

Natural Resources and Conflict: A Dispute of Kurds and the Iraqi Government in Kirkuk

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ABSTRACT

The conflict between the Kurds and the Iraqi government in Kirkuk is not just a political conflict. This article describes how oil resources in Kirkuk can trigger conflict between the Kurds and the Iraqi government. The clash of interests between the two parties is crucial to overcome. The Kurdish referendum support group is determined to depart. Meanwhile, the government defends the Kirkuk region due to its rich natural resources. As a tool for analyzing events, the approach used is the theory of natural resources and violent conflict proposed by Ian Bannon and Paul Collier. The results indicated that Iraq's dependency and weak management of oil export commodities caused the conflict between the Kurds and the Iraqi government. This article, compiled by applying the literature review method, aims to explain the conflict in the Kirkuk region, with natural resources as the object also the Kurds and the Iraqi government as subjects facing each other.

Keywords: Kurdish Ethnic, Iraq, Kirkuk, Natural Resources, Conflict.

ABSTRAK

Konflik antara Kurdi dan pemerintah Irak di Kirkuk bukan hanya konflik politik. Artikel ini menjelaskan bagaimana sumber minyak di Kirkuk dapat memicu konflik antara Kurdi dan pemerintah Irak. Benturan kepentingan antara kedua belah pihak sangat penting untuk diatasi. Kelompok pendukung referendum Kurdi bertekad untuk pergi. Sementara itu, pemerintah mempertahankan wilayah Kirkuk karena kekayaan sumber daya alamnya. Pendekatan yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah teori sumber daya alam dan konflik kekerasan yang dikemukakan oleh Ian Bannon dan Paul Collier. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ketergantungan Irak dan pengelolaan komoditas ekspor minyak yang lemah menyebabkan konflik antara Kurdi dan pemerintah Irak. Artikel yang disusun dengan menggunakan metode literature review ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan konflik yang terjadi di wilayah Kirkuk, dengan objek sumber daya alam serta Kurdi dan pemerintah Irak sebagai subjek yang saling berhadapan.

Kata Kunci: Etnis Kurdi, Irak, Kirkuk, Sumber Daya Alam, Konflik.

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INTRODUCTION

Kirkuk is a city in Iraq located around 238 KM north of Baghdad. According to the Encyclopedia of Islam, the Kurds preceded other ethnic groups in occupying Kirkuk, the second oldest ethnic group being the Turkic people (Martin, 2004). For decades, various

ethnic communities have been known to coexist peacefully in the city. In 1957, the last official census reported that a total of 178,000 Kurds, 48,000 Turks, and 43,000 Arabs lived in Kirkuk (McDowall, 2013; Yildiz & Tayşi, 2007). Kirkuk is known for its rich oil reserves, produces almost half of Iraq's daily exports, and has been one of the areas most frequently seen as a source of disputes and conflict between the Kurds and the Iraqi government in Baghdad.

The Kurds are one of the ethnic groups living in several countries in the Middle East. They have aspirations and ambitions to create an independent and sovereign Kurdistan state. However, after the first world war ended, they had to live separately because the UN divided the Kurdistan region into several sovereign countries (Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey). Historically, the Kurds in Iraq have been the most aggressive in expressing their aspirations compared to the Kurds in other countries. They created a movement of ethnic nationalism that was used to demand their aspirations, namely Kurdish independence. Beginning in 1919, Shaykh Mahmud Barzanji declared the Kurdish struggle in Iraq through a rebellion known as the Sulaymaniyah revolution (Edmonds, 1967; Wuthrich, 2015).

Danisworo (2013), in his research results, explained that the conflict between the Kurds and the Iraqi government in Kirkuk was not only a matter of the Kurds' desire to secede from Iraq. The factor underlying this conflict was oil resources in Kirkuk. Conflict is difficult to avoid in the context of natural resource management. The reason is simple, many parties are interested in controlling the existing natural resources. For several decades, the rebellion carried out by the ethnic Kurds was faced by the Iraqi government with severity. The existence of oil resources is the most logical reason why the Iraqi government does not want to release Kirkuk from its territory. Almost every activity to liberate the Kurds ends in violence and oppression by the Iraqi government. The logical consequence of the Iraqi government's repressive attitude towards the Kurdish movement in Kirkuk is a prolonged conflict due to the different interests between the two. The Kurds want freedom and autonomy, while the Iraqi government maintains the Kirkuk region because of its natural resource potential.

