Middle East [8, p. 162].

The Mosul Uprising in March 1959 was a consequence of a new round of tension in Qasim's relations with the Nasserites. The local nationalists, who opposed the Kurdish autonomy, united with some small Kurdish anti-Barzani tribes, rose in rebellion and captured the city. The Communist supporters and Barzani followers were shot [23, p. 36]. It seemed that the country was on the brink of a Civil War. However, apart from the capture of Mosul, the nationalists failed to carry out any other successful actions.

The united forces of the Communists and the Barzani clan militias held positions around Mosul preventing the nationalists in the city from taking action. Qasim dispatched military equipment and sent artillery brigades to Barzani to support the Peshmerga and communist militia [25, p. 362]. Meanwhile, Qasim began to purge the government and the army of nationalist elements and Ba'athists [18, p. 304]. Strengthening of the ICP positions in the government resulted in Iraq officially announcing its withdrawal from the Baghdad Pact on March 24 [6, p. 230].

During the meeting with the British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan on March 22, Eisenhower warned "the Soviet Union would make its next move in Iraq by organizing the Kurds". He anticipated that the Soviet Union would use the Kurds who lived in four countries (Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Syria. – *A. S.*) to destabilize the situation [1, p. 59]. By early April, the nationalists in Mosul had been defeated, and Barzani's forces were suppressing the resistance of the opposed Kurdish tribes [33, p. 136].

During the discussion of the Mosul uprising at NSC meeting on April 2, Eisenhower spoke out in favor of cooperation with Nasser to "save Iraq from the communists" [19]. John F. Dulles disagreed with it saying that the US allies in the Middle East (Great Britain, Israel and Turkey) would not understand this step, and Iraq could consequently join the Socialist camp. Thus, Washington again took a wait-and-see attitude which was the reason for criticism of Eisenhower by the Democrats J. William Fulbright and John F. Kennedy [9].

In early May, the combined forces of the Iraqi army, communist and Barzani militias faced a well-prepared uprising by the Kurdish Sheikh Muhammad Rashid Lolani. In the battle near the town of Rawandiz on May 16, the Lolani tribe forces were defeated and had to move into Iran. The Western military equipment provided to the Lolani tribe by the Iranians was found on the battlefield. The communists passed off the find as evidence of the U.S. intelligence intervention [25, p. 363].

On May 26, 1959, Qasim met with the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq John D. Jernegan and announced that he did not believe in the communist statements concerning the U.S. support of the Kurdish opposition. He also assured him that, despite the withdrawal from CENTO, Iraq would maintain neutrality in the Cold War [8, p. 182]. The State Department could not understand why Qasim decided to assure the United States of neutrality; whether he was really going to adhere to this position, or he was just trying to protect himself from American covert operations [8, p. 185]. The American intelligence mediated by SAVAK, did contact the Kurdish rebels opposing Barzani and Qasim at that time in order to gather information, while the Iranian intelligence services arranged for the supply of munitions to the rebellious Kurds [8, p. 364].

On May 16, Parker T. Hart, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs visited Ankara and met with the Turkish Foreign Minister Fatin Zorlu. They discussed the situation in Iraq and Iran in private. Zorlu said that the Turkish government agreed with the American vision of the “communist threat” in Iraq, but hoped that the U.S. would not revive Nasser’s influence. He expressed concern about Iran meaning “the Shah’s political courting the Kurds”. The minister said that at the moment the Iraqi Kurds were mainly occupied with rivalries among themselves [14, p. 435].

On May 20–21, Hart visited Tehran where he met with SAVAK General Hassan Pakravan who submitted a news summary on the Iraqi situation. Pakravan said that anti-Communist ideas were popular with the Iraqi army, army officers and their units, and if necessary, they would support Qasim against the ICP. The General also mentioned SAVAK’s contacts with the oppositional Iraqi Kurds, and that they could be “held in reserve” in case the Iraq situation deteriorated [14, p. 435].

On May 27, Rountree met with Zorlu in Washington, where they both attended a memorial service for Secretary of State John F. Dulles who died on May 24. After the funeral, the diplomats discussed the Iraqi issue. Zorlu confirmed the information about the Qasim regime and the Turkish position in relation to Nasser, and said that the Iraqi situation was unsettled and the two countries might need to start joint planning for possible contingencies in Iraq. Rowntree promised to pass on this information to the new Secretary of State Herter [14, p. 436].

On June 1, at a regular meeting of the SCI, Hart and Rountree reported their contacts with Turkish and Iranian officials. Rowntree spoke against any U.S. – Turkey joint action against Iraq. With regard to the Kurds, it was suggested taking a wait-and-see attitude and not running ahead of time. This opinion was supported by the other members of the committee [8, p. 462–463].

