

THE BRITISH ADMINISTRATION
OF SOUTH KURDISTAN AND
LOCAL RESPONSES, 1918-1932

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Abstract

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A few days after signing the Armistice of Mudros on 30 October 1918, British forces occupied the Ottoman province of Mosul, after which its future was a central factor in the formulation of post-war British policy in the region. In general, the studies of this period suffer from discontinuity and lack cohesion. We are dealing with partial accounts and imperfect narrations written from the standpoint of ideological, ethnic and political interests. By means of an examination of the factors influencing British decision-makers, this study seeks to answer the question why British policy came to support the inclusion of the Mosul vilayet within Iraq, rather than to be restored to the new Turkish republic or to be allowed to become a separate Kurdish state in south Kurdistan, although the Kurds were supposed to have self-determination.

This study contests the common argument that the oil was the crucial factor, and instead it explores the contribution of all of the economic, political and strategic arguments considered by British policy-makers. It concludes that the security priority of stabilizing the newly-created state of Iraq was the most significant element in British decisions on the Mosul question. The geo-strategic, economic and racial position of the Kurds in southern Kurdistan were critical to both the British perspective and the League of Nations' decision for the inclusion of the Mosul vilayet in Iraq. It became clear that British policy towards the Mosul question was quite successful in achieving its interests in both the internal and external arenas, but it left the political and territorial question of the Kurds unresolved, and this can be described as the unexploded bomb in the region.

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List of Abbreviations

(a) used in the text

APO	Assistant Political Officer
APOC	Anglo-Persian Oil Company
TPC	Turkish Petroleum Company

(b) used in the references

AIR	Air Ministry
APO	Assistant Political Officer
CAB	Cabinet
CO	Colonial Office
DBFP	Documents on British Foreign Policy
FO	Foreign Office
HC Deb.	House of Commons, debates
IOR	India Office Records, British Library (Asia, Africa and Pacific Department)
IWM	Imperial War Museum
Mss	Manuscripts
n.d.	not dated
PO	Political Officer
TNA	The National Archives
WO	War Office

Glossary of Administrative, Political and Social Terms

Agha	Chief
Hukumdar	Governor
Mathbata	Petition
Mudir	Mayor
Mukhtar	Headman
Mutasarif	Administrator of a Liwa
Nahia	Sub-District
Qadha	District
Qaimqam	Prefect
Salnames	Ottoman Censes
Sinjaq/Liwa	Division
Taifa	Clan
Tira	Lineage
Vali	Lieutenant-Governor (Administrator of a Vilayet)
Vilayet	Province

INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the British administration of south Kurdistan between 1918 and 1932, and the responses of the local Kurdish population. This period saw the frustration of Kurdish aspirations for independence, and instead the creation of the modern state of Iraq. British policy at this time was influenced by various factors, particularly its economic, political and strategic interests in the region. The wishes of the Kurdish people were not prioritised, as became clear after the occupation of south Kurdistan by Britain in 1918. British policy after this was to define the future of the region for decades to come. It disappointed the hopes of the Kurds that the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War would end their repression, particularly from the rule of the Young Turks, who had strongly suppressed any Kurdish movements. After losing their quasi-independent status in the Ottoman Empire in the second half of the nineteenth century, the Kurds believed that they might now have a chance to establish an independent state with the help of the British administration of south Kurdistan. The establishment of a Kurdish government here in 1918 was taken by the Kurds as a signal that Britain would apply the principle of self-determination and establish a Kurdish state. However, after a short period the Kurds feared that Britain was supporting the rule of an Arab country over south Kurdistan, instead of giving them self-governance. At the beginning of the occupation of south Kurdistan, Britain was not sure how to deal with the southern Kurds. However, the predominant view of British policy-makers was to join south Kurdistan with Iraq, especially after the establishment of an Iraqi state. Until 1920, the Kurdish question was also a matter of international negotiation between Britain and France, particularly in the Paris Conference of 1919 and the San Remo Conference of 1920.

The Treaty of Sèvres in 1920 gave the possibility of the establishment of an independent Kurdish state, but the Allies did not implement this. Instead, they allowed the partition of Kurdistan into four parts at the Lausanne Conference (1922-1923), particularly after the strength of the Kemalist's power became apparent in Turkey. The

Kemalists disputed with Britain about the future of the vilayet (Ottoman Province) of Mosul, and tried to oblige Britain to withdraw from it in the same way that France had abandoned some areas to the Turks. This delayed the settlement of the south Kurdistan question until the decision of the Council of the League of Nations in 1925, which approved the integration of the Mosul vilayet within Iraq. The allied powers did not recognise that the Kurds were a separate nation with a different language and culture from the Turks, Arabs and Persians. Afterwards, the Kurds became a minority within Iraq, Persia and Turkey. South Kurdistan in Iraq again suffered from persecution, and due to the policy against the Kurds, they became more backward economically and socially. To prevent the rise of Kurdish national feelings, any political activity by Kurdish nationalists was not permitted. They were even prevented from using the word 'Kurdistan' in Iraq, with 'north of Iraq' used instead of south Kurdistan. However, Kurdistan served a strategic role, as its mountains protected Iraq from outside attack, and Iraq also benefited economically from the wealth of south Kurdistan in agriculture and minerals, and especially from the oil.

South Kurdistan was significant for Britain, but obviously it was just one part of wider British concerns in the Middle East in the period immediately after the First World War. India was the most important part in British policy, as Britain had commercial and strategic interests there, and hundreds of thousands of Indian troops served in the British army during and after the war. Persia was also significant for British policy, not only because of oil, but also to defend routes to India. Egypt and the Suez Canal were also of strategic interest for Britain. Egypt would secure British interests in the Near and Middle East and its 'trade and investment throughout the region'. The canal was a 'vital link in the chain of imperial communication between Britain and the East, and a major artery for the world's merchant shipping fleets'.¹ South Kurdistan was therefore part of a wider regional picture.

The selection of 1932 as the end of the period discussed in this thesis is because in that year the British mandate came to an end and Iraq was admitted as a member of the League of Nations. The British and Iraqi governments had already arranged their future relationship after the mandate by signing a treaty in 1930. After that time, the distress of the Kurds increased, because Britain was not in a strong position to force the

¹ Keith Jeffery, *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire 1918-22* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), pp.36-37,110.

Iraqi government to preserve Kurdish rights, especially after withdrawing its troops from Iraq. The intention of Britain and Iraq was that the Kurds should have some basic rights and accept the rule of Iraq.

The topic of the thesis is very important, because the position of south Kurdistan is a continuing issue in the political life of Iraq. Investigating this issue in depth requires understanding and analysing its origins. After the division of Kurdistan, the Kurds became involved in a long struggle with the Turks, Persians and Arabs. The unrest of the southern Kurds caused instability in Iraq during the period of the monarchy and afterwards. In 2003, after the collapse of the Baathist regime, although the state was rebuilt, the Kurds still could not separate from Iraq, because the superpowers did not support this. In this way, the decision of the League Council still affected the great powers, whilst the Kurdish struggle for separation from Iraq still continues. Kurdish literature and even most of the researchers who have investigated south Kurdistan have blamed Britain for the loss of their independence, but they have not considered exactly what the local situation in south Kurdistan was or the effects of the disunity of the Kurds. The Kurdish national movements depended on the support of the Kurdish chieftains who did not accept each other as leaders and their priority was to secure their own private interests. The British officials understood that the Kurdish nationalism was undeveloped. The southern Kurdish risings (except for a few sections of Kurdish tribes) were not assisted by the majority of Kurdish people. These were factors in the British decision not to separate the Mosul vilayet from Iraq. In addition, the policy of Britain towards the southern Kurds needs further investigation. It was true that the opinions of the British officials in south Kurdistan were not the same, as have been shown by some previous researchers, but investigating British policy-making in greater depth makes possible a new analysis of this significant topic.

This thesis aims to answer three essential questions. First, why did Britain support establishing a Kurdish government, and what factors made Britain change its decision about this? Second, what policies were implemented by the British administration in south Kurdistan, and why was the decision taken for the integration of south Kurdistan with Iraq? Third, what were the responses of the Kurds towards the policy of Britain, both before and after their annexation with Iraq?