Natural resources can be taken or utilized from nature because they have value in fulfilling human needs. While referring to the Cambridge Dictionary, natural resources are something like excavations (mines), forests, and other natural resources that human

can use. Some natural resources are limited. These natural resources are categorized as non-renewable, such as oil, natural gas, coal, uranium, etc. The oil wealth found in Iraq, especially in Kirkuk, is included in the non-renewable natural resource group. In another sense, Kirkuk's oil wealth is a valuable asset for both Iraq and the Kurdish people, so it has the potential to create a conflict to be fought over.

Petroleum is the main raw material in the manufacture of fuel used for various human needs. Oil is not only a need for developed countries because its use is also needed by everyone, including developing countries. In this era of industrial progress, the role of oil is vital and irreplaceable. Therefore, it is no longer strange if several parties are in conflict and even go to war for control of petroleum.

Natural resources such as oil invite conflict. According to Lawang (1985), conflict is a struggle to gain value, status, and power where the goal is not only to gain profit but also to subdue rivals. Basically, humans are conflicted creatures (*homo conflicts*), which means creatures that are always involved in differences, conflicts, and competition both voluntarily and forcedly. Opposition in this context can be in the form of ideological or physical conflict between two opposing sides. Conflicts can arise on different scales, such as interpersonal conflict, intergroup conflict, and interstate conflict. Each scale has a background and development direction. Even though conflict can be constructive for social change in society, in fact conflicts are more often followed by forms of violence and war (Susan, 2014: 24).

The inter-group conflict has a long-lasting social, educational, and economic risk for society. This conflict is also known as a civil war because the two parties to the conflict consist of two groups, namely civil groups and the government. Even though the conflict has ended, its impact will still be felt in the following years. This is due to post-conflict recovery, which requires a long time. Conflict can drain state finances because of the high cost of war, take away the education of the younger generation, and also trigger the emergence of infectious diseases because the environment during conflicts tends to be unclean and well-maintained. In his book, Bannon (2003) states that conflict can trigger three global bads: drugs, AIDS, and terrorism.

Each conflict is motivated by different factors. Of the many factors causing conflict, natural resources is one of them. Bannon & Collier (2003) explained that many models could be used to explore the factors that influence conflict. However, Bannon is more

interested in using the model discovered by Collier and Hoeffler, which consists of a significant relationship between three things. The first is the level of income per capita, the second is the level of economic growth, and the last is the economic structure or dependency on primary export commodities. Every one percent increase in per capita income will minimize the occurrence of conflict by one percent as well. In contrast to the dependence on export commodities, countries with export commodities of around 25 percent of GDP have a 33 percent risk of conflict. However, countries with export commodities of 10 percent of GDP have a reduced risk of conflict to 11 percent (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). According to Collier and Hoeffler, societies where the largest ethnic group accounts for 45-90 percent of the population or what is also known as "ethnic dominance," have about a third higher risk of conflict. On the other hand, ethnic and religious diversity reduces the risk of rebellion, so the role of religion becomes quite essential.

The discovery of natural resources in low-income countries can increase the risk of conflict. Especially if the resource is oil. Collier said that the risk of separatist group conflict in an area is around 68 percent if the area does not have oil. However, if a region has oil, the risk of conflict increases by up to 100 percent. Natural resources such as oil are being fought over by some separatist groups to manage them because they can generate profits that are used to finance their groups. The state, as the authority in managing natural resources, is also often involved in conflicts with several groups to take total management. In practice, on the ground, separatist groups use these natural resources to sell to foreign companies or manage sites around natural resource centers in order to take advantage of security money.

