



THE KURDS OF IRAQ: RECENT HISTORY, FUTURE PROSPECTS

By Carole A. O'Leary*

This article briefly recounts the developing situation of Iraqi Kurds over the last decade and discusses what the future of this group might be like in a post-Saddam Iraq. It explores the option of a federal system in which a division of powers between the central government and north would provide a way for effective regional government will ensuring the state's unity. A workable, acceptable solution to the Kurdish problem would be absolutely necessary for the future stability of Iraq. The article also looks at how the decade-long experience of Kurdish self-rule in a democratic framework affects the debate over Iraq's future. The article concludes with a chronology of modern Kurdish history.

The Kurds, an Iranian ethno-linguistic group--like Persians, Lurs, Baluch and Bakhtiari,--inhabit the mostly mountainous area where the borders of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria converge. Following World War I and the breakup of the Ottoman Empire, the Kurds were promised their own country under the terms of the 1920 Treaty of Sevres only to find the offer rescinded under the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne. Numbering at least 25 million people, Kurds are mostly divided among Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria. The main area they inhabit is about 230,000 square miles, equal to German and Britain combined. The Kurds are the largest ethnic group in the world without a state. The term "Kurdistan" is widely used in Iraq to refer to the Kurdish area of northern Iraq and in Iran to refer to the Kurdish area of northwest Iran. Turkey and Syria, however, avoid this term for political reasons, although under the Ottomans it was widely used.

The area of northern Iraq where Kurds predominate, is a region of about 83,000 square kilometers. This is roughly the same size as Austria. Smaller ethno-linguistic communities of Assyrian-Chaldeans,

Turkomans, Arabs, and Armenians are also found in Iraqi Kurdistan. In Iraq there are approximately 3.7 million Kurds in the predominantly Kurdish northern safe haven area, and between 1 and 2 million in the rest of Iraq, particularly Baghdad, Mosul and that part of Iraqi Kurdistan still under the control of the Baghdad regime.(1)

The majority of Kurds are Sunni Muslims. There are also Shi'a and Yezidi Kurds, as well as Christians who identify themselves as Kurds. Yezidis are Kurds who follow a religion that combines indigenous pre-Islamic and Islamic traditions. The once thriving Jewish Kurdish community in Iraq now consists of a few families in the Kurdish safe haven.

Since the creation of the modern state of Iraq, the history of Iraqi Kurdistan has been one of underdevelopment, political and cultural repression, destruction, ethnic cleansing and genocide.(2) Al-Anfal (The Spoils) was the codename given to an aggressive, planned, military operation against Iraqi Kurds. It was part of an ongoing, larger campaign against Kurds because of their struggle to gain autonomy within the Republic of Iraq. Anfal took place during 1988 under the direction of

Ali Hasan al-Majid, Saddam Hussein's cousin. He became known as "Chemical Ali" because of his use of chemical and biological weapons on Kurdish towns and villages.

The broad purpose of the campaign was to eliminate resistance by the Kurds by any means necessary. Its specific aim was to cleanse the region of "saboteurs"--who included all males between the ages of 15 and 70. Mass executions were carried out in the targeted villages and surrounding areas. The operation was carefully planned and included identifying villages in rebel held areas, declaring these villages and surrounding areas "prohibited" and authorizing the killing of any person or animal found in these areas.

Economic blockades were put onto these villages to cut them off from all support. The army also planned for the evacuation of them and the inhabitants' relocation to reservation-like collective towns. People who refused to leave were often shot. In some cases, people who agreed to leave were gathered up and separated, with men from 15 to 70 in one group; women, children, and elderly men in another. Many of the men were executed while the others were removed to the collective towns or to camps in the south of Iraq.

During the Anfal operation, some 1,200 villages were destroyed. More than 180,000 persons are missing and presumed dead. While the Iraqi government was motivated partly by the fact that some Kurdish groups cooperated with Iran during the Iran-Iraq war, documentation recovered in the Kurdish safe haven in 1991 reveals that this operation was part of a larger campaign undertaken by Saddam throughout his time in power. Many now regard this operation as proof of genocide against Iraqi Kurds. In all phases of the ethnic cleansing program, which began when the Baath Party first seized power in

1963 and culminated in the Anfal operation, it is estimated that more than 4,000 villages in rural Kurdistan were destroyed and perhaps 300,000 people perished.

The best-known chemical attack occurred at Halabja in March 1988. This town is located in the mountains near Sulaimaniya, about 11 kilometers from the Iranian border. Between 40,000 and 50,000 people were living there at the time. The Iranian army had previously pushed Iraqi forces out of the area. During three days, the town and surrounding district were attacked with conventional bombs, artillery fire, and chemicals--including mustard gas and nerve agents (Sarin, Tabun, and VX). At least 5,000 people died immediately as a result of the chemical attack and it is estimated that up to 12,000 people died during those three days.