In Chapter One, the geographic, economic, demographic, social and historical background of south Kurdistan before 1918 is explained. Chapter Two concerns the

administrative and political development of south Kurdistan from 1918 to 1920. It discusses the British occupation of south Kurdistan and the establishment of Sheikh Mahmud of Barzinji's government in 1918, and the obstacles that he encountered from the Kurdish tribes and British administration. This chapter also shows the reasons for the decline of his government and the Kurdish risings against Britain. Chapter Three deals with the diplomatic aspects concerning the Kurds during the conferences from 1920 to 1923. It also assesses the interference of the Turks in south Kurdistan, the establishment of the second Kurdish administration in Sulaimania led by Mahmud, and his failure. Chapter Four examines the negotiations over the Mosul question between Britain and Turkey at the Lausanne and Constantinople Conferences. It shows how Britain and Turkey tried to use the question for their interests, and how the settlement of the Mosul vilayet was referred to the Council of the League of Nations, and its decision in favour of Britain and Iraq. The chapter also analyses the situation of south Kurdistan between 1923 and 1926, and the continuation of Mahmud's fight against Britain and Iraq. The status of south Kurdistan under Arab rule from 1927 to 1932 is discussed in Chapter Five. This demonstrates how the Kurdish nationalists did not accept living under the Iraqi government, and the Iraqi government's failure to implement the Kurdish rights which the League Council had required. The Kurdish reaction to the Anglo-Iraqi treaty of 1930 and the risings between 1930 and 1931 are also included in this chapter. Finally, the thesis concludes that the wish of southern Kurds to obtain their separation was neglected in order to increase the power of the Iraqi state. It also concludes that the disunity of the Kurds was the other main cause for their integration with Iraq.

The thesis is based upon four main types of primary sources: archive documents, newspapers, diaries and memoirs. A wide range of documents has been found in the National Archives in London. These include the telegrams, reports and memorandums which were sent from British officials in south Kurdistan and Iraq to the government in London, and their replies and instructions. The research has investigated the records of the Cabinet, Foreign Office, Colonial Office, War Office and Air Ministry (all at the National Archives), and of the India Office (deposited at the British Library). The thesis has also benefited from the private papers of C.J. Edmonds, a British official in south Kurdistan, deposited at the Middle East Centre Archive at St Antony's College, Oxford. Published contemporary sources have also been relevant,

such as the Official Reports of debates in the House of Commons and House of Lords, and newspapers, especially *The Times*, *Observer* and *Manchester Guardian*. Finally, the published memoirs and diaries of British officials have also been consulted to examine their opinions about the Kurdish question. To obtain the Kurds' perspectives on this issue, this research has used the memoirs and diaries of prominent Kurds.

Many published secondary works (in the form of books, journal articles and essays in edited collections) have discussed the British administration of south Kurdistan, from different perspectives and purposes. In many cases, their primary focus has been upon the establishment of the Arab state in Iraq, with the Kurds and the question of the Mosul vilayet as a marginal concern. Others discuss aspects of Kurdish history during this period but do not approach the subject accurately, and only a few researchers have specifically considered south Kurdistan.

Of the studies which have been written by those who had personal experience in Iraq and south Kurdistan, the first was Stephen Hemsley Longrigg's book, *Iraq 1900 to 1950*.² This relied on published British documents, the press and monographs from Britain, the USA, Iraq, Italy and France, and on Arabic sources. However, as he had served in south Kurdistan as a British officer, he supports British policy towards the southern Kurds and blames them for the deterioration of the situation in south Kurdistan. He examines the Kurdish movements against Britain and Iraq, focuses on the defeat of the Kurdish fighters, and highlights the killing of British officers by Kurdish tribes during the Kurdish risings in the southern part of Kurdistan. He also assesses the role of the Turks in south Kurdistan, when they appointed Euz Damir (Ali Shafiq), as the Qaimqam at Rowandoz in 1922, and the return of Sheikh Mahmud to Kurdistan. However, he does not give further details about the main causes of the movement of Turkish forces to south Kurdistan, and the attempts by the Turks to attract Kurdish support. He does not mention the reasons for Mahmud's support for the Turks, and does not effectively cover Mahmud's fight against Britain, but he has neutrally transferred information and his narration is quite descriptive. He briefly mentions the debate about the Mosul vilayet between the Turks and British officials at the Lausanne conference, but does not analyse the Turkish claim for its restoration. Longrigg shows the economic importance of the vilayet during the Turkish and British negotiations.

² Stephen H. Longrigg, *Iraq 1900 to 1950: A Political, Social and Economic History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953).

After that, he focuses on the recovery of Rowandoz and Sulaimania from the Turks by the combined action of the Iraqi army, police and levies, but says little about the Mosul settlement by the League of Nations' Commission of 1925. Moreover, the role of British oil interests in Mosul vilayet is quite absent. He states that Iraq made a great effort to protect Kurdish rights, but he believes that Iraq practised a suppressive policy towards the Kurds, especially after the agreement between Iraq and Britain in 1930.

Another aspect discussed by Longrigg is the social situation in south Kurdistan. Here he stereotypes the Kurds, as he states that 'the Kurds preserved all their characteristics of wildness and rapacity, dislike of submission and scorn of Arabs'.³ However, it does not include the cultural sector which was encouraged by Britain. Longrigg comments on the situation of south Kurdistan from 1927 to 1932, but he does not analyse in any depth the risings of Mahmud and Ahmed in this period. He does consider the Assyrians' situation in the southern Kurdish areas, and their participation and assistance to Iraq and Britain as Levies forces.

Wallace Lyon's book, *Kurds, Arabs and Britons*,⁴ is his memoir as he was a British administrator in Iraq from 1918 to 1945, and during most of this time he was stationed in south Kurdistan. The writer focuses on the British administration of Mesopotamia and Iraq generally, and of south Kurdistan until 1932. He also covered the campaigns of British forces, especially the Royal Air Force, against the risings. Lyon mentions his experience with the Kurdish tribes with which he dealt, and also briefly refers to the League Council Mission which came to the Mosul vilayet to investigate whether it should remain with Iraq or be restored to Turkey.

Fazil Hussein wrote an early study of the Mosul question. He discusses the League Council's investigations about the Mosul question and its meetings and commissions. However, this study did not have access to the British government documents, which were only opened to research for this period in 1969, under the thirty years rule.⁵

³ Ibid., p.101.

⁴ Wallace A. Lyon, D.K. Fieldhouse (ed.), *Kurds, Arabs and Britons: the Memoir of Wallace Lyon in Iraq 1914-1918* (London: I.B Tauris, 2002).

⁵ Fazil Hussein, *The Mosul Question: Public Opinion and Iraqi, British and Turkish Diplomacy* (Baghdad: al-Rabta Press, 1955).

There are other books which consider the general history of Iraq. The book written by Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, is another general history.⁶ Tripp gives an account of the British occupation of south Kurdistan and the welcome which the British army received. However, he only briefly mentions Mahmud's government and movement, as he covers this in a single page. One of the points which Tripp focuses on is the selection of Faisal (a son of Sharif Hussain of Mecca) to be King of Iraq at the Cairo Conference. However, he does not mention the discussion of the Kurdish question at this conference. Generally, Tripp's book discusses the history of Iraq and south Kurdistan from the establishment of Iraq to the period just before the fall of Saddam Hussain's regime in 2003. Due to this, he does not mention all the events in south Kurdistan. There is a brief account of the Mosul question, the participation of Kurdish members in the Iraqi parliament, and the operations of the British and Iraqi governments against Mahmud and Ahmed.

Reeva Spector Simon's book, *Iraq between the Two World Wars*, generally focuses on the foundation of Iraq and the struggle of Iraqi groups against the British administration.⁷ The crucial point in this book is the Kurdish people abstaining and rejecting the referendum in Sulaimania and Kirkuk in 1921, but he does not mention Arbil. He gives more detail about how the British officials faked the outcome of the referendum in Kirkuk, for the sake of annexing Kurdistan to Iraq. In addition, the author states that the Ottoman Caliph announced Jihad, but this was not a crucial influence on the Iraqi people or tribes because at that time they were mainly influenced by nationalism. Simon explains the creation of the Iraqi army and its use against Ahmed, and the bombing by the RAF in 1931. However, he neglects the use of these forces against the Kurdish uprising in Sulaimania and against Mahmud's movement in 1930. It can be seen that this book concentrates upon political and military aspects in Iraq, and neglects Kurdish history, particularly the economic and social aspects.

There are other works which are mainly devoted to British oil policy. Marian Kent in her book, *Oil and Empire*,⁸ argues that the aim of Britain to control Mosul was due to its important oilfields, and she analyses British oil interests in the Middle East,

⁶ Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd edn., 2002).

⁷ Reeva Spector Simon, *Iraq Between the Two World Wars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, updated c. 2004).

⁸ Marian Kent, *Oil and Empire: British Policy and Mesopotamian Oil 1900-1920* (London: Macmillan in association with the London School of Economics and Political Science, 1976).

including Mesopotamia. In another book, *Moguls and Mandarins*, Kent focuses on Britain's economic oil interests and its policies in Mesopotamia generally.⁹ She analyses the arrangement of the British mandate with the French, and the control over the oil fields in the Mosul region by Britain after the San Remo Agreement. Her mention of French encouragement to the Kemalists due to Britain's oil concessions in the Mosul vilayet and the French desire to participate in the Turkish company to explore for oil in the vilayet is interesting. Kent also discusses the Italian interest in the oil concession, which was also connected to the settlement of the Mosul question. However, she does not consider why oil was not included in the Lausanne Treaty, and does not mention the settlement of the Mosul question by virtue of which Turkey obtained some of Mosul's oil.

