

# THE KURDS: THEIR HISTORY AND STRUGGLE FOR POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE

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## Introduction

One of the most challenging questions for contemporary societies has been the recognition of cultural differences and the governance over diversity.<sup>1</sup> Cultural and political leaders of complex communities tend to essentialize cultural boundaries by dichotomizing and categorizing differences. This promotes conflict and prevents effective management of cultural diversity. It has been the common experience of a number of contemporary nation states that not only categorize but also dichotomize and isolate minorities within their borders. A classic example of this, though very little known to the world at large, is the case of the Kurds.<sup>2</sup>

Kurdistan is situated in Western Asia. The Kurdish people, who are thought to have descended from the Medes of Central Asia have for several thousand years inhabited the region of the Zagros mountains which stand to the north of Mesopotamia and to the east of the Euphrates. The Kurds, who established one of the oldest civilized communities in the world, long before the appearance of the Turks or the Arabs as a nation in

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1 Crawford Young, *The Rising Tide of Cultural Pluralism*.

2 M. Hakan Yavuz, *A Preamble to the Kurdish Question: The Politics of Kurdish Identity*, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol. 18, No. 1, 1998.

the region, are still being denied the right to use their language and to have an identity of their own.<sup>3</sup>

Despite this uncertainty of origin, the Kurds are mentioned in Xenophon's book "Ten Thousand" in 400 BC.<sup>4</sup> Since then the word "Kurd" has appeared in the literary context of various peoples from the Middle East.<sup>5</sup> Ethnically the Kurds form a distinct group unrelated to their Turkish, Arab and Persian neighbours.

Geographical features of Kurdistan refer to a territory of 520,000km<sup>2</sup>, which spread over different countries. Since World War I, Great Kurdistan has been divided among five sovereign states, the largest portions of Kurdish territory being in Turkey (43%), followed by Iran (31%), Iraq (18%), Syria (6%) and the former Soviet Union (2%)<sup>6</sup>. In the absence of an independent state, Kurdistan is defined as the area in which Kurds constitute an ethnic majority today. In Iraq, the Kurds live in the north, in an autonomous area of 36,000km<sup>2</sup>. The main four cities of Southern Kurdistan are Arbil, Sulaimania, Dohuk and Kirkuk. These cities with parts of Dyala and Nineva cover 18% of the total land area of Iraq. In these cities the five million Kurdish population is dispersed. This area that constitutes more than half of the total area of Iraqi Kurdistan is now under the control of Kurdistan Regional Government. The remaining population lives in other area under the control of Iraqi government. The capital of Southern Kurdistan is Arbil expanding over 20 square kilometer above 36 parallel. It is considered the oldest city continuously inhabited in the world.

The total population of the Kurds is more than 35 million. In Iraq, there are around five million Kurds, who now run their own administration. In addition to the Kurds, Assyrians, Armenians and Iraqi

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3 Ewan W. Anderson and Khalil H. Rashidian, *Iraq and the Continuing Middle East Crisis*, pg. 24.

4 The Encyclopedia of Islam, "Kurds, Kurdistan," pg. 447.

5 Izady, *The Kurds*, pg. 34.

6 *Ibid.* pg. 3.

Turkoman live in Iraqi Kurdistan. The Kurds speak an Indo-European language, distinct from both Arabic and Turkish. A different dialect of the Kurdish language is Sorani, which is spoken in Southern Kurdistan, Kurmanjy in central and northern Kurdistan and Zaza in parts of central Turkey. Arabic is the second language in Iraqi Kurdistan. Kurdistan is rich in mineral resources (coal, uranium, chrome, copper, iron); oil is a watershed of the surrounding regions.

Kurds, like other Iranians, adopted different types of religion like Zoroastrianism around the sixth century BC. The infusion of an Indo-European (Iranic) language, culture and genetic element into the Kurdish population over the two millennia preceding the Christian era also includes the incorporation of Aryan religious practices and deities into indigenous Kurdish faith(s). Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Manichaeism and Christianity successively made inroads into Kurdistan<sup>7</sup>. After the Romans adopted Christianity and invaded Kurdistan, some Kurdish tribes (in and around the Turkey-Iraq-Syria border) adopted the new religion. Kurdistan and Mesopotamia became war frontiers between various Iranian empires and the Roman Empire until the arrival of Islam from Arabia.

### **Kurds In Early Islamic History**

The vibrant period of Kurdish history is marked by the reemergence of Kurdish political power from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> century, after three centuries under the centralized governments of the Sasanians of Persia and Byzantine Empire.

It culminated in three centuries, the 10<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> which can rightfully be called Islam's Kurdish centuries. Through steady emigration and military conquests, their political rule extended from central Asia to Libya and Yemen. Kurds established powerful dynasties that defended the Middle Eastern heartland against outside invaders such as the Crusaders, which produced the Kurds' golden age<sup>8</sup>.

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7 Ibid., pg. 131.

8 Ibid., pg. 41.

Reliable information concerning the Kurds dates back to the seventh century A.D., with the Muslim's conquest of northern Mesopotamia. It is during this period that historians began collecting useful information about Akrad (Arabic plural of Kurds). In the early years of Islam, Kurdish territories remained under the Islamic caliphate. Submitting to the Islam, Kurdish tribes willingly participated in the military expedition of the Muslims to extend the realm of their new religion.<sup>9</sup> The Muslim army arrived in southern Kurdistan (in Iraq) in 18 AH and in central Kurdistan (in Turkey) in 20 AH. The geographical proximity of southern Kurdistan to the capitals of Umayyad dynasty (Damascus) and that the Abbasids (Baghdad), caused the Kurdish tribes of the region to be influenced by political events in these capitals more than the Kurds of northern Kurdistan or other Iranians. Most of the Kurds converted to Islam. After that, many semi-independent Kurdish dynasties emerged.

Until the tenth century A.D., it seemed that the highest social and political organizations of the Kurds did not exceed the level of the tribe.<sup>10</sup> Among these dynasties were the Hasanwayhite (959-1015), the Kukboride of Arbil and Kirkuk (1144-1232), etc.<sup>11</sup> Later, the Muslims recaptured the Holy Lands from the Crusaders. The founder of the empire was the Kurdish Muslim leader Salahaddin (1169-1193), who defeated Richard the Lion Heart of England and went on to expand his domain to control, in addition to Kurdistan, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, the Holy lands, Arabia and the Yemen.<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, he did not establish a separate state for the Kurds. Although Kurds were conscious of their ethnicity, they did not carry any political loyalty. Kurds were known to be good fighters.