Almost fifteen years later, there is still not much known about the impact of these agents on the people and environment. Dr. Christine Gosden, a professor of Medical Genetics at the University of Liverpool, working with the Washington Kurdish Institute (WKI), helped establish the Halabja Post-Graduate Medical Institute to understand the impact of weapons of mass destruction on civilian populations. It offers both research and medical help for thousands of survivors living in the area.(3) The Kurds' first-hand experience with such attacks has prompted their request to the international community for protection from this type of weapons in the event of U.S.-led military action against Iraq.

In April 1991, following the March uprising of Kurds in the north and Shi'a Arabs in the south against the central government, Iraqi Kurdistan was divided into two parts. Relying on UN Security Council Resolution 688, military forces from eleven countries, including the United States and Turkey, implemented Operation Provide Comfort to give security and

humanitarian assistance to refugees in camps along the Iraq-Turkey border. The so-called Kurdish safe haven and northern no-fly zone were established in this context. Under considerable constraint and against strong external and internal opposition, the Kurdish safe haven has been successfully governed for a decade by the Kurds themselves. This part of Iraqi Kurdistan is roughly 40,000 square kilometers, or about half of Iraqi Kurdistan.(4) The rest continues to be directly governed by Baghdad.

In October 1991, the Government of Iraq (GOI) voluntarily withdrew its civil administration and the citizens of the Kurdish safe haven were left to govern themselves. Elections were held in May 1992 and the Kurdistan National Assembly (KNA) and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) were created. The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) entered into an equal power-sharing arrangement, with 5 of the 105 KNA seats allocated to members of the Assyrian-Chaldean Christian community. Turkomans boycotted the election, although efforts were made to include representatives from all ethnic and religious communities.

Participatory processes were instituted to develop experience with the requirements, and systems and procedures of democracy. These elections were deemed to have been free and fair by international observers.(5) Regional governance has been based on the March 1970 Autonomy Agreement with the GOI. Four provinces were established, each headed by a governor.

The regional government, headed by a prime minister with a cabinet of ministers, was established in the regional capital of Erbil. But the 50-50 power-sharing arrangement broke down within two years. Today, the Kurdish safe haven is governed

in two separate parts, each by one of the two main parties (KDP and PUK). Efforts have been on-going to find how to integrate the two administrations.

Despite this disappointment, there have been some more positive developments. Free and fair local elections, under international observation, were conducted in dozens of municipalities in 2000 and 2001 in the KDP and PUK areas. For the first time since 1994, the KNA convened in its entirety in Erbil on October 4, 2002. The reconvening of the KNA is a clear indication of the growing cooperation between the KDP and PUK, particularly in their dealings with the Bush administration and U.S. Congress, as well as with states in the region and Europe. In particular, the KDP and PUK are unified in asserting the Kurdish right to self-determination in a future democratic Iraq in which they call for Iraqi Kurdistan entering into a federal relationship with the central government under a new constitutional arrangement.

The Kurdish safe haven is now a decade-old example of what can happen throughout the rest of Iraq. The liberated part of Iraqi Kurdistan has become a refuge for all Iraqis seeking freedom and democracy. Since 1991, thousands of Iraqi refugees in Iran have returned. And since 1991, thousands more Iraqis from central or southern Iraq have sought asylum. Even more striking, some families who fled Iraq over 20 years ago, and who became citizens of the United States and European countries, elected to return since 1991.

Despite various internal difficulties and constraints, including the strong opposition of neighboring countries and both external and internal embargoes on the region by the Iraqi government, all basic public services have been provided to the extent resources have permitted. Freedom of speech and of free movement is respected. Local NGOs have been established and the three universities are working with U.S.

and European partners to develop new academic programs, reform and update curricula, and provide faculty training opportunities. The region's leadership has allowed satellite television with over 500 channels to be available to anyone who can purchase readily available hardware. Private companies provide uncensored international phone service. Unlimited and uncensored Internet access is also available from private, independent sources. According to Human Rights Watch, the leadership of the region has made notable progress in promoting and protecting the basic rights of the people of liberated Iraqi Kurdistan.(6)

With assistance from the international community, hundreds of destroyed communities were reconstructed and tens of thousands of families were able to return to their original homes between 1991 and 1997. Despite serious problems due to inefficiency, intransigence and the efforts of Baghdad, the oil-for-food (SCR-986) program that began functioning in 1997 continues to provide the region with substantial resources from Iraq's public oil wealth for health care, reconstruction and education. The KRG directly cooperates with twelve UN agencies in the region, including nine involved in the management of the oil-for-food program.