The book *Supremacy and Oil: Iraq, Turkey and the Anglo American World Order 1918-1930* by William Stivers discusses British and American intentions to control the oil and their competition in the Middle East regarding this.¹⁰ He believes that American ambitions threatened British oil interests in the early stages of the war, but as their relationship improved, agreements about oil strengthened this and American interests were recognised by Britain. He states that the importance of oil in Iraq caused the Allied powers to incorporate Iraq into the European world, but the modernity of Iraq was still deficient. He argues that control of the oil in Iraq was not only useful for its own sake but also for the defence of the routes to India.

Martin Gibson's dissertation also concerns British oil interests during and after the First World War.¹¹ He discusses the competition between the great powers to control the oilfield areas of the Middle East, and how the British need of oil for the Royal Navy pushed Britain to control Mesopotamia and the vilayet of Mosul. The author believes that oil did not have military importance in the war, but that British strategy was to control its supplies in the post-war period. Oil had a major role in diplomatic relationships, especially between Britain and France, and, similarly to Stivers, Gibson believes that oil strengthened Anglo-American relations from 1920

⁹ Marian Kent, *Moguls and Mandarins: Oil, Imperialism and the Middle East in British Foreign Policy 1900-1940* (London: Frank Cass, 1993).

¹⁰ William Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil: Iraq, Turkey and the Anglo American World Order 1918-1930* (London: Cornell University Press, 1982).

¹¹ Martin William Gibson, 'British strategy and oil 1914-1923', PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2012.

after US oil companies obtained 'a stake in Iraqi oil'. He also mentions that the oil would also serve the economy of Iraq, and this was another reason why Britain rejected the Turkish claim for recovering the vilayet.

The First World War and its immediate aftermath is another subject which is considered by some researchers. Briton Busch examines the role of India in British policy towards the Arabs during the First World War.¹² He discusses the Indian intervention in Iraq, and argues that the Indian government 'dreamed of an Empire within an Empire'. He states that after a short time its direct contact in Iraqi affairs was removed, because it was too late to change the administrative structure of Iraq, but it kept its role in the Persian Gulf. However, through the intermediary of the administrative role of the India Office and the appointments as Civil and High Commissioners of Sir Arnold Wilson (March 1918-June 1920) and Sir Percy Cox (June 1920 to May 1923), the influence of India lived in Iraq. Busch believes that the failure to settle the Kurdish question and the future of the Syrian boundaries by Wilson complicated the problems in Mesopotamia, and that the replacement of Wilson by Cox in June 1920 was a sign of the wish of Britain to adopt a different policy in Iraq.

John Fisher's monograph discusses British policy in Arabia from 1916 to 1919,¹³ and examines the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916 and the views of Earl Curzon of Kedleston (the former viceroy of India, a member of the War Cabinet 1916-1919, and Foreign Secretary 1919-1924) and other British policy-makers towards the future of the Arab areas, including Mesopotamia. Although this study is not specifically about the vilayet of Mosul, it includes much important information, particularly on the belief of Curzon and other Britain officials that the vilayet should be retained by Britain instead of France. The author also mentions the British concern to prevent any threats from Russia in Mesopotamia and Persia. Fisher shows the interest of Arnold Wilson, who was appointed as Civil Commissioner in Baghdad in 1918 and knighted in 1919, in joining the rich areas of south Kurdistan, such as Sulaimania and Halabja with Iraq, and disagreements between Wilson and other British officials in Mesopotamia and London regarding the future of south Kurdistan. Fisher also analyses the desire of

¹² Briton Cooper Busch, *Britain, India and the Arabs, 1914-1921* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971).

¹³ John Fisher, *Curzon and British Imperialism in the Middle East 1916-1919* (London: Frank Cass, 2005), p.10; John Fisher, 'Syria and Mesopotamia in British Middle Eastern policy in 1919', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 34, no. 2 (1998), pp.129-170.

Arthur Hirtzel of the India Office to include not only south Kurdistan but also Diyarbakir within Mesopotamia, and the ambition of Foreign Office to create autonomous state for Assyrians in south Kurdistan, but Wilson supported this further east and he was reluctant to extend the frontier of Mesopotamia beyond Diyarbakir. Fisher also shows the ambition of Wilson to keep only south Kurdistan within Mesopotamia, and that Wilson was concerned about the necessity of getting France to abandon its rights in Mosul. He also covers the decision of British officials to construct the Mosul railway.

Iraq in World War I, by Mohammad Gholi Majd, examines the period of the First World War and the British invasion of Iraq and Kurdistan.¹⁴ However, the book is based on only the US State Department archive and the four volumes of the British official history of the war in Mesopotamia, published between 1923 and 1927. According to Majd, Kurdistan had a significant geographical position for British plans, in particular in the last years of the war, because they could easily reach Persia through Kurdistan. The British tried to surround Persia to prevent the transfer of food from Mesopotamia, due to concern about a possible plot between German, Turkish and Persian officers against Britain, and the emergence of a Turkish force from Persia. For that reason, the advance of British forces to Sulaimania and Kirkuk was ordered by the War Office on 29 April 1918. Majd also discusses the way in which Britain used Clause 7 of the Mudros Armistice as justification for occupying Mosul, as this allowed the Allies to occupy any strategic area in the Ottoman territories if there was a threat to their security. It is apparent that the British knew the importance of Mosul during the war, as he cites a report which discussed the fertility of the soil in the Mosul vilayet for agriculture such as dates, fruits, various types of cotton and silk material. Mosul was also a rich area of coal mines and oil fields.

Charles Townshend in his book, *When God Made Hell: The British Invasion of Mesopotamia and the Creation of Iraq, 1914-1921*,¹⁵ discusses the creation of Iraq by Britain artificially and deliberately, as this integrated two ethnically-different nations in these three provinces. He states that Iraq was a 'geographical expression rather than political structure'. The author believes that the outcome of the First World War did not

¹⁴ Mohammad Gholi Majd, *Iraq in World War I: From Ottoman Rule to British Conquest* (Oxford: University Press of America, 2006).

¹⁵ Charles Townshend, *When God Made Hell: The British Invasion of Mesopotamia and the Creation of Iraq, 1914-1921* (London: Faber, 2010).

realise the Kurdish aspirations, as Britain had already encouraged them to establish their independent state. This book does not mention the economic factors, and does not describe the Kurdish tribes when they became allies for the British forces in Kurdistan. Townshend mentions Mahmud's uprising against British authority, but he refers to Mahmud's movement and the other Kurdish leaders as trouble-makers, and quotes the description by Wilson of the Kurdish nationalists as 'purely anarchistic'.¹⁶ However, many Kurdish writers believe that Mahmud was a glorious Kurdish leader who strove to establish an independent Kurdish state and release the Kurds from foreign rule. Townshend extensively discusses British policy in Iraq, and mentions the intention of the Iraqi government to recruit the Kurds for military service. He states that the Kurdish deputies were against this, but Britain was unable to persuade the Iraqi government not to implement this scheme. In addition, the author briefly discusses the administration of south Kurdistan by Britain until the decision of the League of Nations in 1925.

There are other researches which focus on the 1920 rebellion in Iraq. Abbas Kadhim examines the causes and results of the Iraqi revolution in 1920, and the social and political situation of Iraq before and after.¹⁷ The author points out that Britain did not satisfy all Iraqis after the invasion of Iraq, except those who benefited from British administration, such as obtaining employment. The combination of national feeling with the superfluous taxation and clumsy policy of Britain led to the Iraqi revolt in 1920. He believes that the population of Iraq rebelled due to their mistrust that Britain had not fulfilled its pledge to establish an Iraqi state. The Arab nationalists did not cooperate with the other groups who were also anti-British. The author argues that this revolution attained its political aims by forcing Britain to establish an independent Iraqi state, although it was an artificial state ruled by Faisal, which was unpopular. However, the leaders of the revolution, especially the Sh'ia leaders, accepted Faisal for the Iraqi kingdom. Ian Rutledge believes that the Iraqi revolution was led by tribal leaders, similarly to their participation in Jihad in 1914-1915. He describes the result of the uprising that a puppet state was created by Britain, led by Faisal who was protected by the Royal Air Force. He states that the new Iraqi state was monopolised by Sunnis (especially Sunni officers) as much to defeat internal disorder as to protect Iraq from

¹⁶ Ibid., pp.498-499.

¹⁷ Abbas Kadhim, *Reclaiming Iraq: The 1920 Revolution and the founding of Modern State* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012).

external attack. They relied on the RAF for the settlement of the political questions of the Kurds and Sh'ias.¹⁸

Amal Vinogradov assesses the role of the tribes in this revolt,¹⁹ and believes that it was not a Sh'ia revolt to separate from the Sunnis and that the Sh'ia leaders announced the revolt against Britain for the sake of the independence of Iraq. He states that this uprising was 'a "primitive", but genuine, national response to fundamental dislocations in the political and socio-economic adaptation of the tribally organized rural Iraqis'.²⁰

The following books specifically concern Winston Churchill, the Colonial Secretary, and the Cairo Conference of 1921. The fourth volume of the official life of Churchill, by Martin Gilbert, includes private and published documents on British history from 1917 to 1922. This volume covers the political life of Churchill as a member of Lloyd George's coalition government, and discusses British policy towards Russia, Ireland, the Ottoman Empire (including Mustafa Kemal's movement), France and Mesopotamia.²¹ However, although detailed on nother topics, the book does not contain significant documents about Churchill's policy and his stance towards the southern Kurdish question.