According to Bannon, dependence on natural resources affects the government. A strong and effective government must be able to compensate for some of the economic and social problems caused by resource dependence. But resource dependency tends to take a toll on governments, making them less able to resolve conflicts and more likely to exacerbate situations. It occurs through three mechanisms: corruption, state weakness, and reduced accountability (Bannon, 2003).

Based on the description of the Kurdish ethnic movement that differs from the government's interests in maintaining natural resources in the Kirkuk Region, this article attempts to briefly review the conflict that occurred in Kirkuk between the Kurds and the

Iraqi government. This article is expected to contribute new perspectives on conflict writing in the Middle East region, particularly the socio-political issues of the Kurdish ethnicity in contemporary times.

METHODS

This article was designed using the literature review method. According to Zed (2004), the literature review method is a writing activity based on textual sources. The characteristics of the literature review method can be practically formulated, including (a) the author deals directly with sources; (b) textual sources; (c) the source has an element of practicality-easily accessible.

The data sources in this paper are taken from several books, research journals, and literature on history, conflicts, facts, and other themes related to the dispute over oil resources between the Kurds and the Iraqi government in Kirkuk. Furthermore, the author critically examines the information obtained from various sources to find a series of facts and information related to natural resources and conflict. The ultimate goal is to get answers about how oil resources in Kirkuk can trigger conflict between the Kurds and the Iraqi government.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Geo-History of Iraq

With the basis of agriculture and its potential industry, especially its abundant oil reserves, Iraq can become a prosperous and powerful Middle Eastern nation. However, as it is relatively landlocked, Iraq highly relies upon some of the six neighboring countries to authorize Iraq to export oil and import the food and technical goods needed for consumption and infrastructure. Geo-historically, the modern Iraqi state lies in the region that was once the heart of the ancient kingdom of Mesopotamia and later became the Islamic dynasty of the Abbasids. After the Mongols invaded the region and became a battleground for rival Persians and Ottomans, Iraq ultimately triumphed and held power from the mid-sixteenth century until the First World War. During the period, the central Ottoman government's control of the population was separated by rivalries between townspeople and tribal members, Sunni and Shia Muslims, the Arab majority and the Kurdish minority, the Turkoman minority in the north, and Persians in the city center.

They never be uniform and complete. In the first centuries of Ottoman rule, the region was treated as a single province, with Baghdad as its center. Meanwhile, in the nineteenth century, administrative responsibilities were divided between the 'regents' of Mosul. At the same time, Basra and Baghdad were appointed directly by the central Ottoman government and were each expected to deal with heads of local communities within their territories. The administrative and territorial subdivisions within the three main provinces are only sometimes commensurate, and the amount of autonomy exercised by local leaders varies from one place to another (Schulman, 2022).

By 1900, the boundaries of the three Ottoman territories roughly corresponded to those encompassing contemporary Iraq, yet the borders with Persia were unclear and in dispute at various points, while the Ottomans claimed Arab maritime territory, including Qatar, as part of the Basra region. At the end of the gulf, Ottoman influence met with British vassals, that had sway over the waterway and had treaties with the sultanates on the lower Arabian coast. On the eve of World War I, the competition between the two imperial powers for influence in the upper Gulf region increased. After the war broke out, British and Indian troops were deployed into what is now Iraq and gradually expelled the Turks from their strongholds in Mesopotamia (Syk, 2009).

The boundaries of modern Iraq are derived from maps of the Middle East made under the auspices of the victors of the 1914-1918 war, particularly Britain and France, in the 1920s. Iraq, as did Palestine, became a British League of Nation Mandate in the Middle East. Delineating the borders between Iraq and its neighbors has remained an essential task throughout the twelve years of the mandate. The border drawn between Iraq and Syria in 1920 was only set in real terms in 1933, a year after the Kingdom of Iraq gained its independence, but when Syria was still a French Mandate. Turkey's claim to Mosul was not recognized in the Anglo-Turkish-Iraq agreement of 1926, although the issue of Kurdish separatism remained a problem in later relations between Turkey and Iraq, as it was between Iraq and Persia. Fighting in the border region between Iraq and Iran continued until the 1970s when the Algiers agreement between the Baathist republics of Iraq and the Shah of Iran in 1975 seemed to have eased the problem. However, it resurfaced after the revolution in Iran and Iraq's invasion of its eastern neighbor in 1980 (Jones, 2014).