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9 Hassan Arf, *The Kurds: The historical and Political Study*, pg. 7.

10 Hakan Ozoglu, *State-Tribe Relations: Kurdish Tribalism in the 16th. – 17th century Ottoman Empire*, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (1996), 23(1), pg. 11.

11 Izady, *The Kurds*, pg. 47-47.

12 *Ibid.*, pg. 54.



Kurdish leaders had had an opportunity for demanding an independent Islamic state of their own, at least since the twelve century. They did not do so, because they believed in the concept of *ummah* with a single caliph.<sup>13</sup> However, the invasion of the Mongols destroyed many of these Kurdish kingdoms. Toward the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century the term, Kurdistan emerged for the first time, to refer to only southern Kurdistan. By the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the Kurdish period of Islamic history closed, and there began four Turkic centuries. While the major Kurdish dynasties vanished, smaller Kurdish principalities continued their political lives.

### **Kurdistan Under the Ottoman Empire**

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, two rivals empires emerged around Kurdistan; the Safavid empire (bringing Persian culture and the Shi'a sect to the east of Kurdistan), and the Osmanli empire (bringing Turkish culture and the Sunni sect to the northwest). Kurds, the majority of whom being Sunni aligned themselves with the Osmanlis. Another important reason, which encouraged the Kurds to align with the Turks was the Osmanlis' relatively peaceable, decentralized mode of governance as opposed to the Safavids centralized mode of the governance.<sup>14</sup>

The Kurds were divided into two main sectors in 1514. In that year, the battle of Chaldiran took place, between the Ottoman Turkish Empire and the Persian Safavid Empire. The Ottoman Empire was now able to take eastern Anatolia and the northern (Kurdish) part of Mesopotamia (modern Iraq).

The political significance of this event was that the Kurds were divided from this point right up to the present day between Turkish and non-Turkish overlord. The border between the Ottoman Empire and the

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13 Salih Aziz, *The Kurdish Issue in Iraq : Tragedy and Hope*, op.cit., pg. 70.

14 Zaki, *Khulasat*, pg. 164.

Persians now ran down the middle of Kurdistan. Perhaps three-quarters were assigned to the Ottomans. By the end of the seventeenth century, the Ottomans possessed a strong empire – stretching from the Ukraine to Yemen and from Iran to the western Mediterranean. Central government over this sprawling empire became a complicated affair, allowing certain Anatolian districts in the control of Kurdish and Turkish peoples to function as semi-independent units.

Although the idea of being part of a Kurdish national community emerged very early amongst certain literate members of the community, the formation of a social base for nationalism, for a variety of historical reasons, is a relatively recent development in Kurdistan. First amongst these is the special status, which Kurdistan enjoyed within the Ottoman Empire.<sup>15</sup> The idea of a nation-state in the modern sense and following the European model was more or less unknown in the Middle East until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This European political convention had caught on as much with Kurds as with any other nationality in the area at the time of the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire.

The first important Kurdish revolt of the 19<sup>th</sup> century broke out in 1806 in the principality of Baban, under the leadership of Abdurrahman Pasha. The principality, which Suleiman the Magnificent had established following the annexation of southern (Iraqi) Kurdistan, had developed considerably during the 17<sup>th</sup> century and played an important part in the political affairs of the area during the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. During this period, Kurdish life centered on tribal and religious orders. Within tribal life, Kurdish culture and language were preserved.

At the same time, the tribe kept a sizeable number of armed men loyal to the tribal chiefs. Sufis pledged loyalty to their Sheiks. The center of gravity of the Kurdish uprising remained in the mountain fastness of southern Kurdistan. After the Baban rising, Prince Mohammed, sovereign of the principality of Soran, lying between the Great Zab and the Iranian frontier, also attempted to take advantage of the Ottoman

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15 Gerard Chaliand, *A People without a Country*, op.cit., pg. 14.

Empire's difficulties and create an independent Kurdistan.<sup>16</sup> The Kurdo-Ottoman war broke out towards the end of July 1836. The Ottoman leadership then resorted to a ruse. They invoked religion, calling on the *Mir* (prince) to stop the war and to seek "a reconciliation amongst Muslims."

This appeal impressed the Mullahs and other religious figures in the *Mir's* entourage who exercised considerable spiritual influence over the masses. One Mullah, by the name of Khati, pronounced a *Fatwa* (religious decree), which was binding upon all the faithful, that said, "He who fights against the troops of the caliph is an infidel." There was mutual respect, interest and understanding between the '*ulama*' and tribal chiefs. This relationship served both sides when it came to establishing a good relationship with Osmanli sultans. Nevertheless, it was clear that the influence of the '*ulama*' was much stronger than that of any tribal chief in the second half of nineteenth century.<sup>17</sup>

For a period of thirty years after the destruction of the Baban, Soran and other Kurdish Emirates (1847-1880), the Kurds, as Van Bruinessen suggests, were less integrated into a state, whether Kurdish or Ottoman and less able to move toward a state structure of their own. The proclivities toward tribal rule were still too strong to allow such a development. The Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878 encouraged Ubaydallah's to declare his Kurdish nationalist program. A key cause of Ubaydallah's publicly declared independent Kurdish state was the Treaty of Berlin signed on 13 July 1878 as a conclusion to the Russo-Turkish war. Article 61 stated that it would undertake "improvements and reforms demanded by local requirements in the provinces and inhabited by the Armenians, and to guarantee their security against the Circassians and Kurds."<sup>18</sup>

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16 *Ibid.*, pg. 18-19.

17 For more information about the emergence of '*ulama*' as a spiritual and political power in Kurdistan, see Martin van Bruinessen, Agha, Shaikh and State.

18 For a full text of the Treaty of Berlin, see J.C. Hurewitz, Diplomacy in the Near and Middle-East. pg. 189-191.



At this the end of this first simple stage of Kurdish nationalism, all of the European powers as emphasized in the Treaty of Berlin, were opposed to Kurdish independence movements. The creation of the Hamidiye Light cavalry regiments delineates the second stage of Kurdish nationalism. Bayram Kodaman suggests that Abdulhamid II's creation of the Hamidiye reflected the four major objectives of his regime: centralization, Islamic unity, the politics of balance, and the politics of reform.<sup>19</sup> In 1896, in the wake of increased Armenian revolutionary activity, the Hamidiye was sent against the Armenians, which resulted in much bloodshed for both sides. Their struggle had assumed the characteristics of a civil war, with the Ottomans supporting the Kurds and the Russians and the British supporting the Armenians.