Aaron S. Klieman's book, *Foundations of British Policy in the Arab World*,²² concerns British policy at the Cairo Conference of 1921, and discusses Churchill's plans for both the military and the financial aspects, such as saving British expenditure through the reduction of troop numbers in the Arab world. However, it does not mention his proposal to withdraw British forces from Mosul as a part this. Klieman also discusses British oil interests in Iraq, and focuses on the conference's decision to establish the new country of Iraq from the three former Ottoman provinces. In addition, the author indicates that the Treaty of Sèvres allowed the Kurds to create their own state, and points out that the Political Committee meeting of 15 March 1921 talked

¹⁸ Ian Rutledge, *Enemy on the Euphrates: The British Occupation of Iraq and the Great Arab Revolt 1914-1921* (London: Saqi, 2014).

¹⁹ Amal Vinogradov, 'The 1920 revolt in Iraq reconsidered: the role of tribes in national politics', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 3, no. 2 (1972), pp.123-139.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.125.

²¹ Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill: Volume 4, 1917-1922* (London: Heinemann, 1977).

²² Aaron S. Klieman, *Foundations of British Policy in the Arab World: The Cairo Conference of 1921* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970).

about the Kurdish future in terms of establishing an autonomous entity for them. He shows the British officials' desire to create an Iraqi state including the Kurdish areas, and those who were against this idea. In spite of this, the conference did not determine to create a Kurdish state, but instead Cox considered establishing a domestic state for the Kurds governed by the High Commissioner. However, this was not put into effect, and after the Lausanne Conference neither the British nor Iraqi governments supported a local administration in south Kurdistan for the Kurds, and instead they favoured the integration of south Kurdistan with Iraq.

Christopher Catherwood's book, *Churchill's Folly*, is based on the Chartwell Papers at Churchill College, Cambridge.²³ It focuses on Churchill's and Wilson's decision to create the Iraqi state in order to achieve some economic interests for Britain. The writer points out the conditions of the Sykes-Picot agreement and the changes which happened after the Russian revolution in 1917, when it became a neutral state and focused on its own internal issues. In addition, Catherwood argues how important Mosul appeared to Britain due to its fertile lands and oil fields. The author explains Churchill's economic views about the British decision either to withdraw their forces or to maintain an army and garrison in Mesopotamia and Mosul province, in order to reduce expenditure. Then he concentrates on Churchill's attempt to decrease British ground troops by using instead the Royal Air Force in Mesopotamia, as he considered that this was more economical. However, this needs further investigation, because Cox and other British officials also had their own ideas about evacuating the forces in south Kurdistan. Catherwood also analyses the British mandate in Iraq and the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920, which allowed the Kurds to establish an independent state. After that, the author discusses Churchill's views regarding the Kemalist threat to Mosul.

Of the studies which focus on the establishment of Iraq, and which also include some discussion of Kurdish history during this period, the book *The Formation of Modern Syria and Iraq* by Eliezer Tauber²⁴ discusses the activity of al-‘Ahd al-Iraqi, which after the occupation of Syria by France transferred its activity to Iraq, with the aim of driving out the British. The Al-‘Ahd branch in Mosul is described by Tauber as a socio-political organisation which had active contact with the Kurds in 1919, which

²³ Christopher Catherwood, *Churchill's Folly: How Winston Churchill Created Modern Iraq* (New York: Carol & Graf, 2004).

²⁴ Eliezer Tauber, *The Formation of Modern Syria and Iraq* (London: Routledge, 1995).

has not been mentioned in other studies. He shows that a cluster of Kurds in the Mosul vilayet joined al-‘Ahd al-‘Iraqi as members alongside the Arabs, and also refers to the signing of the petition to be presented to the Paris Peace Conference by prominent Kurds in Duhok and Amadia for the establishment of an Iraqi state under Sharif Husain. However, there is no evidence to show that the majority of the Kurds in these areas wished to become part of the Iraqi state. After that, he demonstrates that al-‘Ahd sent letters to the Kurdish area, but he does not show the result of this contact. The writer also points to the contacts of the society with the Kurdish tribes, to obtain their collaboration in the revolt against the British administration. After this, the uprising of the Kurds against the British administration in Amadia in July 1919 is highlighted by Tauber, but he claims that it was planned by the society from outside the Mosul area. He focuses on the rebels in Tala’far in 1919, and briefly mentions the 1920 revolution in Khaniqin and Kirkuk. It can be said that Tauber shows that the Kurds had supported the Arabs’ efforts before the establishment of Iraq.

Liora Lukitz in her book, *Iraq: the Search for National Identity*, argues that the Kurds and the Arabs had different identities, and shows how Kurdish identity was strengthened as a consequence their minority position in Iraq.²⁵ Lukitz discusses that the Kurds are Sunni Muslim and that it was not easy to integrate them with the Sh’ia Arabs. After that, she shows how this caused conflict between the two different doctrines, because of the dissimilarity of their ethnicity and language. Lukitz discusses the annexation of Mosul to Iraq, and that Britain did not care that the Assyrians and the Kurds were unwilling to live under Arab rule. As the Assyrians and the Kurds had a different religion and culture, they refused to accept each other. The consequence of this was the occurrence of some conflicts between them during and after the First World War. Lukitz mentions the Assyrians’ constant petitions to the League of Nations because their political, administrative and educational rights were neglected by the Iraqi government. The book also evaluates the clash between Kurds and Arabs, and believes that the differences of cultural and language were significant factors in this conflict. According to this book, the differences of their religious doctrine also had an impact on their relationship, as the Islamic doctrine of the Kurds was quite different from that of the Arabs.

²⁵ Liora Lukitz, *Iraq: the Search for National Identity* (London: Frank Cass, 1995).

The book *Inventing Iraq*, by Toby Dodge,²⁶ examines the unsuccessful creation of Iraq as a democratic state by Britain in 1921 and the rebuilding of the country by the United States eight decades later. This book discusses the similarity between the occupations of Iraq by Britain and the United States, and their administrative and military operations in Iraq. Apart from a few points about south Kurdistan, Dodge devotes his book to the events in Iraq during these two different periods. He briefly states that the League Commission knew that Iraq was an unstable country due to the violence of the tribes and the frictions between the Kurds and the Arabs (Sunni and Sh'ia) after the British mandate, but it still decided to join Mosul with Iraq. The writer also argues that Mahmud was the leader of a primitive society and the British viewed him through their 'romantic imagination'.²⁷ Therefore, British policy-makers hesitated whether to accept him as ruler of all the southern Kurds or not, but finally they decided against creating an independent Kurdish state.

Another study has been written by Peter Sluglett, under the title *Britain in Iraq: Contriving King and Country*.²⁸ This book analyses the political, military and economic situation in south Kurdistan from the occupation to the independence of Iraq in 1932. Sluglett briefly mentions Mahmud's governments, but without enough explanation of the British official perspectives about Mahmud and the southern Kurds. The author points out how Mahmud became a real threat to the British administration in Mesopotamia by the end of 1919, after establishing his local government. However, he struggled to expand his strength in the southern part of Kurdistan or to create an independent Kurdish state, as his government only had power in Sulaimania and some places around the city. This book also considers British oil policy in Mesopotamia, and the importance of the Mosul vilayet for Britain due to the potential of its oil, especially at the Lausanne Conference and the reference of the Mosul issue to the League of Nations. However, oil was not the only point considered by Britain during its negotiations with the Turks, as other aspects, such as military, political and geographical ones, were important in the question of the vilayet. These points are also not mentioned when this book deals with the conflict between Iraq and Turkey over Mosul and the referring of this dilemma to arbitration by the League of Nations, which

²⁶ Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (Hurst: Colombia University Press, 2003).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.79-81.

²⁸ Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq: Contriving King and Country* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007).

finally led to the treaty of 1926. Sluglett also does not mention all of the causes and results of the occupation of Rowandoz by the Turks, which was a significant reason for the return of Mahmud to Sulaimania after his period of exile. Moreover, the British were not successful in decreasing the influence of the Turks upon Mahmud. The author shows the reaction of Britain against Mahmud by the bombing of Sulaimania and other places in south Kurdistan between 1923 and 1924. Another point which is examined in the book is Faisal's desire to link Mosul with Iraq, which the Kurds were given no alternative but to accept. The author discusses south Kurdistan under Iraqi rule, such as the Kurdish rights after the decision of the League Council, and Kurdish petitions to the League of Nations. However, this needs further investigation, as he does not give much information about the Kurdish grievances against Iraq, or about British and Iraqi policy towards this question. Sluglett only briefly discusses the Kurdish demonstration in Sulaimania on 6 September 1930, which took place on Election Day and was the result of neglecting the rights of the Kurds. After this, Mahmud returned from Iran to control Sulaimania again, and he also demanded the establishment of a Kurdish state. The author mentions the defeat of Mahmud's third movement, and his acceptance of the Iraqi terms to leave Iraq, but his fight against the Iraqi government needs more explanation. The local uprising in Bahdinan against the Iraqi government, led by Ahmed, is also considered in this study, but it focuses upon the Assyrian factor as a cause of this rising and does not discuss all of the stages of the rising.