The history of Iraqi Kurdistan before 1991 is the history of destruction and displacement. More than 4,000 communities were destroyed including towns of more than 50,000 Iraqi citizens. Hundreds of thousands of citizens were detained and killed. Tens of thousands were forced to live in Baghdad-controlled "collective towns." Many were injured in years of warfare. Despite their achievements in democratization and civil society building since 1991, the citizens of Iraqi Kurdistan continue to be threatened by Baghdad and the neighboring states in a manner that jeopardizes their hard-won

freedom and tenuous well-being. The future of Iraqi Kurdistan remains most uncertain.

POST-SADDAM IRAQ AND FEDERAL ARRANGEMENTS

One extremely important consequence of the Kurdish safe haven's existence is that some 3.7 million Iraqis—a considerable portion of the country's population—have actual experience with self-rule, civil rights, and a transition to democracy.(7) How would this situation interact with the rest of the Iraq if it were to be freed from the current regime?

Certainly, those in the safe haven are greatly concerned about the effects of war and regime change in Iraq, in terms of the threat posed by the war, a possibly unstable aftermath, and their future status in a new Iraq. There is strong support in the U.S. government, Iraqi opposition movements—ranging from the Iraq National Congress (INC) through the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) and Kurdish groups—for a federalist structure in the country.(8)

Iraqis in exile and those lucky enough to live inside the Kurdish safe haven are currently debating the framework for a federal state. Some advocate a federal system consisting of two political units: the Arab region and Kurdistan. Others have suggested dividing Iraq into three federal units: Kurdistan, a Sunni Arab center and a Shi'a Arab south. An arrangement of five federal units (Kurdistan, Baghdad, Jazirah, Kufa and Basra) has also been suggested.(9) Iraq's Kurds would support the division of Iraq into any number of federal units, under a federal system, as long as Iraqi Kurdistan itself constitutes one of those federal units.

At a recent conference hosted by the University of Southern Denmark, Brendan O'Leary outlined an interesting alternative to the adoption of a federal political system

for all of Iraq.(10) In his view, Iraqi Kurdistan could enter into an institutionalized federal arrangement with the central government wherein the rest of Iraq is not federally organized. He refers to this arrangement as federacy. In theory, this model could accommodate the Arab majority in Iraq if system-wide federalism is voted down in a referendum. It is possible, indeed likely, that the Kurds would have no objection to the creation of a democratic Iraq that is not federally organized, as long as Iraqi Kurdistan itself achieves self-rule in a constitutionally mandated federal arrangement with the center.

There is, however, a subtle but important distinction in how the federalist concept might be applied. The Kurds have tended to favor an explicitly Kurdish self-governing portion of Iraq. Another option would be a northern self-governing section (or several such divisions) which are organized on a regional but not ethnic basis. Most Kurds seem to favor the former approach, while most American officials favor the latter approach as a way to reduce ethnic tension in a post-Saddam Iraq. Further, Kurds explicitly have opposed the division of historic Iraqi Kurdistan into multiple federal units, an idea which has currency among some American analysts.(11)

Under what might be called a “Kurdistani” rather than “Kurdish” political solution, a Kurdish majority would still control a geographically defined northern state within an Iraqi federalist system. Still, that type of structure would reduce Turkish objections while also preserving the rights of non-Kurdish minorities, especially Turkomans, in the area, who would be less enthusiastic about a Kurdish ethnic entity. But would the Kurds find such a plan acceptable? The issue is not just whether the Kurds will exercise a right to self-determination but

how they will choose to do so. My field work in the area (see below) shows some important trends relative to this issue.

Federalism refers to a system of government in which power is divided between a central authority and constituent political units which have a fair degree of local power, including the ability to raise taxes and a militia, for example. In some multi-cultural states like Switzerland, the constituent political units are defined not only geographically but also culturally on the basis of language, ethnicity, religion or tribe. Federalism as an organizing structure for governance can promote stability in multi-ethnic or multi-religious states through the establishment of political units whose relationship to the center is defined in a constitution that provides written principles concerning structures and rules for governance and appropriation of federal funds.

As in the United States, federalism in a future Iraq can provide a system of checks and balances to moderate the power of any future central government, inhibiting the ability of an autocratic leadership—secularist or Islamist—to seize control of the center. And, as in Switzerland, federalism can guarantee the political and cultural rights of Iraq’s ethno-linguistic and religious communities.

The creation of a constitutionally mandated federal relationship between Iraqi Kurdistan and a post-Saddam Hussein central government is the only solution that will address the legitimate right to self-determination of Iraq’s Kurdish community in the context of a unified Iraqi state. Absent a just and lasting resolution to the Kurdish question in Iraq, it will prove impossible to achieve stability in a post-Saddam Hussein state.(12) Equally, an unstable post-Saddam Hussein Iraq would be unlikely to pursue democratization – a stated goal of the Bush administration.

In theory, the establishment of a federal

system of governance that includes power-sharing at the center and self-governance for Iraqi Kurdistan is a model that will work well in Iraq. In practice, the challenge is to achieve internal, regional and international support for the self-determination of Iraq's Kurdish community in a federal and democratic Iraq.