In mid-July 1959, another round of the crisis in Iraq took place. On July 14, during the celebration of the Revolution anniversary, clashes involving violence between Turkomans, Arabs and Kurds occurred in the northern Iraqi city of Kirkuk on ethnic and ideological grounds, resulting in pogroms of the Turkoman districts by the Kurds

and communists that lasted for two days. Iraqi government managed to re-establish order only by involving the military forces [25, p. 364; 33, p. 132]. The “Kirkuk massacre” coincided with the conflict between Qasim and the ICP which started over the disagreement on the parliamentary election scheduled for January 1960 and the Qasim’s expansion of the Cabinet of Ministers which was perceived by the Communists as an attempt to undermine their positions [11, p. 20; 25, p. 365; 33, p. 134].

Qasim took advantage of the situation and hastened to strike at the ICP. He accused the communists of the Kirkuk outbreak and started to remove them from the government. Ambassador Jernegan, describing the events of the second half of July, made a conclusion that the Kirkuk outbreak was a point of no return for Brigadier Qasim [8, p. 475], and he assumed that Qasim’s policy would further develop according to an authoritarian scenario [8, p. 477]. This did not exclude future cooperation of Qasim with the Kurds (who might still have the Soviet support) or agreements with Moscow, but it was unlikely that the Communists would return their influence [8, p. 478].

On July 23, at the NSC meeting, Allen Dulles briefed the president and the Council members on the Kirkuk event. He reported that the outbreak occurred rapidly, and the CIA was unable to respond to them timely [8, p. 198]. The administration judged Qasim’s actions as evidence of the fading of “Iraqi crisis”. After the meeting, the President asked the head of the intelligence to prepare a report on the Kurds in Iraq [14, p. 438]. The SCI was disbanded, and its former members continued to follow the Iraqi events working within the framework of their separate departments.

Barzani supported Qasim’s actions against the Communists. At the plenum of the KDP Central Committee General Secretary Hamza Abdallah was removed from the post, and his adherents were expelled from the party [33, p. 133]. At the end of August, an overt conflict between the KDP and the ICP occurred, and Barzani’s forces supported the Iraqi army in suppressing the Communist unrest in Northern Iraq. Ambassador Jernegan kept the State Department informed, reporting mainly on anti-Communist activities. He also pointed out that new

conspiracies by anti-Communists might be underway to overthrow Qasim, because Qasim approved the executions of a senior nationalist officers involved in Mosul issue. The Ambassador did not regard their chances for success as high, but expected that the removal of the Prime Minister could lead to destabilization in Iraq and restoration of the ICP influence [8, p. 204].

Together with the Ambassador's reports, the CIA's estimates were received. On September 10, Allen Dulles informed Eisenhower that strengthening of the anti-communist forces in Iraq could lead to unfavorable consequences for the USG. Any unsuccessful attempt on Qasim's life could cause new repressions against the nationalists, which would push the Brigadier "into the arms of the Communists" [8, p. 478]. On October 1, the NSC represented a list of possible U.S. actions in the event of a communist outbreak [11, p. 25].

On October 7, 1959 an assassination attempt against Qasim took place in Baghdad. The Prime Minister was badly wounded [28, p. 102]. The attempt was made, as it turned out later, by the Ba'athists (in particular, the young Saddam Hussein). According to the White House estimates, it could lead to new anti-nationalist repressions [8, p. 202]. On October 10, Eisenhower sent a letter to the Prime Minister in which he expressed "deep gratitude that Qasim escaped serious harm" wishing him a speedy recovery [8, p. 205]. The President instructed the CIA to project possible retaliatory actions of the Iraq neighboring states in the event of a coup in Baghdad which seemed quite probable while Qasim was not at the helm [4].

According to the intelligence service, most neighboring countries declined the possibility of a communist takeover. However, the Kurdish Question stood out in the context of Turkey and Iran. The Turkish government, which considered the communist threat to Iraq insignificant, feared reorientation of Baghdad and the Kurds to Egypt in case the ruling regime changed.

Intelligence experts noted that Iran's attitude to the crisis was more close to Washington's. Tehran also worried about the growing influence of the communists, but Shah Pahlavi's foreign policy was focused on confronting the Egyptian threat. At the same time, SAVAK continued to conduct secret negotiations with the Kurdish

opposition and even requested the U.S. assistance to assassinate the Kurdish leader Mustafa Barzani who, as they believed, was loyal to Qasim, and interfered with their plans ².

According to the CIA estimates, the United States and its allies had no consensus either on the problem of the communist threat or in relation to the Qasim regime. For Washington, establishment of a communist government was highly undesirable, while the rise of the nationalists to power was seen as consistent with the U.S. interests and not posing any serious threat.