In the early years of the Hashemite monarchy in Iraq, which lasted from 1921

until the revolution in 1958, relations were bitter with Najd, the Arab heartland from which Ibn Saud expelled Hashemites from the Hijaz on the Red Sea coast. The border between Iraq and Najd was drawn in 1922, including the demarcation of the Neutral Zone for shared grazing rights, but this did not stop raids and counterattacks by tribes on both sides. Things improved slightly in 1925 with the Treaty of Bahra, which the British negotiated with the Saudi delegation, but those living nearby still did not respect the borders. Further British mediation later resulted in the Iraqi-Saudi Agreement I 1931, a year before Iraq became independent and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was formally declared. British influence in Iraqi persisted after the expiration of the mandate in the form of bilateral agreements, but the relationship was severed when the Iraqi monarchy was overthrown in 1958. Concerning Kuwait, independent Iraq periodically claimed this British-protected sheik—at the instigation of King Ghazi in 1938, Nuri al-Said in 1958, and General Qassem in 1961, when Kuwait had just gained independence (Noor, 2014).

Who are the Kurds?

Kurdish is the name of an ethnic group. Even though they are in the Middle East region, the tribe is not included in the ranks of the Arab ethnicity and has a different language from Arabic, namely Kurdish. The Kurds are an Indo-European ethnic group (European tribes) who are predominantly Sunni Muslims and live in a region called Kurdistan (the land of the Kurds). The Kurdistan region is in several countries, such as southeastern Turkey, northern Iran, northern Iraq, northern Syria, and southern Soviet. The geographical character of Kurdistan, which consists of clusters of hills, a social structure full of tribal sentiments, and a livelihood system that relies on agriculture and herding, has made the Kurdistan region and people semi-exclusive throughout its history for around 3,000 years. In its history, no single nation or kingdom could fully control or conquer the Kurdish region and people, including Islamic rule (Sahide, 2013).

Most Kurds inhabit the northern Iraqi region in Iraq, including Arbil, Dahuk, Sulaymaniyah, Mosul, and Kirkuk, as strategic areas with rich oil resources (Edmonds, 1958). According to data from the Center Intelligence Agent (CIA), the Kurdish population in Iraq reaches 20%, making them the second largest ethnic group in Iraq. Differences between Arab and Kurdish tribes in Iraq are often the cause of conflict in that country. Since 1958, Arabs have occupied the government in Iraq, precisely during the

revolution that ended British rule, which was then allied with the Kurds in an attempt to maintain British rule in Iraq. After the revolution, several attempts were made by the Iraqi government to unite the Kurds into the government, but some extreme and separatist groups from the Kurds were reluctant to join the Iraqi government. The Kurds really do not want to be led by Arabs, especially after several ruling elites in Iraq who incidentally are Arabs were caught up in cases such as corruption. The Kurds became increasingly heated and began to show frequent rebellions. Major rebellions broke out in 1922-1924, 1930-1931, and 1932 under the leadership of Shaikh Mahmud from Sulaimaniyah (Sahide, 2013).

The relationship between the Kurds and the Iraqi government has led to several uprisings and revolutions. Hence, a gradual genocide of Kurds began (Joffe, 2000), first under British occupation and then in independent Iraq in 1932. A decade of fighting in the 1960s led to the creation of the Kurdistan Region in 1970 (Kelly, 2010). That same year, there was an attempt to reach an agreement between the Kurds and the Baghdad authorities to grant the Kurds autonomy. That said, it does not work because it is not geographically based. After 1974 the situation worsened and led them to another rebellion. Meanwhile, Mullah Mustafa (Kurdish leader until 1979) stepped up his demands again by asking to include Kirkuk in Kurdish autonomy (Bengio, 1990). Bad relations between the Kurds and the Iraqi government at the time led to a mass genocide of Kurdish civilians to end the rebellion in the north of the country.