THE ROLE OF TURKEY

A key concern for the Kurds, as well as the Bush Administration, is Turkey's evolving position on federalism and the Kurdish question in Iraq.(13) Turkey has consistently opposed the creation of an independent Kurdish state in Iraqi Kurdistan. However, Turkey has also raised concerns about the establishment of a federal arrangement between Iraqi Kurdistan and a post-Saddam Hussein central government. Turkey's primary concern is that Mosul and the oil-rich city of Kirkuk are not ceded to a new Kurdistan federal unit.

In the period since the establishment of the Kurdistan Regional Government, the disposition of the Iraqi Turkoman community has also been of concern to Turkey. In this regard, Turkey and its proxy inside the Kurdish safe haven-- the Iraqi Turkoman Front--have called for the establishment of a Turkoman federal unit to include the cities of Mosul and Kirkuk if a permanent Kurdistan federal region is created. Turkish leaders have declared that the future establishment of a Kurdistan federal region to include Kirkuk is a *casus belli*. In fact, the Turks appear to have positioned themselves to intervene militarily in Iraqi Kurdistan in the event of a regime change.(14)

Estimates of the number Turkoman in Iraq are unreliable and politicized. They range between 350,000 to well over one million. Similarly, the exact number of Kurds and Turkoman living in Kirkuk today is unknown.(15) Historically the city

was predominately Kurdish, but successive Iraqi governments have pursued a policy of ethnic cleansing in Kirkuk, directed first against the Kurds and later against the Turkoman as well.(16)

The proposed constitution for a Kurdistan political unit in a federal Iraq, drafted by the KDP and PUK and currently under review by the recently reunified Kurdistan National Assembly does call for the inclusion of Kirkuk in a future Kurdistan federal political unit. However, the draft constitution is clear in ceding control of Kirkuk's oil to the new central government and in recognizing the fact that Kirkuk is a multi-ethnic city inhabited by Kurds, Arabs, Turkomans and Assyrians. The draft constitution calls for regularly scheduled mayoral elections in which members of all ethnic and religious communities can field eligible candidates.(17)

Iraq's Kurds are concerned that Turkey's strategic relationship with the United States will negatively influence U.S. support for the kind of federal arrangement they want to see. The Kurds have repeatedly and publicly assured the U.S. and Turkey that they do not seek independence but prefer a unified, federal and democratic Iraq within which Kurdistan represents one of the federal political units. They have repeatedly indicated that they will work with a representative transitional government to create a constitution for a federal Iraq that addresses the needs of all the communities in Iraq.

Whether Kirkuk is incorporated into a Kurdistan federal region in a future Iraq and whether a separate federal region for the Turkomans will be established cannot be unilaterally determined by Turkey. Clearly, these are issues for the Iraqi people to decide. Iraqi Kurds who have been expelled from Kirkuk and its environs will surely return after the liberation of

Iraq. If the majority of Kirkukis were to vote in favor of annexing Kirkuk to the Kurdistan federal political unit in a future referendum in a democratic Iraq, this would be a powerful argument for doing so.

In thinking about a federal solution for Iraq, it is important to note that Turkey is supporting a UN plan to create a Swiss-style federal government in Cyprus in which the Republic of Cyprus would be replaced by two component states—one Turkish and one Greek—each with its own constitution, in addition to a common state with a presidential council and a two-chamber legislature. Even the Tamil Tigers seem to have reached the conclusion that a federal arrangement with the government of Sri Lanka will address their demands for self-determination through “substantial regional autonomy.”(18)

A key question for American and European policy makers—as well as for Iraqis and Turkey—is whether federalism is the only viable solution to Iraq’s still unresolved Kurdish question that will ensure the territorial integrity of the state. A second question is how the federalism will be structured. And a third is whether federalism, as an organizing structure for governance in pluralistic societies, can best ensure stability in Iraq after regime change—a necessary condition for the development of democracy, human rights and an active civil society.

IDENTITY FORMATION IN IRAQI KURDISTAN SINCE 1991

When I returned from a visit to the region in June 2001, I wrote that an unintended but welcome consequence of the establishment of the Kurdish Safe haven in 1991 was an ongoing experiment in democracy.(19) Based on subsequent fieldwork conducted in July 2002, I would further suggest that a second unintended but welcome consequence of the

establishment of the safe haven is an experiment in pluralism that is encouraging the emergence of a communal identity shared by Kurds, Assyrian-Chaldeans and Turkomans.