Guiditta Fontana's article, 'Creating nations, establishing states',²⁹ analyses how Britain created Iraq and integrated the Mosul vilayet with this new country, which contained dissimilar ethno-religious nations. It mentions that Iraq was created by the control of the minority of Sunnis in the central government, by outmanoeuvring the Sh'ia in the political field and by imposing their power over the Kurds. For this, Fontana mentions that King Faisal wished to integrate the Sunni-Kurdish people to make a balance between the majority of Sh'ia and minority Sunni, as 95% of Kurds are Sunni. In addition, Fontana discusses the rejection of the British plan to establish a Kurdish state. As the article notes, the Turkish threat affected British policy in Iraq, as Britain sought to keep the Iraqi border safe from any possible Turkish attack in the future. He believes that establishing Iraq and extending this country was affected by the relationships between British officials in Iraq and in London, such as the exchanges

²⁹ G. Fontana, 'Creating nations, establishing states: ethno-religious heterogeneity and the British creation of Iraq in 1919-23', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 46, no. 1 (2010). pp.1-16.

with Wilson in 1919-1920 and Cox's disregard of directions from London to establish a Kurdish state. In addition, it mentions that after the fall of the Lloyd George government and the formation of a Conservative cabinet in October 1922, British policy changed and moved more rapidly to establish an Iraqi state. For these reasons, Britain signed the Lausanne treaty in June 1923 with Turkey, as an alternative to the Sèvres treaty. The conclusions of this article are that Britain accepted this revision because at that time, the Kemalists did not agree with the terms of the Sèvres Treaty, which allowed the establishment of an independent Kurdish state. However, it does not mention the importance of the economic and strategic factors, such as the fertile agricultural lands and oilfields.

John Townsend also considered the evaluation of British oil interests in the Persian Gulf and the Arabic areas of the Ottoman Empire in the wartime and postwar view of British officials, especially Cox, towards Arabia and Mesopotamia, and Cox's role in establishing Faisal as king of Iraq. He also discusses the views of Wilson, Gertrude Bell (Cox's Oriental Secretary) and other officials about the future of Mesopotamia and south Kurdistan, and especially the close economic connection of south Kurdistan with Mesopotamia.³⁰

There are several studies which focus on the role of Bell and the establishment of the monarchy. Maurice Ridley's biography, *Gertrude Bell*,³¹ only focuses on her role in Mesopotamia and the choice of Faisal for the Iraqi throne, although Bell had a significant role in the discussion at the Cairo Conference about joining Mosul with the Iraqi state. Ridley discusses the occupation of Mosul by Britain, and he accepts the result of the 1921 referendum. However, he does not provide much detail about this event; some authors believe that the British administration faked the result, since some Kurdish cities (such as Sulaimania) rejected merging with Iraq, and the majority of the Kurdish people had demanded independence.

The book entitled *A Quest in the Middle East: Gertrude Bell and the Making of Modern Iraq* has been written by Liora Lukitz.³² This study depends on Bell's writing

³⁰ John Townsend, *Proconsul to the Middle East: Sir Percy Cox and the End of Empire* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010).

³¹ Maurice Roy Ridley, *Gertrude Bell* (London: Blackie, 1943), pp 158, 196.

³² Liora Lukitz, *A Quest in the Middle East: Gertrude Bell and the Making of Modern Iraq* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006).

in documents and memoranda, and argues that together with T.E. Lawrence (who was employed as the Political Advisor in the Middle East Department), she drew the boundary lines in the post-war Middle East. The author discusses that Bell supported joining Kurdistan to Iraq after the failure of the idea of establishing an independent Kurdish nation, either as an integrated state or as scattered emirates which had a direct connection with Britain. Lukitz believes that this failure relates to British policy, in which the Kurdish independent state was not in the British agenda, and that it did not depend upon the capability of the Kurds to govern themselves. Lukitz mentions that Bell called for a change of British policy, and that she supported another Kurdish leader instead of Mahmud. For this, she wanted to give a leading role to Tawfiq Wahbi, who was a highly-educated Kurdish officer in the Iraqi army. However, Wahbi like Mahmud was a Kurdish nationalist, and he had a major role in increasing Kurdish aspirations for their independence from Iraqi rule. This book also argues that Bell supported a Kurdish administration in Sulaimania first and other Kurdish areas later, which would have regular ties with the central government. She also preferred Hamdi Beg Baban (a Kurd who belonged to Baban family) for this administration, but finally Britain chose Mahmud in 1922. However, the author does not discuss the reasons behind neglecting other candidates for the Kurdish administration in south Kurdistan.

Another study is the essay about Gertrude Bell and the creation of Iraq by Shareen Brysac, in the collection *Ultimate Adventures with Britannia*, edited by Wm. Roger Louis.³³ The author used the Gertrude Bell Archive at Newcastle University Library, the *New York Times* newspaper, and Bell's reports. Brysac shows the economic importance of Mosul province, as there were several petrol fields discovered in this area, and it is shown how they tried to spend the resulting income on establishing Iraq's infrastructure as a new state. However, Brysac does not discuss the demands by Iraqi officials to obtain Mosul. She views the Cairo Conference as just an agreement for creating Iraq by merging the vilayets of Baghdad, Basra and Mosul. This essay only focuses on the offer to Faisal to become King of Iraq, and according to this research, the Kurdish issue was not a significant factor during the creation of Iraq.

³³ Shareen Brysac, 'Gertrude Bell and the creation of Iraq', in Louis, W.R. (ed.), *Ultimate Adventures with Britania: Personalities, Politics and Culture in Britain* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), pp.283-298.

Rasheeduddin Khan's article, 'Mandate and Monarchy in Iraq',³⁴ discusses the reasons for and the progress of Faisal's candidature in 1920-21. He believes that Britain chose Faisal from amongst the Sherifian dynasty members because his character and political capability were very suitable for being the king of a newly-built country like Iraq. Another reason for choosing him was his good relations with the British decision-makers in Iraq, such as Lawrence and Gertrude Bell, as they strongly supported him. At the same time, Faisal was very popular among the Iraqi officers, which was good for keeping a balance between the Arab nationalist and British imperialist agendas. The author also argues that Faisal was preferred by Britain not only because of his religious family which associated with the Holy Places, but also because of his tolerant attitude towards other religious people. The writer states that although there were some obstacles to Faisal becoming king of Iraq, such as his brother who was initially preferred by Britain. However, the British eventually decided in favour of Faisal, and persuaded Abdulla to become king of Transjordan instead. After this, Khan points out the obstacles in Iraq, as Talib Naqib who came from a famous family of Baghdad and who wanted to convince the Iraqi tribes to oppose Faisal, but Britain persuaded these tribes to accept Faisal. Regarding the Kurds, the writer only briefly mentions the refusal of the Kurds to vote for Faisal in the referendum of 1919.

Efraim Karsh's paper focuses on the dependence of Britain on Hussain's family, the obstacles in front Faisal and his rejection by France as the ruler of Syria.³⁵ After this, the author points out the debate among British officials to choose between Faisal and his brother Abdulla for the throne of Iraq, and indicates that most of the decision-makers, such as Churchill, Cox and Lawrence, supported Faisal.

Three Kings of Iraq, by Gerald De Gaury,³⁶ concerns British imperialism and the Hashemites' role in Iraq. The author (who was Special Charge d'Affaires with the uncle of King Faisal II when he was the Regent of Iraq) discusses the reasons behind the choice of Faisal for the Iraqi throne by Britain. In addition, he focuses on the Assyrians in Iraq rather than the Kurds, and he analyses how the Assyrians crossed from

³⁴ Rasheeduddin Khan, 'Mandate and monarchy in Iraq: a study in the origin of the British Mandate and the creation of the Hashemite monarchy in Iraq 1919-1921', *Islamic Culture*, 43 (1969), pp.255-76.

³⁵ Efraim Karsh, 'Reactive imperialism: Britain, the Hashemites, and the creation of modern Iraq', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 30, no. 3 (2002), pp.55-70.

³⁶ Gerald De Gaury, *Three Kings in Baghdad: The Tragedy of Iraq's Monarchy* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007).

Turkey to the Kurdish area. He discusses their settlement, following the suggestion of the British High Commissioner, first at Baquba and later at Mosul, and how Kurdish and Assyrian levies were recruited by Britain for security duties after the First World War. However, although he mentions the Turkish claim to regain Mosul, he only discusses Faisal's concern to prevent any Turkish threat. In addition, De Gaury only gives some information about the Turkish intervention in south Kurdistan and the operations of the RAF against the Turks and Mahmud's movement in 1923.