The conflict between Iraq's central government and Kurds in northern Iraq escalated. During the Anfal operation, 1,200 villages were destroyed (Kirmanj & Rafaat, 2021). Over 180,000 people are missing and presumed dead (O'Leary, 2002). Then, the most famous chemical attack occurred in Halabja in March 1988 (Black, 1993). The city is located in the mountains near Sulaymaniyah, about 11 kilometers from the Iranian border. The city and the surrounding district were attacked for three days with chemical bombs and artillery fire. They used chemicals, including mustard gas and nerve agents. At least 5,000 people died instantly from the chemical attack.

The plan for ethnic cleansing of the Kurds is carried out not only through the Anfal operation and the use of chemical weapons but also through the demographic change of the populated areas is another process in this plan. Statistics for October 2000 show the scale of displacement that occurred. According to Benon Sevan, executive director of the

United Nations Oil for Food Program, 805,000 people were displaced in northern Iraq. This number represents 23% of the total Kurdish population in the autonomous zone (Romano, 2005). This repressive policy is not only against the Kurdish race but also against all Iraqis living in Iraq.

Beginning in 2003, the Iraqi Kurdistan region has gained the right to autonomy and can elect its own president with its seventeen ministers. Kurdistan has a president as well as a prime minister. The prime minister of Kurdistan is assisted by his deputy and seventeen ministers consisting of the minister of agriculture and water resources, the minister of culture and youth, the minister of education, the minister of information, the minister of religion, the minister of finance, the minister of health, the minister of higher education and research, the minister of labor and social affairs, minister of martyrs and anfal affairs, minister of cities and tourism, minister of natural resources, minister of peshmerga affairs, minister of planning, minister of commerce and industry, and minister of transport and communications (Monalisa, 2017).

On January 30, 2005 Iraq gave full de facto autonomy rights to Kurdistan and status as a proto-state (Christiastuti, 2017). Iraq promised an allotment of 17 percent of Iraq's budget as compensation and revenue sharing from oil revenues managed by the Iraqi government in the Kurdistan region. However, Iraq did not keep its promises and the Kurds felt disillusioned because of the non-transparent distribution of oil revenues (Misrawi, 2017). The Kurds of Kirkuk have made various efforts to fully acquire the oil resources of the region. However, Iraq also made similar efforts in retaining Kirkuk as part of their territory. The conflict between the two is difficult to find a point of peace because of the abundant presence of oil in Kirkuk.

Control over Oil Resources

Oil is the main source of wealth in the Gulf region, but it turns sensitive and emotional to answer who owns the reserves and controls the supply, given the history of foreign involvement in Middle East oil exploration. In the early years of the 20th century, the Persian Gulf states did not have their own oil companies and were only in a position to set up such companies once they reached more advanced levels of economic and technological development. Finally, the independent miners from the West founded oil companies and formed consortia, which led to the exploration of Gulf oil. In addition, Western governments began to account for oil as a critical resource for military and

civilian needs from the first decade of the century (Odell, 1997).

Access to oil supplies in Persia, particularly around the Shatt al-Arab, was one of the goals behind Britain's Mesopotamian campaign in the First World War. In 1914, at the instigation of Winston Churchill, Britain acquired a controlling stake in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC), one of the most active companies in early oil exploration, and eventually became British Petroleum. The scramble for oil concessions in the Gulf region gained momentum in the years after the World War. Under the exclusive agreements with the Arab sultanates along the Gulf coast, including Kuwait, Britain was in a position to oversee the allocation of exploration rights in these areas, although it did not mean British companies had the upper hand. In Iran, the APOC came to power years after the war. Meanwhile, in Saudi Arabia, companies are trying hard to win the competition to get concessions (Hollins, 1990).