I have termed this emerging form of collective identity “Kurdistani-ness” for lack of a better word. My interviews with Assyrian-Chaldean and Turkoman intellectuals, political and religious leaders, and cultural activists suggest that the decade long experiment in self rule has been a golden age not only for the Kurds but for these smaller communities as well. In trying to contextualize the frequent use of the term “Kurdistani” by my Kurdish, Assyrian-Chaldean and Turkoman informants, I was reminded of how Americans use the descriptors “New England” and “New Englanders” to define not only geographic but also cultural and historic aspects of this localized American identity.

My discussions with more than 100 Kurds, Assyrian-Chaldeans and Turkomans suggest that this new sense of Kurdistani identity is taking root precisely because it accommodates pluralism or cultural diversity by not threatening deeply rooted ethno-linguistic identities. The Kurdish Democratic Party--established in 1946 and renamed the Kurdistan Democratic Party in 1953--supported a broad-based political platform for all Kurdistanis regardless of ethnic identity. The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan Party has advocated the same view since its creation in 1975.

However; it is only in the post-1991 period that the people of Iraqi Kurdistan have experienced self rule and democratization. This emerging Kurdistani identity allows Kurds, Assyro-Chaldeans and Turkoman to maintain their respective ethno-linguistic identities and, at the same time, to establish a wider sense of collective identity based on three key factors:

--Common geography;
--The ongoing experiment in self rule, democratization and cultural tolerance;
--And their shared experience as non-Arab Iraqis who have all known repression and marginalization within the modern state of Iraq.(20)

Suham Wali, one of the many Turkomans I interviewed, is an educator and cultural activist, as well as director-general of Turkoman Studies in the Ministry of Education in Erbil. She argues that the establishment of the Kurdistan Regional Government in 1992 was a milestone. For the first time in Iraq's modern history, the cultural and political rights of all communities were truly guaranteed. According to Wali, while the Kurdish majority may have first sought to address the rights of their own community, the new political structure under the KRG has benefited all communities. She describes political life in safe haven since 1991 as "a work in progress in which all communities, not just the Kurdish majority, participate." Based on my interviews with Turkomans and Assyrian-Chaldeans, I would suggest that it is this growing confidence in the Kurdistan Regional Government's protection of the political and cultural rights of all communities—not just the Kurdish majority—that has caused these two communities to embrace a shared Kurdistani cultural identity, in addition to their respective ethno-linguistic identities.(21)

Moreover, I would suggest that this shared sense of Kurdistani-ness relates to a developing sense of communal solidarity as these communities ponder their fate in a post-Saddam Iraq. For these reasons, I would argue that the growing sense of Kurdistani-ness among Kurds, Assyrian-Chaldeans and Turkomans in the Kurdish safe haven has implications for the debate on federalism as the best model for governance in a post-Saddam Hussein Iraq.

It is well known that the Kurds support a concept of federalism in which all of Iraqi Kurdistan forms one of the new federal political units. What is less well understood is level of support for this position among Assyrian-Chaldeans and Turkoman in the northern safe haven. Future research can focus on how this emerging sense of Kurdistani identity will affect support for federalism within the Assyrian-Chaldean and Turkoman communities in the safe haven.

CONCLUSIONS

As political realists, Iraq's Kurds do not seek separation from Iraq. Their goal is to share in the establishment of a viable regional government for Iraqi Kurdistan in a unified Iraq under a federal system, with a governing document that provides written principles concerning structures and rules for governance and appropriation of federal funds. Federal systems flourish around the globe and the establishment of such a structure in Iraq should not be viewed as a threat by Turkey, Iran or the Arab states of the region. On the contrary, federalism can help to ensure the unity and stability of a post-Saddam Hussein Iraq, thereby providing a climate for democratization and civil society building. Such an outcome is clearly in the interest of the United States and its European allies, as well as in the interest of Turkey and the Iraqi people.

Given the fact that the Iraqi regime has pursued a genocidal campaign of ethnic cleansing against its Kurdish community, it is imperative that any future structure of governance institutionalize protections and guarantees for all of Iraq's communities, but most notably for the Kurds who have been so brutally victimized on the basis of cultural identity. A unified, democratic and federally organized Iraq would not only address the legitimate right to self-determination of the Kurdish community

but also guarantee the rights of all communities within Iraq.

CHRONOLOGY

The following is a selected chronology of some of the significant events that had an impact on Iraq's Kurds in the past century.

1918 President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points: Woodrow Wilson was committed to the ideal of self-determination for all peoples. The Twelfth Point stated that non-Turkish nationalities living under Ottoman control "should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development."

1920 The Treaty of Sevres: At the end of World War I, the Allied powers met to determine the political future of lands and peoples in the defeated Ottoman Empire. The Treaty provided for independence from Turkey in those parts of Anatolia where Kurds were in the majority and set forth a political mechanism for the establishment of a Kurdish state that was to have encompassed the vilayet of Mosul. The Treaty of Sevres was signed but never ratified.