The Young Turk revolution of 1908, beginning the third stage of Kurdish nationalism, led immediately to the public establishment of Kurdish nationalist organizations, especially in the capital city of Istanbul. Following the March 1909 mutiny and overthrow of Abdul Hamid II, the Young Turks, feeling they could do without non-Turkish intellectuals, threw themselves into their ultra-nationalist adventure. Even during the "Young Turk spring", there had been revolts in Kurdistan in Dersim, where the uprising lasted until the end of 1909.

In early 1910, the revolt spread throughout southern Kurdistan and the disturbances continued in Kurdistan during that period till World War I but generally speaking, this pre-1914 period was a short-lived political apprenticeship for an emerging Kurdish intelligentsia, which was only just beginning to feel its way. These developments left behind in Kurdistan only major chiefs and religious leaders to fend for the Kurds and their aspirations. None of these leaders was even remotely capable for fathoming the requirements of the fast arriving new world. Instead, individuals like Sharaf al-Din Bitlisi, the spokesman for an independent Kurdistan at the end of World War I were unacceptable. At his historic moment, when independent states were being created thanks to the professionalism,

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19 Robert Oslon, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism*, pg. 7.



wit and political prowess of other local ethnic leaders, Kurdish politicians could hardly have been any less professional and convincing to the European powers.

Mosul was a major problem, as under the secret Sykes-Picot Treaty of 1916 between Britain and France, France was to take half of the Vilayet of Mosul to add to its Syrian demands. Oil production was already a strategic factor. Britain wanted both parts of the Mosul Vilayet, which contained Kirkuk. Oil was struck in Kirkuk in 1927, making that area which is located in Southern Kurdistan, together with Mosul the richest known oil-production region in the world.

### **Kurdish Political Struggle In The Post First World War (1918-1930)**

The Kurdish minority within Iraq has striven for independence since the Ottoman Empire was dismembered at the end of World War I. Iraq recognized the Kurds as an officially constituted ethnic minority with legal rights in 1925 as a condition set by the League of Nations for the inclusion of Mosul in Iraq.<sup>20</sup> The victory of the Allies in World War I in 1918, the introduction of the "Nation-State System," and the spread of "new thoughts" in the Middle East were strong challenges to the traditional life of Arabs, Kurds, Persians and Turks. Political conflict among these peoples in the region is one result of that "New World Order." The case of the Arabs and Kurds in Iraq demonstrates this reality. While the helpless Kurds missed the excellent opportunity presented at the end of World War I, and the breakup of the old empires, they were fully involved in its most horrendous devastation. The front line of fire between the Russian and the Ottoman forces moved back and forth across northern and western Kurdistan. By 1917 and 1918, British and the French were also warring on Kurdish soil. Moreover, Kurdistan was a land with its infrastructure

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20 Othman Ali, "The Kurds and the Lausanne Peace Negotiations", 1922-1923, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 3, July 1997, pg. 521-534; Oles M. Smolansky with Bettie M. Smolansky, *The USSR and Iraq: The Soviet Quest for Influence*, pg. 63; Michael M. Gunter, "The Kurds of Iraq: Tragedy and Hope", pg. 1-5.

wrecked, its society in utter disarray, its intelligentsia dispersed, and the tribal chieftains and sheiks in full control of what were left.<sup>21</sup>

The dilemma of the Kurds from the Mudros<sup>22</sup> (31 October 1918) to the Treaty of Sevres (10 August 1920) is centered on the question of autonomy or independence. The agreement between Sherif Basha and Boghas Nubar of 29 November 1919 confronted the Kurds with the necessity of declaring for a policy of autonomy or independence. Some Kurdish nationalists wanted independence, such as Bedir Khan, who wanted separation from Turkey but recognition of the Sultan as Caliph.

Bedir Khan wanted the self-determination principles of President Wilson to be implemented in Kurdistan. Britain colonized the Kurds of Mosul and the Arabs of Mesopotamia (Baghdad and Basra) in 1918. Britain planned to form a modern state from Baghdad and Basra, since such a state would be able to protect its trade route to India. There was no plan for the political future of the Kurds.<sup>23</sup>

Two factors prevented a Kurdish nation-state in the settlement following World War I. One was internal,<sup>24</sup> resulting from the absence of credible, worldly statesmen following the demise of the princely houses three generations earlier. As a body, the Kurds were not ready to take advantage of such a unique opportunity to demand an independent state of their own. Tribal loyalty was greater than the urge for Kurdish

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21 Mehrad R. Izady, *The Kurds a Concise Handbook*, op.cit., pg. 59.

22 On 30 October 1918, the World War I on the Middle Eastern Front was officially ended with the signing of the Treaty of Mudros between Britain and the Ottoman Empire. This Treaty called for Turkish withdrawal from Mesopotamia, it made no mention of Mosul city. Later on it became very clear with the signing of the San Remo agreement on 24 April 1920 that France agreed to relinquish the Wilayet of Mosul to Britain in return for other territory and a share in the Turkish Petroleum Company (TPC) which was created by Turkey and Germany in the time of sultan Abdul Hamed. It later became the Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC) in which Britain was the major shareholder and controlled its administration.

23 Walid Hamdi, *al-Kurd wa Kurdistan*, in *Wathaiq al-Baritania*, pg. 100-141.

24 *Ibid.*, pg. 59.

nationalism. Aghas and Sheiks were more concerned with retaining their own authority and increasing their personal influence at the expense of Kurdish rivals and enemies, than with uniting for a common national purpose. Urban Kurds may have understood what was at stake, but they lacked a popular following and were neither conditioned nor capable of negotiating effectively on an international platform.<sup>25</sup> Another reason was external. U.S. President, Woodrow Wilson had vigorously promoted the idea of "self-determination" for all nationalists living within the boundaries of the defunct empires of the Germans, Austrians, Ottomans and Russians.

The Treaty of Sevres (August 10, 1920), which dismantled the defeated Ottoman Empire, clearly recognized this. Section III, Articles 64 provided for the creation of a Kurdish state on the Kurdish territories and the Allies reached an agreement known as the "Treaty of Sevres" in August 1920, which was signed by the defeated Sultan. The Treaty included three articles dealing with the Kurdish issue. They are worthy of a closer examination:

#### Article 62

*A Commission, having its seat in Constantinople and made up of three members appointed by the Governments of Britain, France and Italy will, during the six months following the implementation of the present treaty, prepare for local autonomy in those regions where the Kurdish element is preponderant lying east of the Euphrates, to the south of a still-to-be established Armenian frontier and to the north of the frontier between Turkey, Syria and Mesopotamia, as established in Article 27 II (2 and 3). Should agreement on any question fail to be unanimous; the members of the commission will refer it back to their respective governments. The plan must provide complete guarantees as to the protection of the Assyro-Chaldeans and other ethnic or religious minorities of the area. To this end, a commission made up of British, French, Italian,*

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25 Edgar O'Balance, *The Kurdish Struggle 1920-1994*, op.cit., pg. 12-13.