In Iraq, the main concessionaires were the Iraq Petroleum Company or IPC, a consortium of American companies—most notably Standard Oil of New Jersey, now Exxon; Standard Oil of New York, now Mobil; and Gulf Oil, and three large European-Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Company, now Royal Dutch Shell; APOC, now BP; and Compagnie Francaise des Petroles. IPC and members of its group of companies won rights to exploit oil in northeastern Iraq (in 1925), in northwestern Iraq (in 1932), and in southern Iraq (in 1938). In the border areas with Iran, APOC subsidiaries retained rights won initially as part of a deal with the Shah of Persia. In each case, the original agreement stipulated that the Iraqi government should receive a royalty of four shillings (gold) per tonne of crude oil produced and 20 percent of all oil produced by concessionaires in the southern and northern territories of the West. In 1950, the amount of royalties paid by IPC was increased. In 1952, however, the royalty system was replaced entirely, and the Iraqi government and the oil companies agreed to share the profits those companies made from oil sales in Iraq before payment of foreign taxes. When the Iraqi monarchy was overthrown in 1958, the issue of the price of oil, over which companies retained overall control, became a major source of contention.

After several maneuvers by competing companies, encouraged by the Sheikh of Kuwait, the oil concession for the sultanate was granted in 1934 to a specially formed Anglo-American joint venture, the Kuwait Oil Company (KOC), with APOC and Gulf Oil each owning 50% of the shares. Production on the Kuwaiti portion of the Neutral

Zone between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia was handled by the American Aminoil group, which was granted a concession in 1945. Offshore rights were won by the Japanese company, the Arabian Oil Company, in 1958. Commercial oil production in Kuwait was delayed during the Second World War but began earnestly afterward. In 1951, the government obtained the same fifty-fifty profit-sharing arrangement with oil companies as had been adopted elsewhere in the Gulf, and Kuwait, like Iraq, became increasingly interested in gaining the right to set company pricing policies.

In response to declining oil revenues, due to a weakening market and cutting prices, in 1960, Iraq led the formation of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in a meeting in Baghdad which was attended by Iran, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Venezuela, in addition to Iraq itself. Although this organization successfully persuaded companies to resist further price reductions, it failed to return to the pre-1959 higher price levels in the short term. In 1971, OPEC members in the Gulf managed to secure an agreement with the oil companies that increased their receipts from pre-production by 50 percent. By then, the world had become heavily dependent on oil and increasingly reliant on supplies from the Middle East. In late 1971, Libya led the way toward nationalizing oil production, taking over BP's 50 percent stake in the Sarir oil field. In 1975, all commercial oil companies operating in Iraq were nationalized. In the same year, Kuwait founded the Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) after gaining control of KOC. In 1980, KNPC and related companies came under the auspices of the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, a company similar in scale to multinational corporations (Farzanegan et al., 2021).

Oil Rich in Kirkuk

Kirkuk is known for its rich oil reserves, produces nearly half of Iraq's daily exports, and is one of the most disputed areas between the Kurds and the Iraqi government in Baghdad. Oil is difficult to transport through the war-torn region, but the Kurds export nearly 500,000 barrels of oil per day. Most of this oil is sold to Turkey. The geopolitically strategic area of Kurdistan or northern Iraq and the availability of large amounts of oil, complete with pipelines to Europe and Israel, have made it increasingly difficult for the Kurds to become an independent state of being realized. Every activity to liberate oneself always ends in crushing and oppression. The desire for what is Baghdad considers a separatist movement is a reason behind Baghdad's military attacks on the Kurds

(Danisworo et al., 2013).

Kirkuk holds Iraq's second-largest oil reserves, located 238 kilometers north of Baghdad, Kirkuk is a province for 1.7 million Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmen. The region has long been at the center of the dispute between Baghdad and Erbil. There are five major oil-producing fields in Kirkuk, Avana, Bai Hassan, Qubbat Baba, Jambour and Khabaza, which are overseen by the Iraqi government's Northern Oil Company. Reporting from Kirkuk Now, Kirkuk's oil exports stopped from July 2017 to the first quarter of 2019 due to an impasse between the Iraqi government and the KRG (Kurdistan Regional Government). Iraqi troops took power in Kirkuk in October 2017, the federal government has taken control of five of Kirkuk's oil fields. The Iraqi Oil Ministry announced that Iraq and Turkey will reopen the 970-kilometer pipeline that carries Iraqi crude oil from Kirkuk to export processing in Ceyhan, located on the Mediterranean coast. Iraq's oil reserves are the fifth largest in the world with 140 billion barrels.