1923 The Treaty of Lausanne: The Treaty of Lausanne superseded the Treaty of Sevres. The Kurds were not given autonomy and the areas where they lived were distributed between Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and the Soviet Union. The greatest number of Kurds found themselves either under the control of the Turkish state or under British rule in the newly created state of Iraq. A League of Nations delegation to Mosul in 1923 to determine the wishes of the Kurds there reported they wanted an independent state.

1924 British view: The British High Commission issued a statement on December 24, 1924, "Recognizing the right of the Kurds living within the frontiers of

Iraq to establish a Kurdish government inside these frontiers."

1932 Iraqi Independence: In 1932, Iraq was granted full independence by the British and the Kurdish problem was left unresolved.

1946 Republic of Mahabad: In Iran, Kurds established the short-lived Republic of Mahabad, which survived from January 1946 until December 1946.

1946 Creation of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iraq: This party changed its name to the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iraq in 1953 to emphasize the inclusion of the non-Kurdish communities of Iraqi Kurdistan.

1958 Iraq under Abd al Karim Qasim: After the monarchy was overthrown, Qasim encouraged the participation of Kurds in the new government until his power was consolidated. In 1959, the new government began to clamp down on all dissident groups including the Kurds. In 1961, a Kurdish rebellion broke out which continued intermittently for the next fourteen years.

1963 Phase I of the Ethnic Cleansing and Arabization Campaign: The ethnic cleansing and Arabization campaign began when the Ba'th party first came to power in 1963 and lasted until the temporary removal of the Ba'th leadership in February 1964. During this time, the Iraqi regime began destroying most of the Shorgha, Azadi, and Akhur Hussein neighborhoods inside the city of Kirkuk. Hundreds of houses were flattened using bulldozers. The inhabitants of some forty villages in the Kirkuk governorate were forcibly evicted and Arabs from the south and center of Iraq resettled there.

1970 Autonomy Agreement between Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Government of Iraq: On March 11, 1970, an autonomy agreement was worked out between the KDP and the central government which acknowledged the

existence of Kurds and granted certain rights, but included only three of five Kurdish provinces. It excluded provinces like Kirkuk which contain oil.

1974 Kurdish Revolt against the Iraqi Government: By 1974, relations between the Kurds and the central government had deteriorated to the point of armed rebellion. During this period, Iran and Iraq were involved in extensive border disputes. The United States was backing Iran and Iran was backing the Iraqi Kurds in their struggle in order to put pressure on Iraq. In 1975, the border disputes were settled under the Algiers Accord and the United States and Iran withdrew their support of the Iraqi Kurds. As a result, the rebellion collapsed. Hundreds of thousands of Kurds fled the country to refugee camps, mainly in Iran. Many who could not escape were murdered.

1974 Phase II of the Ethnic Cleansing and Arabization Campaign: After the collapse of negotiations between the Kurds and the Iraqi regime in 1974, the Ba'th government implemented the ethnic cleansing and Arabization policy begun in 1963 to reduce the predominantly Kurdish population in areas deemed of strategic economic or political importance to Iraq. In particular, the areas surrounding Kirkuk where large oil fields are located and those within a 20-kilometer strip near the Iran-Turkey border were targeted. Kurds were forcibly deported, murdered, removed to refugee camps, or resettled in collective towns. Kurdish language instruction was terminated in schools. Villages and wells in border areas were destroyed. This area became a kind of no-man-land and anyone found entering this 20-km. strip was imprisoned and executed. Many Faily (Shi'a) Kurds living in Baghdad were deported to Iran as well.

1975 Creation of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK): It was established in June 1975 in Damascus, Syria, after the

collapse of the Kurdish rebellion that same year.

1980 The Iran-Iraq War: While many Kurds fought against the Iranians during this war, others continued the rebellion against the central government, often with Iranian support. This diverted Iraqi troops from the battlefield to the Kurdish areas. By 1987, the Kurds, with the support of Iran, controlled most of Iraqi Kurdistan. Saddam appointed his cousin Ali Hassan al-Majid in charge of northern Iraq with full authority and powers to eliminate the Kurdish rebellion. Chemical attacks, further destruction of villages, pollution of water supplies, detentions, and mass murders were some of the methods used to put down the rebellion.

1984 Phase III of the Arabization Campaign: After another failed attempt at negotiation in 1984, the regime began systematic destruction of villages, homes, churches and mosques in the Kurdish areas. Its operation reached a final stage in the Anfal campaign of 1988. Some 1,200 villages were destroyed during this one year alone. It is estimated that 182,000 people died as a result of the Anfal campaign. The number of persons unaccounted for or killed during the three phases of the ethnic cleansing and Arabization campaign is estimated at 300,000. The total number of villages destroyed during all phases is estimated to be more than 4000.

1988 Halabja: In March 1988, Iraq attacked the town of Halabja over three days using a mix of chemicals that resulted in the deaths of around 5,000 civilians immediately and many more over the next few years.

