

**Saint Petersburg State University
School of International Relations
Russia**

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Report

Thesis presented by Urper Mehmet, entitled (Policy of the United Kingdom towards regional and ethno-confessional elites in modern-day Iraq) for PhD degree – The Saint-Petersburg State University.

The candidate has fairly divided his thesis into two major parts: the first part was concentrated on Iraq as an occupied territory by Britain, a country under British mandate and later as an Independent country linked to Britain by different treaties. The second part was allocated to the oscillating relations between Independent Iraq and Britain in particular, and the USA and the west in general. In the two parts the candidate was clear in concentrating on the main issue of his thesis that is the Kurdish issue. Depending on a notably wide range of relevant academic literature, as well as primary international and Russian sources, the thesis offers an illuminating study of the Kurdish issue in Iraq as well as the British role inside it since the beginning of the last century.

In the first chapter the thesis begins by offering a historical and political background to the ethno-confessional problem in Iraq. It discussed the British occupation of Iraq during the WWI, the mandate and the treaties that were signed between the UK and Iraq. His concentration was on the way the UK mandatory administration dealt with the Kurds of Iraq living in the northern provinces of Iraq. Depending on the documents available to him he tried to review the Kurdish national feelings and objectives in Iraq, the reaction of successive Iraqi governments to them and the role of the British policies towards them as well.

In the second chapter the candidate discussed the main characteristics of British policy in the Middle East following WWII, and the role of successive Iraqi governments in dealing with the Kurdish issue. A special attention was paid to the Baath government (1968-2003), which was the one that lasted longer than any other government in modern Iraq, and was the government that accepted to solve the problem on the basis of autonomy. The new British policy towards the Middle East, according to the concept of “world community” was also discussed.

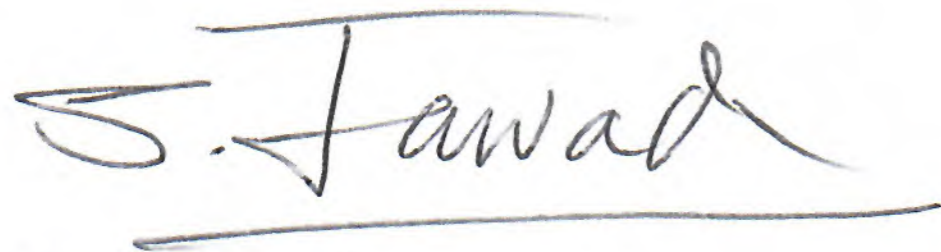
In the third chapter the thesis focuses on British policies towards the Kurdish autonomous region. It also touches upon very critical periods of official Iraqi-Kurdish relations during the war on Iraq, the occupation and the Kurdish referendum for independence that was carried out by the Regional Kurdish government in 2017. More important it shows, depending on recent original British documents, that the UK is still

interested in what is happening in Iraqi Kurdistan, and still wants to have some influence to bear on that region.

In all the thesis clearly shows that Britain, the West and the USA, despite all the public and propaganda – like support they declare for the Kurds, claiming that they do that for the sake of human rights and the right to self-determination, but the fact remains that they do that for their own interests, and not for the interest of the Kurdish people.

Overall, the thesis provides, on the one hand a sophisticated analysis and assessment of the complicated relations between successive Iraqi governments and the Kurdish political parties, and on the other a clear view about the general negative role played by Britain, USA and the West in the ethno problem in Iraq.

The only shortage I can see, and this is not to be blamed on the candidate but on the Russian universities, is the lack of Arabic and Kurdish documents and sources. But this in fact cannot belittle the good and insightful work done by the candidate. I can fairly conclude that the thesis entitled “Policy of the United Kingdom towards regional and ethno-confessional elites in modern-day Iraq“, by Urper Mehmet, deserves to be awarded the degree of PhD in political science.



Saad N Jawad

Prof. of Political Science
Member of research committee, Middle East Centre-LSE
<http://www2.lse.ac.uk/middleEastCentre/people/fellows.aspx>
London School of Economics
University of London
Email: S.jawad@lse.ac.uk
Tel. 0044 7944214923