The Kurds of Kirkuk lived long before Iraq became a state. It is the reason the Kurds want independence and to separate themselves from Iraq. The Kurds feel that Iraq has colonized them by ignoring their interests. Kirkuk, with its oil reserves, prevents the Iraqi government in Baghdad unable just to let the city go. Economically, if Kirkuk is no longer part of Iraqi territory, Iraq will undoubtedly lose one of its economic resources, including its oil needs. The Kurdish movement to secede from parts of Iraq is considered a separatist movement. Phenomena like this are common in areas with high natural resources. Disputes between the government and several ethnic groups in regions that produce natural resources often lead to prolonged conflicts between the two (Rubin, 2007).

The discourse for peace began to be followed up seriously by the government during Saddam Husein's leadership. The government gave the ability for broader regional autonomy to the Kurds in Iraq and dared to guarantee the Kurdish economic rights over oil resources. Nevertheless, the Kurds see this situation as a paradoxical problem; on the one hand, the government wants to monopolize oil resources, but on the other hand, it gives the Kurds the right to manage it. This policy is likely the government's attempt to attract the attention of Western countries so that Iraq's economic sanctions do not continue. Negotiations were held in 1991 involving Jalal Talabani as Kurdish leader and an envoy from Baghdad. In these negotiations, the Kurdish envoy proposed an economic

coalition between Baghdad and the Kurds to share the percentage of oil profits in the Kirkuk region with the Kurds and the presence of international guarantees for the Kurds. However, the proposal was rejected by representatives from Baghdad (Gutama et al., 2022; McDowall, 2013).

There has been a lot of fighting between the forces of these two sides, and the Iraqi forces do not want the Kurdish region to be completely stable. Anfal's operation and the use of chemical weapons in northern Iraq prompted Kurds to launch an uprising against the Baathist regime in 1991. After the Gulf War in 1991, Kurdistan ruled itself de facto under the auspices of an international no-fly zone. The United States declared Britain and France after the 1991 Gulf War to maintain Kurds in northern Iraq and Shiite Muslims in the south (Goldstein, 1992). At that time, Iraqi planes were prohibited from flying within the zone. In other words, Kurdistan was an autonomous region until 2003. The Kurdish region has been in permanent conflict with successive Iraqi governments since the founding of the Iraqi state.

Oil-rich Kirkuk has never stopped being disputed by the KRG and the Iraqi government. Both are often involved in accusing each other in violations of oil management. In fact, the KRG had completely controlled Kirkuk in 2014 when they managed to defeat ISIS who had occupied the region. However, three years later, namely in 2017, the Iraqi government succeeded in recapturing Kirkuk and fully controlling oil management following the Kurdistan independence referendum (Lucente, 2022).

Iraq's Dependence and Weak Governance on Oil

Iraq is the second largest oil-producing country in OPEC. This country relies heavily on oil export commodities to maintain its economy. Iraq is even one of the twelve largest oil producing countries in the world and the top four countries with reserves with the largest oil reserves (Gray, 2012). However, after the war, Iraq's oil production decreased due to domestic security factors which impact political instability. In addition, Iraq has another big problem, namely the high rate of corruption by government officials. The elite officials in Iraq have inherited a very high culture of corruption from their predecessors. In 2020, the Iraqi Integrity commission revealed that 63 ministers were charged with 92 counts of corruption. While four ministers were convicted during 2020. The Iraqi Integrity Commission did not release further details on the ministers or officials accused or convicted of corruption, including the nature of the charges against them.

According to the Iraqi Integrity Commission, throughout 2020 there were 8,891 figures or figures charged with corruption charges. According to Transparency International, Iraq is one of the most corrupt countries in the world, ranking 157 out of 180 countries in the corruption perception index. The large anti-regime protests at the end of 2019 were largely driven by anger over corruption and depravity regarding public services (Dikarma, 2021).