British military control, especially the role of Royal Air Force and Assyrian Levies in Iraq and south Kurdistan is another subject which is considered by the following authors. David Omissi considers the formation and use of the Assyrian Levies in Iraq.³⁷ The author argues that by the creation of the Iraqi state, Britain wanted to finish the opposition of the Iraqi nationalists, who rose against Britain. After this, Britain hoped to reduce its expenditure in Iraq by reducing its forces there, but without weakening its influence. For this, they relied on the air force and the Levies, of which the Assyrian refugees comprised a significant part. Omissi analyses the giving of responsibility to the Royal Air Force in Iraq, which was intended to help the British economy by decreasing the scale and cost of the British forces in Iraq. The Assyrians wished to obtain their rights in Iraq with the help of Britain, but after combining with Iraq they were in an isolated position. Their worry for their future after the termination of the British mandate caused their strike in July 1932, as they felt that their rights were not guaranteed.

In another paper, John Fisher discusses Captain George Gracey and British policy towards the Assyrians from 1917-45.³⁸ He gives some information about the difficulty of living with the Arabs in Iraq, and believes that the Arabs did not like having the Assyrians there, and also the Assyrians did not have loyalty to the Iraqi government. This led them to ask for autonomy from the Iraqi government when they knew that the British mandate would finish in 1932. However, their request was not accepted by Britain and the League Council, and it approved their remaining within Iraq, but they suffered massacre after the independence of Iraq. Fisher also states that

³⁷ David Omissi, 'Britain, the Assyrians and the Iraq Levies, 1919-1932', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 17, no. 3 (1989), pp.301-322; David Omissi, *Air Power and Colonial Control: the Royal Air Force 1919-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990).

³⁸ John Fisher, 'Man on the spot: Captain George Gracey and British policy towards the Assyrians, 1917-1945', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 44, no. 2 (2008), pp.215-235.

the Iraqi government only cared about the Assyrians for employing them in the Levies force, which caused unrest in south Kurdistan, because Iraq wanted to use the Assyrians to defeat Kurdish nationalists.

There are other researches about the emergence of Kurdish nationalism. Robert Olson argues that the rising of Sheikh Sa'id was a nationalist rising, similar to the northern Kurds, rather than the other risings which were religious in origin.³⁹ His book also considers the methods of the Turks to defeat this rebellion, and its consequences. He argues that the British policy to intensify the bombing of the Kurds in south Kurdistan from 1922 to 1925, which obliged Euz Damir to evacuate Rowandoz, had been shaped in their negotiation in 1925 and encouraged Turkey to increase its air force. He states that Turkey and Iran had learnt from the British example in bombing the northern and eastern Kurdish rebellions.

In the article 'Five stages of Kurdish Nationalism: 1880-1980', Robert Olson argues that the religious factor in Iraq had not played a significant role between the Sunni and Sh'ia,⁴⁰ while Arabs nearly had the same attitude towards Kurds, in spite of their religious doctrinal difference. He argues that the ethnic religious dissimilarity between the Kurds and Arabs caused the lack of co-operation between them in Iraq. Olson believes that the ethnic/national aspect played a greater role between the Kurds and the Arabs as a minority and majority, rather than the religious factor.

Jordi Tejel Gorgas⁴¹ argues that the urban mobilization in south Kurdistan was incited when Britain decided to give up its mandate and let Iraq gain its independence. This caused Kurdish demonstrations in Sulaimania, which he argues were a fundamental change in Kurdish society, because before that time the Kurds were tribal and came from rural areas. The author states that the killing of the Kurds by the Iraqi army in September 1930 became a collective memory among the people there, and gradually a new political elite appeared in Sulaimania. The majority of them came from educated people, whilst Mahmud, who came from the Sufi dynasty, became more popular among Kurdish people. This paper is based upon English sources and some

³⁹ Robert Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880-1925* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989).

⁴⁰ Robert Olson, 'Five stages of Kurdish nationalism 1880-1980', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 12, no. 2 (1991), pp.391-409.

⁴¹ Jordi Tejel Gorgas, 'Urban Mobilization in Iraqi Kurdistan during the British Mandate: Sulaimaniya 1918-1930', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 44, no. 4 (2008), pp.537-552.

official reports, such as the High Commissioner's reports from Baghdad to the Secretary of State for the Colonies in London. It also used two interviews, the first with Fereyduh Rafiq Hilmi (the son of Rafiq Hilmi), and the second with Diler Barzngy (grandson of Sheikh Muhammad Garip, the Minister of Interior in 1922). The author has not used any Kurdish books, and has only used one Arabic book.⁴²

Some other researchers have discussed the Mosul question and the Kurds. Sarah Shield examines the League of Nations' Commission regarding the fate of the Mosul vilayet and their decision in favour of Iraq and Britain.⁴³ She believes that Britain regretted its argument about the self-determination of the Kurds. She mentions the complication of the commission's questions, which confused people as to whether they wanted Turkey or Iraq. She argues that in the settlement of Mosul, the European assumption stressed that the boundaries of nationalists and states should coincide, but the problem was that the people of the Mosul vilayet did not have one ethnic identity. Under these European assumptions, the economy of the vilayet was also destroyed, and this 'left it open to the new oil economy waiting in the wings'.⁴⁴

Saad Eskander in his paper examines British policy in south Kurdistan,⁴⁵ and discusses the air attacks on the people there from 1922 to 1923. This occurred after the deterioration of the political relationship between Britain and Mahmud, and also to calm and control the situation in Kurdistan during the negotiations with the Kemalists. Eskander also argues that the defeat of the Kurdish rebels facilitated Cox's project to join Mosul with Iraq, and shows that he followed the same policy as Wilson had previously. Thus, in the same way as Wilson, he had economic, political, demographic and strategic justifications for the annexation of south Kurdistan to Iraq. Eskander also assesses the other British authorities' attitudes towards south Kurdistan, especially at the Cairo Conference and later. However, Eskander does not cover very effectively the local responses of the Kurds, and he does not discuss the important points of the

⁴² This is H. Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and its Communists, Ba'athists and Free Officers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

⁴³ Sarah Shield, 'Mosul questions: economy, identity and annexation', in Reeva Spector Simon and Eleanor H. Tejirian (eds.), *The Creation of Iraq 1914-1921* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.59.

⁴⁵ S. Eskander, 'Southern Kurdistan under Britain's Mesopotamian Mandate: from separation to incorporation, 1920-1923', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 37, no. 2 (2001), pp.153-180; Saad B. Eskander, *From Planning to Partition: Great Britain's Policy towards the Future of Kurdistan 1915-1923* (Arbil: Zheen Establishment, 2007).

breakdown of Mahmud's relationship with Britain, particularly in 1919. He has not used the parliamentary debates, which are very useful, especially for showing the views of Churchill about the Kurdish question.

Robert Olson's article focuses on the attempt of A. Rawlinson,⁴⁶ an intelligence and political agent of the British in the Middle East, to persuade the British government to support the Kurdish rising in north Kurdistan by giving arms and money, and to defeat the Kemalists by sending vessels to the Black Sea. However, his proposal was rejected by the Colonial Office and most British officials, as they believed that this would not destroy the Kemalists. Moreover, this proposal would involve heavy expenditure, which was not wished by Britain, especially if they tried to reduce costs, as without British protection, the Kurds would be massacred by the Turks. The author states that after the growth of Turkish power, this proposal was abandoned and the British plan was not only to allow the Turks to occupy north Kurdistan, but since November 1921, Britain decided to integrate south Kurdistan with Iraq.

Othman Ali in his article 'The Kurdish Factor in the struggle for vilayet Mosul, 1921-1925'⁴⁷ focuses on the Mosul question at the League of Nations and discusses the British and Turkish arguments about holding a plebiscite in the Mosul vilayet. He states that the Turks insisted on doing this, because they were familiar with the disunity of the Kurds. He believes that Britain was against any referendum in the vilayet, because they feared that the Kurds might vote for establishing a Kurdish state, which was opposite to the British desire to join south Kurdistan with Iraq. After that, Ali discusses the British and Turkish attempts to attract the southern Kurds to declare in favour respectively of Iraq or Turkey during the visit of the Commission. However, he does not mention the effect of their attempts on the people, and the reactions of Britain and Turkey against each other, and does not cover the procedures of the Commission of the League Council to settle the Mosul question. He briefly mentions the decision of the League of Nations and Iraqi policy towards south Kurdistan during that time.

In another article, Ali discusses the British and Turkish negotiations at the Lausanne conference, and briefly indicates the main points of their arguments about the

⁴⁶ Robert Olson, 'Time around: British policy toward the Kurds (1921-22)', *Die Welt des Islams*, new series, 27, no. 1/3 (1987), pp.91-102.