*Persian and Kurdish representatives will visit the area so as to determine what adjustments, if any, should be made to the Turkish frontier wherever it coincides with the Persian frontier as laid down in this treaty.*

#### Article 63

*The Ottoman Government agrees now to accept and execute the decisions of the two commissions envisaged in Article 62 within three months of being notified of those decisions.*

#### Article 64

*If within one year from the coming into force of the present Treaty, the Kurdish people within the areas defined in Article 62 (comprising western Kurdistan) shall address themselves to the Council of the League of Nations in such a manner as to show that a majority of the population of these areas desire independence from Turkey, and if the Council then considers that these people are capable of such independence and recommends that it should be granted to them, Turkey hereby agrees to execute such a recommendation and to renounce all rights and title over these areas. The detailed provisions for such renunciation will form the subject of a separate agreement between the principal Allied Powers and Turkey. When such renunciation takes place, the principal Allied Powers will raise no objections to the voluntary adhesion to such an independent Kurdish State of the Kurds inhabiting that part of Kurdistan, which has hitherto been included in the Mosul Vilayet (comprising central Kurdistan).<sup>26</sup>*

This treaty was signed by the Moribund Ottoman Sultanate in Istanbul, but the successor to the Ottoman, the newly founded Turkish Republic under Mustafa Kemal Pasha (later name Ataturk, i.e. "Father of

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26 The material is reprinted from Gerard Chaliand, ed. *People without a Country: The Kurds and Kurdistan*, op.cit., pg. 34.

the Turks") did not consider itself bound to observe it. The terms of the Treaty of Sevres were never enacted.<sup>27</sup>

As a result of the failure to implement the terms of the Treaty of Sevres, the Kurdish's question became a matter of internal law and the Kurds, previously divided between the Ottoman Empire and Persia, found themselves divided among five states. The principle of establishing international boundaries became a matter of inviolate sovereignty, however illegitimately these boundaries may have been created originally. Under the Treaty of Laussane in 1922, in which there was no mention of Kurds or Armenians, Turkey established control over eastern Thrace and all Anatolia, with only Mosul remaining in dispute. Working towards turning Turkey into a secular state, Kemal abolished the Sultanate in 1922.

On third March 1924, he abolished the caliphate, thus depriving Aghas and Sheiks of their religious authority. He then set about removing all vestiges of a separate Kurdish entity, which had become more than just a general Kurdish talking point. He closed Kurdish schools, teaching foundations and religious fraternities, and banned Kurdish associations and publications.

Actually, this British military and civil officers in the region tendered several proposals for Kurdistan, this includes the establishment of an independent Kurdistan (in Turkey first) and adding Mosul to it later (see item number 64 of the Treaty of Sevres) or forming an independent Kurdish state in Mosul,<sup>28</sup> or adding Mosul to Mesopotamia and forming the state of Iraq.<sup>29</sup> The British waited until other internal and external factors develop which may be helpful in determining one of the above scenarios.

The British adopted the third proposal during 1918-1923. Kurds interpreted this policy as an indication that Britain would help in the

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27 Mehrdad R. Izady, *The Kurds a Concise Handbook*, op.cit., pg. 59-60.

28 Walid Hamid, *Al-Kurd wa Kurdistan*, in *wathaiq al-Baritania*, op.cit., pg. 110-123.

29 *Ibid.*, pg. 185-189.

creation of an independent state. However, after 1923, Britain's policy shifted to the second, rather than to the first.<sup>30</sup>

In March 1925, a Kurdish revolt, under the leadership of Sheik Said, erupted the revolt spread widely. Although, it was a tribally based uprising and the lively Kurdish nationalist association at Diyarbakir failed to respond to Said's call to join him. By mid-April, Ataturk had completely crushed the insurrection. The significance of Sheik Said was that he was the first Islamic leader who tried to reestablish the Islamic Caliphate after its collapse. In addition, after the World War I, Persia was plunged into turmoil. The largest insurgency in eastern Kurdistan erupted in October 1921. This was led by Agha Simko at a time when the area was threatened by British, Turkish and Russian armies. In 1922, Reza Khan led a military expedition against him dispersing his followers and driving him into the new adjacent state of Iraq.

Meanwhile, in October 1922, Sheik Mahmood announced the formation of a cabinet and on 18<sup>th</sup> proclaimed himself "King of Kurdistan" in southern Kurdistan. Although, relations with the British deteriorated, they stood by their joint declaration with Iraq of 22 December 1922 in which they recognized the right of the Kurdish people to form a government within the borders of Iraq.<sup>31</sup> The war started between Sheik Mahmood's followers and the British military in 1922-1924 and at the end, the British military controlled the area. Finally, on 16 December 1925, the council of the League of Nations decided in favor of the attachment of Mosul to Iraq and fixed the frontier between Iraq and Turkey.<sup>32</sup>

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30 In the Treaty of Laussane (1923), the recommendation to form a Kurdish state was deleted and replaced with a recommendation to the Iraqi governments (and Britain) to use the Kurdish language and appoint Kurdish officials in Kurdish cities and towns.

31 Gerad Chaliand, *The Kurdish Tragedy*, op.cit., pg. 52.

32 To resolve this conflict, the League of Nations decided to ascertain the wishes of the population of the Wilayet Mosul, most of who are Kurds. To this end, an International Investigation Committee was sent into the Wilayet of Mosul, on 16 June 1925. It published its report, which proposed that the Wilayet be put under the mandate of the League of Nations for a period of 25 years. It also stressed that the control of the administration and of judicial and educational matters must be given to the Kurds and that Kurdish must be the official language.



Meanwhile, although Sheik Mahmood had taken refuge on the Iraq-Iranian border, he was not out of the political picture. Despite the resolution of the council of the League of Nations in 1925, which settled the problem in international law, Baghdad's control over Kurdistan was still not, in fact, assured at the time of Iraq's accession to independence in June 1930.