1990 Sanctions: Under UN SCR-661 passed in August 1990, sanctions were imposed on Iraq with the intention of forcing Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait.

1991 The Gulf War: Kurds were encouraged by the United States to rise up

against the government and overthrow Saddam Hussein. The uprising began in March 1991. But coalition forces did not help the Kurds. At first, the Kurds were successful in driving out the Iraqi army from their territory but the Iraqi Army regrouped and crushed the rebellion. In the north, almost two million people fled Saddam's forces, seeking refuge in Iran and Turkey. International outrage forced the coalition and the UN to take action. The Kurdistan National Front was formed to organize an administration of public services for the area.

1992 Elections: In May 1992, elections were held in the newly established Kurdish safe haven with international observers in attendance. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) was formed and 105 Members of the Kurdistan National Assembly (the Parliament) were elected.

1994 KDP-PUK Split: The fifty-fifty government split between these two parties fell apart and fighting broke out between them

1996 Ceasefire: The KDP gained control of Erbil and the PUK withdrew to Sulaimaniyah. The two have maintained separate administrations from that point on.

1998 The Washington Agreement. KDP and PUK representatives met in Washington in the fall of 1998. Although both parties accepted the Accord, it has not been fully implemented. Discussions and negotiations however are ongoing and currently there has been significant movement towards the resolution of issues.

2002 Reconvening of the Kurdistan National Assembly: For the first time since 1994, the full Kurdistan National Assembly convened in Erbil on October 4, 2002.

*Professor Carole A. O'Leary is the Scholar-in-Residence for the Middle East Initiative at the American University Center for Global Peace. Professor O'Leary established a Future of Iraq Working

Group at the Center in early 2001 to examine the premise that federalism is the best organizing framework for governance in a future Iraq. Since 1994, she has been an adjunct professor in the School of International Service, cross-appointed to the Divisions of International Peace and Conflict Resolution and Comparative and Regional Studies. With Charles MacDonald, she is the co-editor a volume entitled *The Kurdish Identity in an Unsettled World* that will be published in 2003.

NOTES

1. See Martin Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State: the Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan* (London, 1992) and David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, (London, 2000) for comprehensive studies of the Kurds in English, including extensive bibliographies. According to World Food Program (WFO) food registration figures, the population of KRG-administered Iraqi Kurdistan is approximately 3.7million today. Based on the 1957 census (the last reliable census) and Kurdish estimates of the number of Kurds who were forced to leave Kirkuk and other areas due to the regime's policy of ethnic cleansing, there are well over one million Kurds in regime-controlled Iraq today, including Baghdad, Mosul and part of Iraqi Kurdistan. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that there are between 5 and 6 million Kurds in Iraq.

2. See the Washington Kurdish Institute website <<http://www.kurd.org>> for links to human rights organizations that have documented the ethnic cleansing and Arabization campaign against the Kurds of Iraq, as well as the Anfal campaign and use of chemical and biological weapons on Kurdish towns and villages, including Halabja. See also Chapter 17, "The Road to Genocide," including footnotes and

references, in McDowall. See Kenan Makiya, *The Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq* (Berkeley, CA, 1989) and *Cruelty and Silence: War, Tyranny, Uprising and the Arab World* (New York, 1993). For a comprehensive analysis of the documents turned over by the Kurds to the U.S. in 1991 see Robert G. Rabil, "Operation 'Termination of Traitors': The Iraqi Regime Through its Documents," *MERIA Journal*, Volume 6, Number 3, September 2002. See also the Harvard University Iraqi Research and Documentation Project (IRD) website <<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~irdp>>

3. See the Washington Kurdish Institute website under "Programs".

4. According to the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the area of Iraqi Kurdistan under KRG administration amounts to 9% of the total land area of Iraq, which is 437,400 square kilometers. This makes KRG-administered Iraqi Kurdistan approximately 40,000 square kilometers which is roughly the same area as Switzerland (39,800). To compare with states in the United States, KRG-administered Iraqi Kurdistan is double the area of the State of Massachusetts (20,300 square kilometers).

5. Contact the Kurdistan Regional Government <<http://www.krg.org>> for a copy of the report on the 1992 elections. Observers included members of the Danish and Norwegian Refugee Councils.

6. See the Human Right Watch/Middle East website <<http://www.hrw.org>> under the section "Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan".

7. See the KRG/KDP <<http://www.krg.org>> and KRG/PUK <<http://www.puk.org>> websites for articles on the democratic experiment in Iraqi Kurdistan since 1991. See also Carole O'Leary, "A No-Fly, Yes Democracy Zone: Iraqi Kurdistan Offers a Model for a Post-Saddam Future," (*Washington Post*, Sunday, July 15, 2001) and Robin Wright,

"Kurdish Enclave May Lead Way for New Iraq," *Los Angeles Times*, December 1, 2002.