⁴⁷ Othman Ali, 'The Kurdish Factor in the struggle for vilayet Mosul, 1921-1925' *Journal of Kurdish Studies*, 4 (2002), pp.31-48.

Mosul question.⁴⁸ He mentions the necessity of the British evacuation of south Kurdistan, but this point needs further consideration, because this was a question debated between the British administration of south Kurdistan and London. Ali suggests that Britain wanted to prevent any possible Russian threat to the Middle East by forging a good relationship with Turkey before any possible Turkish-Russian relations. For this, Britain was willing to partition south Kurdistan by giving a part of the Mosul vilayet to Turkey, and abandoning the clauses about Kurdish rights in the Treaty of Sèvres. However, this article does not mention that the suggestion of a partition of south Kurdistan was a tentative proposal and was strongly rejected by the cabinet. In addition, Ali does not include the main reasons for the failure of the Lausanne Conference. He mentions the British operation against Mahmud during the conference, and the attempt of Britain to sign the Anglo-Iraqi treaty in 1924.

Zeynep Arıkanlı explores the development of Kurdish nationalism after the First World War, especially due to the postponement of the fate of south Kurdistan by Britain. The author argues that after the annexation of the Mosul vilayet with Iraq and the southern Kurds became a minority in this new state, this encouraged Kurdish nationalism to develop in the Middle East.⁴⁹

There are other studies which concern Turkey, the League of Nations and the settlement of the dispute. Peter Beck argues that the Lausanne Conference did not settle all of the Kurdish question,⁵⁰ as the fate of the Mosul vilayet had not yet been decided, and this caused delay in drawing the frontier between Iraq and Turkey. He believes that as Mosul was a rich area the Turks did not abandon their rights in the vilayet, especially after their success against the Greeks who were supported by Britain. However, Britain believed that joining the vilayet with Iraq meant their success, particularly for their oil interests in Iraq. The writer states that it was true that the Foreign Office had the major role in the diplomatic steps regarding the Mosul question, but it also involved other British ministries. He also says that in the case of losing the vilayet to the Turks, Iraq would be deprived of the oil of Mosul, and America and France would benefit more

⁴⁸ Othman Ali, 'The Kurds and the Lausanne Peace Negotiations, 1922-1923', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 33, no. 3 (1997), pp.521-534.

⁴⁹ Zeynep Arıkanlı, 'British legacy and evolution of Kurdish nationalism in Iraq (1918-1926): what significance the "Mosul Question"?'', Centro Argentino de Estudios Internacionales (unknown place and publisher, 2013).

⁵⁰ Peter J. Beck, 'A tedious and perilous controversy: Britain and the settlement of the Mosul dispute, 1918-1926', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 17, no. 2 (1981), pp.256-276.

from oil than Britain. Beck argues that Curzon preferred to refer the Mosul question to the League, because he expected that it would force the Turks to leave the vilayet, instead of continuing his direct discussions with the Turkish delegation. This paper covers the discussions between the Turks and Britain at Geneva. However, the investigation of the Commission of the League Council needs further consideration. Beck does not consider the situation of south Kurdistan during the examination of the commission, and does not analyse the impact of the decision of the League on the southern Kurds.

John Rogers believes that the British and Turkish governments were satisfied that they could not settle the Mosul question,⁵¹ and were agreed about the judgment of the League Council. In this study, he shows that Sweden had a great role in foreign crises such as the Mosul issue. He indicates that Hjalmar Branting, who was Prime Minister and ‘a part of Sweden's delegation to the League, was appointed rapporteur’, and due to his suggestion a commission was sent to examine the sentiment of the people in the Mosul vilayet. He states that the Brussels line was also Branting’s idea, which was accepted by the Council on 29 October 1924, and that after his illness his place was taken by Östen Undén (a Swedish citizen who was expert in international law). In addition, another Swedish diplomat who is mentioned in this study was Carl Einar Wirsén, the chairman of the Mosul Commission. After that, the writer discusses a Swedish proposal for the protection of the minority groups and the demilitarisation of the frontier line. However, the Swedish suggestions were neglected because the Commission believed that it was difficult to consider the interests of these groups and that for economic reasons the vilayet should be a part of Iraq. Finally, the author believes that the Swedish suggestions did not come from their own interests, because they did not have any direct relations with the people in the disputed areas.

Oya Silier considers the foreign policy of the Turkish state from 1923 to 1939,⁵² and examines the negotiations between Britain and Turkey. He believes that Turkey would have turned to Britain instead of Russia after the Lausanne Conference, if Britain had agreed to restore the Mosul vilayet to them, because the Kemalists were anti-Communist and needed economic reconstruction with the help of western powers.

⁵¹ John Rogers, ‘The foreign policy of small states: Sweden and the Mosul crisis, 1924-1925’, *Contemporary European History*, 16, no. 3 (2007), pp.349-369.

⁵² Oya Silier, *The Place of Anglo-Turkish Relations in the Foreign Policy of the Turkish Republic (1923-1939)*, http://www.politics.ankara.edu.tr/dergi/tybook/11/Oya_Silier.pdf.

Nevin Coşar and Sevtap Demirci⁵³ assess the policy of Britain and the allied powers towards the Ottomans and Kemalists. The latter valued the Lausanne Conference because it recognised the new Turkish state, and they believed that the British negotiation with the Turks was a diplomatic victory for the Turks, whilst the Treaty of Sèvres would partition the Ottoman Empire. The authors briefly describe the negotiations at the conference and the reference of this question to the League of Nations, and the subsequent settlement of the frontier question between Turkey and Iraq in 1926.

Sarah Shields in her paper, ‘Mosul, the Ottoman Legacy and the League of Nations’,⁵⁴ examines the whole process of annexing the Mosul vilayet into Iraq. According to the article, Faisal had a crucial role in combining this province into the new country. The writer discusses how British and Iraqi policy-makers worked to annex Mosul to Iraq. For that purpose, before the League of Nations’ decision, they tried to link it with Baghdad and Basra economically, even though it was quite different from the other two provinces. The paper argues that the composition of the population in the city of Mosul was not clear because inter-marriage between all ethnic groups had become a normal phenomenon. Therefore, it would be difficult to rely on ethnicity in Mosul’s fate. In addition, it concentrates on the League of Nations’ Commissioners’ interviews with the prominent and even ordinary people in Mosul, Kirkuk and Arbil about their fate.

David Cuthell states that Britain practised an aggressive policy to control the Mosul vilayet,⁵⁵ and he covers the Turkish response to the invasion of south Kurdistan, which they believed was an illegal action. He believes that the Kemalists cared about ‘territorial integrity’, but that they were concerned more about north Kurdistan than the south. His study also concerns the diplomatic steps of the Turks with France, Russia and Italy. After this, the Turks sought to recover the vilayet, but this was difficult as Mosul was much more strategically important to Britain than it was to Turkey.

⁵³ Nevin Coşar and Sevtap Demirci, ‘The Mosul question and the Turkish republic: before and after the Frontier Treaty, 1926’ *Middle Eastern Studies*, 42, no. 1 (2006), pp.123-132.

⁵⁴ Sarah Shield, ‘Mosul, the Ottoman legacy and the League of Nations’, *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies*, 3, no. 2 (2009), pp.217-230.

⁵⁵ David Cuthell, ‘Kemalist gambit: view of the political negotiations in the determination of the Turkish-Iraqi border’, in Reeva Spector Simon and Eleanor H. Tejirian (eds.), *The Creation of Iraq 1914–1921* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp.80-92.

The article by Richard Schofield⁵⁶ aims to compare the demarcation of the boundary between Iraq and Turkey in the 1920s with that of Iraqi and Kuwaiti territory after the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in 1990. The writer argues that the treaties regarding the Perso-Ottoman boundaries had a role in defining the boundaries of Iraq. Regarding the Mosul vilayet, he argues that Britain joined Mosul to Iraq to keep a religious balance because the overwhelming majority of Mosul's population were Sunnis. He states that creating Iraq as a country was very confusing, and in particular the boundary of Iraq in Mosul still remained unsolved.

The study by Fuat Dundar of the British use of statistics in the Mosul question⁵⁷ discusses how Britain used statistics about the Kurds during its negotiations with the Turks at Lausanne Conference. The book shows that the Kurds constituted a majority of the population in the vilayet of Mosul, but Britain did not create a state for the Kurds. Moreover, Dundar believes that due to the number of the Kurds, it was in British interests to join south Kurdistan with Iraq, and this also had a great influence on the decision of the League of Nations' Commission in favour of Iraq. The author shows the increase of non-Kurdish officials in south Kurdistan, whilst it was ruled by Iraq. However, he only used the employment statistics for 1931, and he does not mention the number of Kurdish and non-Kurdish officials in 1926 and 1930. Without these figures, it is unclear how the number of non-Kurdish officials increased, and whether or not Britain and the Iraqi government tried to increase the number of Kurdish officials in south Kurdistan.