The Anglo-Iraqi treaty, which ended the colonial government's mandate, made no mention of the rights of the Kurds. In April 1931, Sheik Mahmood's troops suffered a severe defeat and he crossed over into Iran. Thereafter, he was forced to give himself up to the Baghdad's government, which kept him under house arrest until his death in 1956.<sup>33</sup>

### **The First Barzani Movement**

The family of the Sheiks of Barzani has played a central role in the Kurdish nationalist movement since the 1930s until the present day. The first revolt to win them fame was in the Ottoman era and led to the arrest and then hanging of its leader Sheik Abdel Salam. The British and Iraqis were supported by the Royal Air Force bombers, whose appearance alone stunned the Kurdish villagers more than the destruction their bombs brought to their lives and property.

His brother Sheik Ahmad was at the heart of a revolt movement, which only ended in 1934, with the exile of the whole family.<sup>34</sup> A harsh result of Mahmood's and Ahmad's fierce and long struggle against the British in central Kurdistan, however inadvertent, was that it weakened British resolve to grant local Kurdish autonomy, as expressed in the League of Nations articles of incorporation of central Kurdistan into the state of Iraq. The guerilla struggle continued which kept the whole region in a state of insecurity until 1934. After 1934, a relative calm descended upon the ravaged countryside of central Kurdistan, for the first time since 1914.

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33 Gerad Chaliand, *The Kurdish Tragedy*, op.cit., pg. 53-54.

34 *Ibid.*, pg. 54.

A new party called Hewa (Hope) emerged in 1941 and it was in fact to be the organizational base of the new leader, a member of the Barzani family called Mullah Mustafa Barzani. After he was sentenced along with Sheik Ahmad to house arrest in Sulaymaniya, he escaped from prison. The Kurdish movement, however, which was originally directed against Britain, found itself in conflict with both pro-Iraqis and pan-Arabist, as power slowly shifted from the hands of the British to the hands of Arabs. From 1943-1945, the war occurred between the Kurdish Liberation Movement and the Iraqi regime. Barzani and his followers were forced to seek refuge in Iran in 1945, where he directed the armed forces in the ephemeral Mahabad republic.<sup>35</sup> After it met with disaster, Barzani spent eleven years in exile in the USSR.

In Mahabad in November 1945, Qazi Mohammed announced that the Komala Party would become the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran. Contrary to Soviet advice, on January 1946, Qazi Mohammed wearing a Soviet-Type uniform and his religious headdress proclaimed Kurdish 'independence' to an assembly of Kurds in the "Chwar Chura (Four Lamps), the open square in the town of Mahabad in the "Kurdish Republic of Mahabad."

On 11 February, Qazi Mohammed was appointed president.<sup>36</sup> An attempt was made to draw in notables from all over territory, especially from Turkey and Iraq. Qazi Mohammed faced several problems, the first being that the Soviets refused to guarantee the defense of his new republic. The second was that his only means of defense were small groups

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35 The Kurdish Republic of Mahabad came about when Iranian Kurds declared their independence in January of 1946. Mullah Mustafa Barzani moved several thousand of his forces from Iraq into Iran, and fought the Shah's army. He was encouraged by the support that he newly declared republic had received from the Soviet Union. However, the Western powers were opposed to a Kurdish state, as were Turkey and Iran. The Shah reached an accord with the Soviets to withdraw their troops from Iran and terminate their support for the Kurds and the Azerbaijanis in return for allowing the Soviets to explore for oil in northern Iran. Once the Soviets withdrew their aid, the Republic of Mahabad collapsed in 1947. For a detailed study on this issue, see William Eagleton Jr., *The Kurdish Republic of Mahabad*, London: Oxford University Press, 1963.

36 Edgar O'Balance, *The Kurdish Struggle 1920-1994*. op.cit., pg. 29.

of armed followers of various Sheiks who had promised allegiance, but these were mercurial, undisciplined and of doubtful reliability. Iranian troops entered Tabriz, its capital, on 13 December 1946, when the self-declared republic collapsed. As winter approached, tribal support for the Mahabad republic fell rapidly away, and in 1947, Qazi Mohammed and two other leaders were hanged.

## **The End of the Monarchy in Iraq**

General Qasim seized power in Baghdad on 14 July 1958. This awakened fresh hope in the Kurds, since the provisional constitution of 7 July recognized, for the first time, that the Arabs and the Kurds were associates in Iraq. The constitution guaranteed their respective national rights within the Iraqi entity. Symbolically, the arms of the new republic were made up of an Arab sword crossed with a Kurdish dagger.<sup>37</sup>

Actually, the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) was established in southern and central Iraq in the 1930s and by the 1940s, it had spread to Kurdistan.<sup>38</sup> The significance of ICP was that it was the first political party in Iraq that recruited different ethnic and religious groups (Arabs, Kurds, Muslims and Christians, etc.) to its ranks, and it recognized the right of the Kurds for self-determination.

When the World War II ended and all Allied occupation forces were withdrawn, the governments of Iran and Iraq were free to assert their authority over their Kurdish subjects, although this was somewhat restricted owing to the lack of a competent, well-armed military. Often, mountain Kurds were left to fight among themselves or, if quiescent, left alone for the time being. In the cities, detribalized Kurds became active in the Kurdish cause, making strides in political development.<sup>39</sup>

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37 Ibid., pg. 56.

38 Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, *Journal of Minority Affairs*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1988, pg. 134-5.

39 Edgar O'Balance, *The Kurdish Struggle 1920-1994*, op.cit., pg. 37.



The fact is that the ICP had an agenda against Islam and it introduced new types of social relationship and political agendas.<sup>40</sup> ICP became the largest political party in 1959-1960. It aligned itself with the first President of Iraq, Abdul Karim Qasim, who was also a dictator. Further, ICP introduced an organizational structure and a relationship with other parties, which were soon adopted by them.

Several massacres took place in Mosul and Kirkuk.<sup>41</sup> Following the 1959 events, the Qasim government began to interfere more in Kurdish affairs, installing police positions in the Kurdish provinces, disbanding Kurdish militia groups, and evading questions of autonomous rights for the Kurds. With the hope of creating a *modus vivendi*, Mulla Mustafa laid before the Iraqi government his demands, among which were the following:

- Kurdish to become the first official language in the Kurdish autonomous region.
- The police to be entirely Kurdish, as well as the army units stationed in the Kurdish region.
- The Kurdish provincial government to control education, health, communications and municipal and rural affairs.
- A substantial share of the oil industry of the Mosul-Kirkuk region to be spent in Kurdistan.
- The Vice Premier, the Assistant Chief of Staff and the Assistant Ministers to be Kurds.
- The employment of Kurdish Army units outside the Kurdish region to be made only with the consent of the Kurdish Republic authorities.<sup>42</sup>

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40 Ibid., pg. 59.