8. The parties that formed the Iraqi National Congress (including the Kurdistan Democratic Party, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, Iraqi National Accord, and the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq) publicly announced their support for federalism and the legitimate right of Iraq's Kurds to self-determination in Salahadin in 1992, in the final statement of the Meetings of the Iraqi Congress National Assembly. The Iraqi National Congress reiterated its support in New York in 1999. Noted independent Iraqi intellectuals, including Kanan Makiya, Ghassan Attiyah, Munther Al Fadhil and Rend Rahim Francke, have also voiced their support for Kurdish self-determination and federalism.

9. For example, the U.S. State Department has organized a 'Democratic Principles Working Group' which brings Iraqis together to flesh out a road map for democracy and federalism as part of its Future of Iraq project. For a regional perspective on the project see Mustapha Karkouti, "Post-Saddam Roadmap Envisions Federal State," *Gulf News*, December 5, 2002.

10. "Iraqi Kurdistan: Ten years of self-rule and future prospects," an international conference hosted by the University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark, November 30 - December 1, 2002. Brendan O'Leary presented the keynote speech entitled "Right-sizing and right-peopling the state: Regulating national and ethnic differences." O'Leary holds the Stanley I. Sheerr Endowed Term Chair in the Social Sciences and is Director of the Solomon Asch Center for the Study of Ethno-political conflict, both at the University of Pennsylvania.

11. See Michael Rubin's article on "Federalism and the Future of Iraq" in *How to Build a New Iraq*, edited by Patrick

Clawson (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2002).

12. Stability in this context refers to the establishment of a peaceful social and political environment wherein democratization and civil society building can take root. Stability as defined here rejects the notion that support for autocratic regimes in the Middle East promotes stability and is, therefore, in the U.S. strategic interest

13. See the interview with U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Paul Wolfowitz entitled "Wolfowitz Interviewed: Nobody Should Have Their Eyes on Kirkuk," in *Hurriyet*, December 5, 2002, by Sedat Ergin. See also my written testimony for the Congressional Human Rights Caucus briefing on "The Human Rights Situation in Northern Iraq: The Kurdish Minority and its Future," November 20, 2002, for a discussion of Kurdish concerns about U.S. plans for a military intervention, including role of Turkish forces in northern Iraq <http://www.house.gov/lantos/caucus/caucus_webpage.htm>, and Barbara Slavin, "Kurds Push U.S. for a Promise of Protection," *USA Today*, October 22, 2002.

14. See the report by David Nissman entitled "Turkey to Set Up 'Security Belt' in Northern Iraq if U.S. Attacks," in the *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Iraq Report*, Vol. 5. No. 34, October 18, 2002. In the report, Turkey's Defense Minister, Sabahattin Cakmakoglu is quoted as stating: "The Turkish armed forces are a deterrent force both with respect to its size and its weapons....[And] if this deterrent force impedes the situation we do not want in Iraq, it will have completed its objective." Turkish tanks are positioned in areas inside the Kurdish safe haven, including Bamarni. During my July 02 visit to the Kurdish safe haven, I noted that the Turks had carved the Turkish flag

(Crescent and Star) into the mountainside below where their tanks are stationed in the Berwari Bala area, between Kani Masi and Zakho. The number of Turkish troops currently in the Kurdish safe haven is perhaps 5000.

15. The last reliable census in Iraq took place in 1957. It indicated that Kurds constituted the majority community in Kirkuk (48%). The number of Kurds and Turkoman in Iraq as a whole and in Kirkuk in particular will be determined by a new census in a post-Saddam Hussein Iraq.

16. See Robin Wright, "'Arabization' Forces Iraqi Kurds to Flee From Homes," *Los Angeles Times*, December 3, 2002, for a description of Saddam's ongoing ethnic cleansing campaign against the Kurds.

17. The original draft constitution for the establishment of Iraqi Kurdistan as a federal political unit in a post-Saddam federal Iraq can be accessed on the KDP/KRG website <<http://www.krg.org>>. Note that the draft document is currently being debated in the Kurdistan National Assembly and will surely be amended to reflect the positions of the PUK and other political parties represented in the regional assembly.

18. Michele Kambas, "Cyprus Peace Plan Gets Major Boost from Turkey," *Reuters* (Nov. 12, 2002), and Amy Waldman, "Sri Lanka to Explore a New Government," *New York Times* (December 6, 2002).

19. See note 7.

20. See Chapter 6 in Makiya's *Republic of Fear* for a discussion of the treatment of Iraq's non-Arab and Shi'a communities since the Mandate period, as well as an analysis of the construction of an Arab (Sunni) nationalist ideology, under the Baath.

21. Turkomans affiliated with the Turkish-backed Iraqi Turkoman Front reject this shared Kurdistan identity.