On December 2, Brigadier Qasim left the hospital after his recovery and held a six-hour press conference that turned into a "denunciation of the Nationalists" [8, p. 503-504]. He actually removed the responsibility for the Kirkuk outbreak from the Communists shifting all the blame onto the Nasserites [11, p. 26]. During the December 4 emergency NSC and CIA experts meeting organized at the initiative of Rountree, the participants discussed Qasim's speech and concluded that he was going to return to alliance with the ICP against the Nationalists [8, p. 210]. The Iraqi Prime Minister was perceived as a person "who could change his attitude tomorrow" [11, p. 27].

On December 10, at the NSC meeting (chaired by Vice President Nixon) it was decided to restore the SCI in the form of the Interdepartmental Group headed by Secretary of State Herter. The group was to keep the situation under scrutiny, study the intelligence and diplomatic reports, summarize information and suggest potential options for U.S. actions as respond to events taking place in the Iraq and the region [8, p. 496].

An estimate of short-term prospects for Iraq was given by CIA experts on December 15. The Intelligence officials suggested that Qasim would primarily rely on the support of the armed forces which had remained loyal to him during the entire course of his condition [8, p. 497]. Only the support of the Iraqi Army, according to the report, ensured the survival of the Qasim regime. It was anticipated that he would continue "maneuvering between the various political factions" (Communists and Nationalists) [8, p. 498], while the ICP leaders would try to gradually reinstall the positions they had lost back in August 1959 and would not force events so as not to generate another wave of repressions [8, p. 498].

The Iraq parliamentary election was scheduled for January 1960. The Qasim regime took active steps to weaken both the Nationalists' and the Communists' influence: neither the ICP, nor the Ba'ath Party, nor the others nationalist parties had been licensed. At the same time, the Iraqi government licensed the KDP and allowed Barzani to run for the election [25, p. 366]. According to Zhigalina, it was Qasim's political maneuver aimed at lulling Barzani's vigilance [33, p. 135]. As early as October 1959, the Iraqi leader started to suspect Mullah Mustafa of his intention to consolidate the Kurdish forces, the evidence of which he saw in the elimination of the Kurdish tribal leaders loyal to the regime (and opposed to Barzani) and in one of the ideas of the party's election program which said that the KDP would fight for the expansion of the national rights of the Kurdish people on the basis of autonomy within the Iraqi Republic [20, p. 114].

After the election, which was unsuccessful for the Kurdish forces, the Iraqi government and the Nationalists published articles calling to "dissolve" the Kurdish people amongst the Arabs [20, p. 115; 33, p. 136]. It was a turning point in Qasim – Barzani's relationship. In this situation, Mullah Mustafa, without breaking openly with Qasim, began to gather supporters in northern Iraq [10, p. 220]. He believed that Qasim would not agree to grant autonomy to the Kurds and planned a military confrontation with Baghdad [21, p. 53].

Meanwhile within SCI, the CIA and the State Department experts could not come to agreement about the Iraqi situation. The State Department continued to insist that Qasim was able to balance between various political factions and constrain the Communists. The Intelligence, on the other hand, argued that Communist elements began to infiltrate both the state machinery and the Army increasing the number of followers. The State Department advocated a solution to the Iraqi problem by Iraqis themselves, while the CIA insisted on supporting Nasser's plan to invade Iraq. The controversy continued throughout January and February 1960 [11, p. 27].

Only in March, Eisenhower reorganized SCI to end the disputes and entrusted the development of policy towards Iraq to a special group within the State Department – Iraqi Action Group (IAG), moving the CIA away from direct participation in the decision-making process [28, p. 103; 11, p. 27].

On February 26, 1960, Washington received a telegram from Ambassador Jernegan describing the current situation in Iraq. He wrote that Qasim had created a situation of uncertainty among most political groups including left-wing forces. The January repressions had weakened the Nationalist opposition. At the same time, Qasim managed to prevent the ICP from entering the parliament and government. Despite this, according to Jernegan, the Communist party power was still great, and it controlled many streets of Baghdad [8, p. 504]. With Iraq's economy facing depression, Jernegan anticipated further recession and consequent clashes between the government and the Communists [8, p. 505].

The Ambassador's conclusions were discussed at the IAG meeting. On March 18, the head of the Group Evan M. Milson, in the memorandum to the Director expressed the idea that in the conditions of Iraqi instability, Washington should continue the policy of neutrality and non-involvement [8, p. 508]. The insecure position of Qasim, the lack of adequate estimates of his capabilities as well as the potential of the Communists, Nationalists and the Kurds combined with the impending economic crisis gave rise to assumptions of an imminent change of power. According to the IAG head, the most likely scenario was the establishment of an anti-Communist government in Southern Iraq, which could later be used by the United States to create an anti-Communist coalition, and a Kurdish uprising in the North and a probable establishment of a pro-Soviet government there. Milson made a conclusion that the USG should take a wait-and-see approach [8, p. 509].