41 Salih Aziz, *The Kurdish Issue in Iraq: Tragedy and Hope*, op.cit., pg. 74.

42 Arfa, *The Kurds*, pg. 134. Edgar O'Balance, *The Kurdish Revolt 1961-1970*, provides a detailed account of some of the military developments.

The Kurdish Revolt in Iraq began to gather momentum in March 1961-1962, when Mullah Mustafa Barzani arrived back in Barzan. The second and third offensive in Iraq occurred during 1963-1965 and the southern Kurdistan became more destabilized during this period. Despite the ICP national program (which accommodated both Arabs and Kurds), Arab and Kurdish nationalists formed their own political party. The new nationalist parties integrated the traditional agenda and objectives of nationalism into the ideology of socialism.

The Ba'ath party is an example of an Arab organization. The Ba'ath ruled Iraq in 1963 and from 1968 onwards.<sup>43</sup> The defeat and the death of Marshal Aref a few days before the offensive, favored the opening of negotiations, which concluded, on 29 June 1966, with a cease-fire agreement and recognition of the 'national rights of the Kurds.' Nevertheless, from 1966 to 1969, the autonomy of Kurdistan enabled Barzani to conduct a policy, and even broadly independent diplomacy.<sup>44</sup> Both of the Kurdish leaders sought to utilize their alliance, Barzani with the U.S and Talabani with the Iraqi regime, in order to strengthen themselves relative to each other. It is probable that the Kurds could have achieved a limited, workable autonomy plan in the 1970s had they not been encouraged by the Shah and the US to fight the Iraqi government.

### **The Kurdish Question in Iraq and Foreign Interference (1970-1975)**

When the Ba'ath party came to power in 1968, it was obsessed with security and did not wish to share power with anyone, particularly the Kurds who were "the strongest organized force in Iraq." The Ba'ath sought to present itself as the leader of all of Iraq and not just the Arab part. Saddam Hussein declared that the Ba'ath would represent 'the will of the Arabs as well as the Kurds...'<sup>45</sup>

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43 To learn more on the establishment of KDP, see Jalal al-Talabani, *Kurdistan wa al-Haraka al-Qaumiyah al-Kurdiyah*, pg. 269. and for the events after 1975, see Edmund Ghareeb, *The Kurdish Question in Iraq*, pg. 181-185.

44 Gerard Chaliand, *The Kurdish Tragedy*, op.cit., p. 60.

45 Saddam Hussein, *On Current Events in Iraq*, pg. 15.

The Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) pledged to bring a peaceful settlement to the Kurdish problem and issue a decree to establish a Kurdish academy for the study of Kurdish culture and a Kurdish university in Sulaimaniya.<sup>46</sup> The Ba'ath also issued a proclamation praising the Bazzaz Plan and made it the basis for any settlement regarding the Kurdish problem.<sup>47</sup> The Ba'ath dominated RCC, revised Bazzaz's<sup>48</sup> 12-point Declaration and renamed it the March Agreement of 1970.<sup>49</sup> At the outset, the Ba'ath party, which had left some very bad memories after its first period in power, seemed to prefer to make overtures rather than confrontations. The party representative, Saddam Hussein, negotiated an agreement with Mullah Mustafa Barzani.

The agreement explicitly declared, "The people of Iraq are made up of two principal nationalities, the Arab and the Kurdish." Kurdish was to be given the status of the second national language alongside Arabic, and an autonomous Kurdish region was to be established within four years of the signing of the treaty. Only Kurdish-speaking government officials would be appointed to serve within the autonomous region. A Kurd was actually appointed the Vice President of Iraqi Republic.<sup>50</sup> In the short term, the agreement of 11<sup>th</sup> March 1970 led to the legislation of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iraq (KDPI), and the agreement even provided for a census, which was to have served as the basis for setting the territorial limits of Kurdistan, but that was never organized.

The region of Kirkuk, which Baghdad refused to include in Kurdistan, was already a principal cause of disagreement between the Ba'ath party and the Kurds. The Kurdish leadership of the 1970s was very eager to

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46 ARR., 1-15 August 1968, pg. 219.

47 Ibid.

48 When Abd. al-Rahman al-Bazzaz, a civilian and Iraqi nationalist, was appointed Iraqi Premier in 1965, he declared that the aim of his government was to 'establish a permanent constitutional regime' and to 'preserve Iraqi territorial unity.'

49 Hanna Yousif Freij, Alliance Patterns of a Secessionist Movement: The Kurdish Nationalist Movement in Iraq, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 1998.

50 Izady, The Kurds, pg. 67.



declare their desire for an independent state and to serve American Cold War interests in the region. However, Mullah Mustafa Barzani overestimated the USSR. The fact was that the U.S did not perceive the Kurdish issue as being important enough to destabilize two of her most important allies, Turkey and Iran. U.S National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger viewed the Kurds simply as an instrument to weaken a Soviet ally and his main interests were never for the human and legal rights of the Kurds within Iraq. For Kissinger, the Kurdish issue was secondary to the Soviet-American competition in the region.<sup>51</sup>

The Kurdish leaders desired autonomy but the ultimate objective was to gain independence if the right international situation materialized.<sup>52</sup> On the other hand, Barzani stated that he fully trusted the U.S and was "ready to become the 51<sup>st</sup> state in U.S" The Pike Report reveals that Nixon, Kissinger and the Shah had no desire or intention of allowing the Kurds to succeed in their attempts to establish an autonomous state.<sup>53</sup>

For four years, the U.S armed and financed Kurdish uprisings against Iraqi only to abandon the Kurds when they felt it expedient to do so. In the early 1970s, the U.S joined Iran to foment such as an anti-Baghdad revolt. In a 1970 New York Times interview, the Shah of Iran stressed that the Soviet's sought influence in the region and had put pressure on Baghdad to seek an accommodation with the Kurds, which if successful would put the Soviets in favor with both the Iraqis and the Kurds.<sup>54</sup> In 1972, the war was ready to start up again and assassination attempts on Barzani finally succeed in breaking off relations between the two parties. The March agreement was a little more elaborate than the 12-point but the key issue of Kirkuk, which the Kurds wanted within their region given its rich oil resources and pipeline, remained unsettled. Barzani accepted the

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51 Ibid., pg. 33.

52 Richard W. Cottam, "The Case of the Kurds : Minorities in the Middle East", paper presented at the 1977 American Political Science Association Meeting, pg. 25.

53 The Village Voice, op.cit., pg. 87.

54 New York, 26 April 1970. The Soviet leadership in an article in Pravda urged the Ba'ath Party to seek an accommodation with the Kurds, see ARR, 1-14 February 1970, pg. 87.