Corruption or misuse of funds in Iraq has indeed become a political culture since the US invasion that overthrew Saddam Husein's leadership. Since the invasion, officials and politicians have only competed for state funds and have not used them for the benefit of the Iraqi people. The weakness of the Iraqi government system in enforcing the law against corruptors has made the culture of corruption even more entrenched. Most of the corruptors who have been found guilty by the courts are still able to escape punishment for their actions because of their affiliation with powerful political groups and being able to put pressure on the judiciary. The rampant level of corruption in the Iraqi government has strained relations between the Kurds who live in the Kirkuk region and some of the elite officials who live in Baghdad. The high rate of corruption is an indication that a country cannot uphold law and justice properly. As a result, Iraq's wealth of oil resources will not have a significant impact on the progress of the Iraqi people. However, it has only become a bone of contention for government elites and several separatist groups that have invited ongoing conflict.

As Bannon points out, the dependence on natural resources impacts the government. A strong and effective government must be able to compensate for some of the economic and social problems caused by resource dependence. But resource dependence tends to affect governments, making them less able to resolve conflicts and more likely to exacerbate them.

Kirkuk, which is in northern Iraq and far from Iraq's central government in Baghdad, makes the city less likely to be treated fairly by the Iraqi government. The government's lack of transparency regarding Kirkuk's oil governance has angered the city's Kurds. The Kurds carried out this resistance movement because the local population and government always marginalized them. The rights that the ruler should obtain seized them. Finally, they decided to be independent and did not want to be tied to the country they currently occupy. It is possible that if the rights of the Kurds were granted, this

conflict would end, but the Iraqi government does not want that (Assri, 2021).

The Impact of the Kurdish Conflict on Global Politics

Modernization in the Middle East region has changed many things in several aspects. In the aspect of government, for example, several Middle Eastern regions which were previously under monarchical rule have begun to transform into modern states (Muttaqin, 2018). In addition, in the economic aspect, the capitalist system has also begun to be implemented in several countries, including Iraq. The previous section explained how Iraq as a modern state tries to control oil resources, which are considered its main economic commodity (Noor, 2014). Iraq's passion for controlling oil resources clashed with the interests of the Kurdish ethnic group, resulting in a prolonged conflict. This conflict is not only a problem in Iraq's internal political conditions, more broadly this conflict also has an impact on global political dynamics.

One of the impacts that is quite visible as a result of this conflict is the strain on relations between Turkey and America. Turkey as a large country that has primordial ties and often conducts oil transactions with the Kurds feels aggrieved by the attitude of the United States which considers it too interfering in the affairs of the Kurdish ethnicity. The reckless attitude of the United States of America in sending weapons aid to the YPG-ethnic Kurds in Syria has angered the Turkish government. This unilateral action by the United States seems to have canceled the agreement with Turkey to fight the PKK (Theoretical Organization). The two countries entered into conflict after previously agreed violations occurred, as happened in August 2016 when Turkey began carrying out attacks on the YPG (Asyrofi, 2019; Ozkahraman, 2021).

Turkey's attitude which strongly opposes US interference in affairs with ethnic Kurds is also colored by economic motives. Turkey sees a potential economic threat if the United States successfully expands its hegemony in this oil-producing region. This is because the United States is very eager to control several oil-producing areas in the Middle East. Not wanting its economic interests to be disturbed, the Turkish government takes an adamant stance when a country tries to interfere in matters of conflict involving the Kurds and oil resources.

CONCLUSION

The conflict between the Kurds and the Iraqi government in Kirkuk is not just a

matter of the Kurds who want independence. However, there are several ecological and economic reasons for this conflict. Kirkuk, rich in oil and inhabited by Kurds, has forced the Iraqi government to do everything it can to defend the region. Another reason is weak governance and Iraq's dependence on oil in Kirkuk. The Kurds continue to voice their movement to secede from Iraq in line with Iraq's treatment of Kurds in the country's north. The impact of this conflict was significant thousands of civilians became victims in several uprisings. Iraq's treatment of the Kurdish people has also pushed the Kurds into a corner.

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