Washington's benevolent neutrality towards the Qasim regime played its role. Trying to find a way out of the economic crisis, the Iraqi government began to establish contacts not only with Moscow (a long-term economic cooperation program was signed during the official visit of Anastas Mikoyan on April 8), but also with Western countries [8, p. 218]. Qasim also managed to balance his policy and push back the communists from power again.

In May, the CIA made a new report on the situation in Iraq stating the stabilization of the regime and the opinion that the communist crisis was almost and at most over [2]. Subsequently, the Intelligence experts approved previous

estimation of the situation in Iraq and indicated that an attempt at Qasim's life remained possible [11, p. 28].

The uncertainty and inaction (as it was perceived by the American society) of the Eisenhower administration in regard to the "Iraqi crisis" played into the hands of the Democratic Party in the 1960 election campaign that was gathering pace. The Democratic candidate John F. Kennedy paid a lot of attention to foreign policy issues and the situation in the Middle East [28, p. 103; 11, p. 28]. Following the defeat of the Republican Party in November 1960 election, the Eisenhower Administration focused on handing over affairs to the Kennedy team [11, p. 29]. The CIA and the State Department were instructed to change the emphasis in the interpretation of the Iraqi situation switching from a "communist threat" to "coinciding interests" of Washington and Baghdad in the region [11, p. 30]. Leaving administration did not want to put Kennedy in a difficult position in relations with the Qasim regime and tried to maintain the status quo policies in the Middle East.

In the heat of the election campaign, the United States overlooked tensions between the Iraqi government and the KDP. Qasim at this time began to develop a plan to undermine the influence of the Barzani party in the North by supporting the Kurdish tribes which were loyal to the regime and had tense relations with Mullah Mustafa [33, p. 137]. Barzani tried to contact some officials in the UK, Iran and the U.S. to gather their support [25, p. 366]. The American diplomats and intelligence officials, however, were not authorized to negotiate with his representatives due to the government instructions for a transitional period.

In November 1960, Barzani was invited to visit the USSR to celebrate the anniversary of the October Revolution, where he met with Nikita Khrushchev and Mikhail Suslov [33, p. 138]. The Soviet leadership promised to help him resolve his conflicts with the ICP and support the Kurdish people "in their struggle for legal rights" and also help the KDP in case the government troops went on the offensive [33, p. 139]. Qasim took Barzani's visit to Moscow as evidence of his disloyalty. The Iraqi government began to accelerate a campaign to oust the KDP from the legal framework.

Results. The Eisenhower Administration's Policy in Iraq in 1958–1960 had two key goals:

1) to prevent strengthening of the Soviet presence in the Republic; 2) to protect Western, primarily American, economic interests in the region. Washington's attitude to the 1958 Iraqi Revolution and the Qasim regime repeatedly changed depending on the political force the Iraqi leader relied on in his struggle for power.

Qasim's course of action in respect to the U.S. economic interests was to maintain the status quo, and it was the main deterrent to Washington's attempts to overthrow the Iraqi government. One more factor was also important; the CIA and the State Department often disagreed in their estimates regarding the Qasim regime, the Iraqi communists, the Kurdish forces, and other political parties, as a result they did not have enough time to respond to the changing situation in Baghdad. The SCI reported either growing or fading of the "Iraqi Crisis" which usually coincided with the next round of Qasim's struggle for power (together with either the Kurds, or Nationalists, or Communists).

The Kurdish issue was "tied" to the fact that Mullah Mustafa was seen as a possible Moscow agent, which, according to Washington, was confirmed by the KDP and the ICP collaboration. The American diplomats and intelligence officials considered the Kurdish movement as one of the Soviet instruments to manipulate the Qasim regime disregarding intra-Kurdish conflicts, tension between the KDP and the ICP, and Barzani's maneuvering between the "Kurdish nationalism", the Communists, and Qasim. In addition, Washington, trying to defend their own interests, could not agree with the political allies in the region: Great Britain, Israel, Turkey, and Iran. This is the reason why the Eisenhower Administration did not try to establish interaction with the Kurds, although Tehran, Ankara and Tel Aviv pointed out the possibility of it out of various concerns.

The inert foreign policy of "benevolent neutrality" towards Iraq and exaggeration of the "communist threat" by the President and members of the Administration caused misunderstanding in the American political establishment and allowed Eisenhower's opponents to criticize them for inconsistent policies on the Middle East problems. Despite these factors, the political line of the President team was integral and obeyed the logic of bipolar confrontation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The study was carried out as part of the Russian Science Foundation Grant (project No. 19-18-00501).

NOTES

¹ According to the doctrine, any country suffering from external military aggression could request economic or military assistance from the United States. A particular emphasis was placed on the Soviet threat in the Middle East where, as it viewed by Eisenhower, a power vacuum has formed.

² In the late 1960s – early 1970s Mustafa Barzani will be Iran's ally in the fight against Ba'athist Iraq. See [26].

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