March agreement of 1970 as a temporary measure. His forces were exhausted after nine years of fighting and he realized he could not defeat the strongest government Iraq had known since 1958.

Initially, Barzani did not believe that an Iraqi Kurdistan could have real peace under the socialist Ba'ath. Besides, if Barzani allowed the Ba'ath to achieve development and national cohesion in his region, it would undermine his legitimacy and the tribal authority upon which his rule rested.<sup>55</sup>

The war began in February 1974 with artillery fire at the Iran-Iraq border, but the Iraqi army launched its real offensive in April 1974. The initial negotiation took place as early as the Autumn of 1974 under the aegis of President Boumedienne and with the support of Anwar al-Sadat and King Hussein of Jordan. These dealings began to take a more concrete form at the 1975 OPEC summit in Algeria when Saddam Hussein and the Shah of Iran had a *tete-a-tete* which finally produced an agreement: strict and effective control of the border between Iran and Iraq was redefined to the benefit of Iran. On the very day of the Algerian agreement, Iran pulled its artillery and anti-aircraft weapons out of Kurdistan.<sup>56</sup> The Kurds were left alone to face Iraq's revenge.<sup>57</sup>

The Kurdish revolution collapsed and its leaders took refuge in Syria, Iran the United States. The abrupt collapse of the Barzani Kurdish insurrection in Iraq was a setback to Kurdish aspiration, not only in Iraq but also to Kurds in Turkey and Iran, who had closely followed Barzani's fortunes and misfortunes and had listened to inflammatory exhortations beamed out on insurgent Iraqi radio broadcasts. Barzani wrote a desperate appeal to Kissinger "...We feel, your excellency, that the United States has a moral and political responsibility towards our people who have committed themselves to your country's policy".<sup>58</sup>

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55 Ibid., pg. 25.

56 Gerard Chaliand, *The Kurdish Tragedy*, op.cit., pg. 63.

57 Ghareeb, *The Kurdish Question*, pg. 174.

58 Roger Morris, *Uncertain Greatness: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy*, pg. 278.

The tragic end to this episode is best illustrated by a curt comment made by a high U.S. official most likely Kissinger himself that covert action should not be confused with missionary work.<sup>59</sup> Many Kurds, some for the first time, became aware of their Kurdish identity and potential. These Kurdish stirrings began to alarm governments.<sup>60</sup>

In August 1977, Jalal Talabani went to Kurdistan and with Komala and the Kurdistan Socialist Party, organized a new party: the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK).<sup>61</sup> The KDPI was reborn in 1976 under the leadership of Idris and Masud Barzani.<sup>62</sup> A number of small Islamic parties also began to appear during the 1980s.

After the Algeria Agreement, the Iraqi government continued with its program of Arabization and Ba'athization. "Arabization" meant the forcible eviction of Kurds and Turkomans from their homes and jobs, particularly in the city of Kirkuk, and their replacement with Arabs. "Ba'athization" meant the attempt to persuade Kurds to become

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59 The Village Voice, *op.cit.*, pg. 278.

60 Edgar O'Balance, *The Kurdish Struggle 1920-1994*, *op.cit.*, pg. 102.

61 The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) was founded in 1975 by Jalal Talabani and others who had become disillusioned with what they described themselves against (feudalist, tribalism, bourgeois rightist...) Kurdish leadership whom they blamed for the collapse of the rebellion against Autonomy Law of 1974. (DMcDP. 343 quoting from PUK, *revolution in Kurdistan*, p.1). Two Iraqi groups came to form the PUK, Komala, a Marxist-Leninist group and the socialist movement of Kurdistan (KSM). The party demanded autonomy for Kurdistan and democracy for Iraq. Jalal Talabani remained the leader of the PUK. Now they controlled the southeastern part of the enclave, focused on the city of Sulaymaniyah. From late 1994 until 1996, the PUK controlled Arbil. It had friendly relations with PPK (before but they have a current conflict which started in September 2000) and an alliance with Iran.

62 The Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iraq (KDPI) was founded by Mullah Mustafa Barzani and others. It was the first Iraqi Kurdish nationalist political party. In the 1960s it split into two factions that led by leftwing orientation. In 1970 the Ahmad Talabani faction was dissolved, re-emerging as the PUK. The current leader of the KDP is Mullah Mustafa's son Masoud Barzani. The Party has its strongest supporters in the Badinan, in the north-western area of the Kurdish enclave. Since 1994, the KDP has controlled the borders crossing between Iraq and Turkey at Khabur/Ibrahim Khalil and it currently in control of Arbil that it seized from the PUK in August 1996 with the assistance of Iraqi government troops. The KDP currently has an alliance with Turkey.



members of the Ba'ath party; those who refused were forcibly re-settled in south Iraq. Along with the policy of Arabization, the Iraqi government followed a policy of depopulation of Kurdish villages all along the Iraq-Iran border. In fact, the Ba'ath destroyed villages by cutting down fruit trees and filling water wells with concrete.

### U.S Foreign Policy Towards Kurdistan 1969-1991

According to an article by the ex-US Consul in Kirkuk (Iraqi Kurdistan), a secret agreement was reached between the CIA and Barzani in August 1969. Barzani got an alleged \$14 million at the time. He noted too that, conflict between Iraq and Iran was concern to the U.S. If Iraq could be destabilized and kept off balance, it would not be able to challenge the Shah for supremacy of Shah. According to Lee Dinsmore, a former U.S counsel in Kirkuk, the U.S had been helping the Kurds against the Iraqi regime prior to 1970.<sup>63</sup> After the Iran-Iraq agreement spelled the end of the KDP rebellion, the KDP and the Kurds were left in the lurch.

Barzani wrote a letter to President Carter in early 1977 in which he complained that "*I could have prevented the calamity which befell by people had I not fully believed the promise of America.*"<sup>64</sup> Saddam Hussein became an enemy of the United States in August 1990, following his attempted annexation of Kuwait, but prior to that, he had gotten favorable reviews from the American foreign policy establishment. He rendered great services by engaging in a war with Iran from 1980 to 1988 resulting in the loss of over one million lives.

Much of southern and western Kurdistan was devastated during this war. The Iraq-Iran War helped Kurdish leaders organize themselves against the Iraqi regime, especially the two main Kurdish political parties, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), who were able to re-assert themselves. The eight-year Iran-Iraq

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63 Lee Dunsmore, "The Forgotten Kurds," *The Progressive*, op.cit. pg. 39.

64 An article was written by Husayn al-Kurdi (The CIA in Kurdistan), Internet <http://www.ibbs.org/zmag/articles.dec96kurdi.htm>.

War began in September 1980, when on the 1980 troops occupied Qasr Sherin and other Iranian border towns, although Iran dates its commencement from skirmishes on the 4<sup>th</sup> September 1980. On the 17<sup>th</sup> September 1980 Saddam Hussein, who had become President of Iraq, 16 July the previous year, abrogated the Algiers Treaty.<sup>65</sup>

The U.S foreign policy was static towards the region, the U.S military helped Iraq and fooled Saddam during this period because Iraq became the first country to spend most of its economic capacity just buying weapons from U.S During the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, Washington viewed Iran as the more formidable threat, and so tilted towards Iraq, sharing intelligence with Baghdad while covertly selling arms to both sides. U.S Iraqi collaboration continued after the war but ended abruptly in August 1990, when Iraqi troops invaded and occupied Kuwait.

Iran and Iraq sought to exploit Kurds during War to their own particular advantage, only to find that the Tehran and Baghdad governments were using them in turn. Both Iran and Iraq bribed the other's Kurds to use and exploit them: the Baghdad government paying Iranian Kurds to fight against the Tehran government, while the Tehran government bribed Iraqi Kurds to fight the Baghdad government. Kurdish resistance groups and tribes continued to pursue their own domestic enmities regardless of their nationality. Meanwhile hundreds of thousands of Kurds were conscripted into the Iranian and Iraqi armed forces to fight against each other on the battlefield.<sup>66</sup>

U.S and Western countries that are pretend to preserve the human rights gave a green light to use any weapons towards its enemies for the sake of surviving and they sold Iraq the mass destruction weapons to use. In another connection, there was no decrease in the number of arbitrary arrests and tortures during this period. In 1987, the Kurdish political

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65 Ibid., pg. 123.

66 Ibid., pg. 124.

parties in southern Kurdistan established the Iraqi Kurdistan Front, a coalition of eight organizations to reunite the Kurdish political movements. The restoration of Iraq's military position in 1988 allowed Saddam Hussein to abandon his policy of openness.<sup>67</sup> Between 1980-1987, some parts of Kurdistan became 'no-go' areas for the army and fell under the control of the PUK and KDP *Peshmarga* (Fighters).

In the spring of 1987, Saddam Hussein appointed his cousin, Ali Hassan al-Majid as the Secretary General of the northern region. He was given the task of 'solving' the Kurdish question for the last time. From March 1987 until 1989, al-Majid undertook this task, master-minding the chemical attack on many areas in southern Kurdistan, and the greatest crime being the Holocaust at Halabja in March 1988 which resulted in thousands of deaths and lasting injury. The images were inescapably reminiscent of the ghastly afflictions of Hiroshima, Nazi gas chambers, and similar chemical attacks during the World War I. One must also mention the Anfal campaign of genocide against rural Kurds (February-September 1987) in which up to 180,000 Kurds either disappeared or died and more than 4,500 villages were destroyed in the combined ravages of the scorched earth the re-settlement programs and the Anfal campaigns.<sup>68</sup>

In spite of these great crimes, the United Nations and the U.S kept silent. In addition, it was some European countries and the United States sold these kinds of weapons of mass destruction to their client.<sup>69</sup> Further, the Kurdish people remained orphaned and they blamed the Super Powers in the name of human rights for taking part in these crimes. Kurdish people are still demanding that Saddam and his top officials be sent to the international court for war crimes. Similar tribunals were instituted to try people from the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. Finally, in the spring of 1989, the Iraqi regime also took measures against the city dwelling Kurds.

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67 Gerard Chaliand, "The Kurdish Tragedy," op.cit., pg. 69.

68 Kurdish Media-Reports : Draft Briefing Paper on Iraqi Kurdistan-Teresa Thornhill.

69 Clinton says from the cold war to the post war "we have slain a large dragon" and now find ourselves living "in a jungle filled with a bewildering variety of poisonous snakes." So, how he will describe the U.S.?



They were prevented from buying or building houses and those inhabitants who taken up residence after 1975 had to be registered by the police.

Suddenly and unexpectedly, on 2 August 1990, Iraqi armed forces occupied Kuwait. Saudi Arabia asked for US military assistance and US troops landed in that country, and a military confrontation built up into an American-led coalition of some 29 national contingents. Iraq became an allied enemy. When Iraq invaded Kuwait, the Iraqi Kurdistan Front coalition decided to stop guerilla activity against the Iraqi army in northern Iraq because the U.S commanded them to keep silent and they did not want them to be an obstacle in their policy.<sup>70</sup>

The dictatorial regime in Baghdad thought that the international community would remain silent for this crime, as they have been dumb, blind and deaf for its crimes against Kurds. However, because of the oil in Kuwait and other Gulf states, the Security Council took decisive action against it. Such a decision would not have been possible just a few years before because they wanted to stop Saddam's threat in the Persian Gulf. However, Jalal Talabani, the leader of the PUK, rushed to Washington to seek United States foreign policy support for his own group to rise up against Saddam Hussien, but his plea was ignored by both the US State Department and the CIA, which were after bigger and more reliable fish. However, the U.S was already supplying assistance to the Kurds. A retired American Air Force Colonel stressed that the Untied States was arming the Kurds '*before and during the (second) Gulf War,*' *although the US had officially denied it.*<sup>71</sup>

Talabani was cold-shouldered in the U.S Later on, Talabani visited several European and Arab capitals, saying that the Iraqi Kurds would not join 'any foreign forces' fighting Iraqi government, in short, Kurdish

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70 Edgar O'Balance, *The Kurdish Struggle 1920-1994*, op.cit., pg. 182.

71 "The war we left behind," Frontline, reported by Leslie and Andrew Cockburn, *Journal Graphics*, Inc., 1991, pg. 11.

groups in northern Iraq remained nominally passive during the Kuwait crisis and Gulf War.<sup>72</sup> The Kurdish Front wanted international guarantees to secure their rights and have these issues on the agenda of any future Middle East conference.

The Allied Force – Iraqi confrontation dragged on dramatically until 19 January 1991, when the Allied air offensive against Iraq began, followed by a ground offensive on 24 February. Hostilities formally ended in a cease – fire on 3 March, with the sound defeat of Iraq. The Gulf War, as it became known, introduced new destabilizing factors into the region, and changed the U.S foreign policy towards the Middle East and especially towards southern Kurdistan.

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72 Edgar O'Balance, *The Kurdish Struggle 1920-1994*, op.cit., pg. 182.

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