In summary, the existing literature has focussed much more on Iraq rather than Kurdistan. Of the few that have considered south Kurdistan, they have not deeply analysed the most important events there. For example, they have considered the Mosul question as an issue in international diplomacy, without really relating it to what was happening in south Kurdistan and the Turkish efforts at intervention there. There are gaps in the understanding of British and Iraqi policy towards southern Kurds, especially during the Lausanne Conference and after the joining of south Kurdistan with Iraq. The activities of the Commission of the League of Nations in the Mosul vilayet is another aspect which has not been examined thoroughly. Many important questions remain

⁵⁶ Richard N. Schofield, 'Laying it down in stone: delimiting and demarcating Iraq's boundaries by mixed international commission', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 34 (2008), pp.397-421.

⁵⁷ Fuat Dundar, *British Use of Statistics in the Iraqi Kurdish Question, 1919-1932* (Brandeis University: Crown Center for Middle East Studies, 2012).

unanswered about the reasons for integrating the southern Kurds with Iraq, the causes of instability in south Kurdistan and the continual pattern of Kurdish risings against Britain and Iraq.

CHAPTER ONE

THE GEOGRAPHY, SOCIETY AND HISTORY OF SOUTH KURDISTAN BEFORE 1918

1.1 Geography and economy

Kurdistan is the term used by most writers for the area in which the Kurds comprised the majority of the population. They describe it as a strategic place situated in the core of the Middle East.⁵⁸ Kurdistan included territory in the north of Iran, a large area in eastern Iran, and a small part of Armenia within the Russian Empire.⁵⁹ Within the Ottoman Empire, it included the vilayets (provinces) of Bitlis, Diyarbekir, Erzurom, Mamuret al-Aziz (Kharbut), Mosul and Van, and the Kurds also lived in in the north-eastern part of the Damascus vilayet.⁶⁰ The Mosul vilayet was known as south Kurdistan, and in the present day it is Iraqi Kurdistan. The administrative boundary of the vilayet was separated from the Baghdad vilayet by the Sirwan river in the south-east and by the Jabal Hamrin mountains in the south-west, and then 'by a straight line westward across the Jazira back to the Syrian frontier'.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Lokman I. Meho, *The Kurds and Kurdistan: A Selective and Annotated Bibliography* (London: Greenwood Press, 1997), p.1.

⁵⁹ Wadie Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement: Its Origins and Development* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2006), p.3.

⁶⁰ E.B. Soane, *Report on the Sulaimania District of Kurdistan* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, India, 1919), St. Antony's College, Oxford, Middle East Centre Archive, Edmonds Mss, Box 7, File 1, pp.1-2; *Armenia and Kurdistan: Handbook Prepared under the Direction of the Historical Section of the Foreign Office, No.62* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1920).

⁶¹ C.J. Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs: Politics, Travel and Research in North-Eastern Iraq 1919-1925* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), p.9.



Figure 1: Topographic map of south Kurdistan

source: https://kurdistancommentary.files.wordpress.com/2011/01/vilayet_mosul.gif

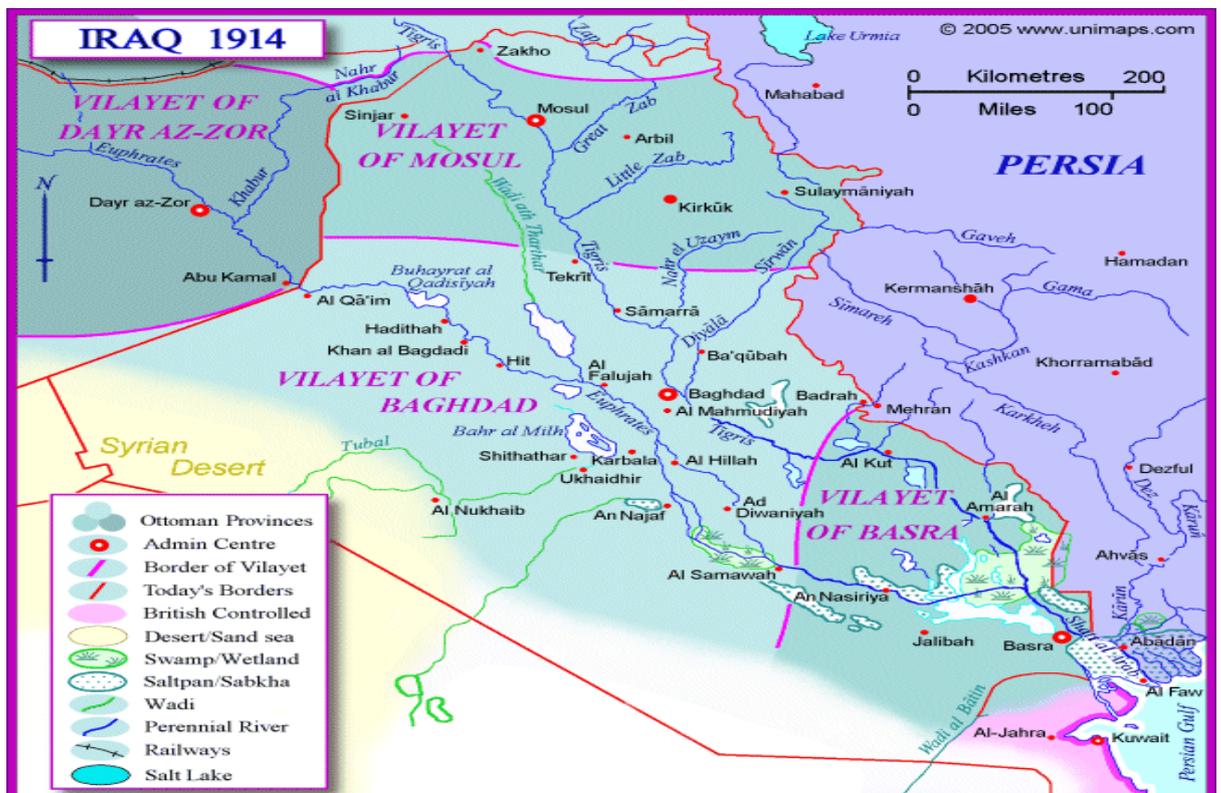


Figure 2: Geographic map of the Mosul vilayet

source: https://kurdistancommentary.files.wordpress.com/2011/01/vilayet_mosul.gif

South Kurdistan contains a series of mountain ranges which 'run in a north-west to south-easterly direction ... Fertile valleys lie between the mountain ridges, and this intermontane zone is heavily dissected with active drainage systems'.⁶² From the mountains to the south there are fertile plains, such as Arbil and Harir and Sharazor, which become more of a desert area in the southern part. There are four main rivers in south Kurdistan, which flow from north and east Kurdistan. They are the Greater Zab, the Adhiam (Uzaym), the Lesser Zab and the Diala (Sirwan) rivers, which all join 'the Tigris from the Persian hills on its left bank'.⁶³ South Kurdistan extended from a flat plain to high mountains, and this caused the variance of climate, such as the semi-arid areas of south Kurdistan which were quite similar to the Arab areas of Iraq. This is because there is rainfall from January to April, but after May the temperature rapidly increases, which makes it difficult for agriculture. In the central plains, snow and rain continue until the end of March, but in summer the weather is very hot and dry and the temperature exceeds 40°C. By August, the temperature decreases and rainfall starts again in September, but in the high mountain areas the winter is very tough and usually snow blocks the roads to the villages.⁶⁴

The most developed urban settlement of the Kurds was Sulaimania, situated in the south-eastern part of the Mosul vilayet. Its population at the end of Ottoman rule was 15,762, of whom 90% were Kurds, with Jews and other minorities making up the remaining 10%. Arbil and Duhok were the other important towns in south Kurdistan in which the Kurds comprised the majority of the population, together with other minorities (especially the Turks in Arbil). The population of Arbil was 14,255, and that of Duhok 5,363. Kirkuk was a mixed city, as Turkmens and Arabs also lived there, but the Kurds were the largest ethnic group. According to the Turkish records, the population of the Kirkuk Qadha in 1912 was about 41,137, but there were no accurate figures of the number of Arabs and Turkmens in the town. According to the Salnamas

⁶² Gareth R.V. Stansfield, *Iraqi Kurdistan: Political Development and Emergent Democracy* (London: Routledge, 2003), p.29.

⁶³ *Mesopotamia: Handbook Prepared under the Direction of the Historical Section of the Foreign Office, No.63* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1920), p.48.

⁶⁴ Soane, *Report on the Sulaimania District*, pp.1-2.

(Ottoman census), 20,000 people lived in the town before the First World War and the majority of them were Turks.⁶⁵

The vilayet of Mosul had economic importance as it was a trade route from other parts of Mesopotamia; from Persia by way of Sulaimania and Rowandoz, to north Kurdistan by Zakho, and from Aleppo and Damascus by the route between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The administrative centre of the vilayet was the city of Mosul, and it was also the commercial heart of the region, as sheep, goats and other products were sent to Mosul and then transferred to the rest of the Ottoman Empire, India and Europe.⁶⁶ The main products of the vilayet were plants and grains, especially wheat and barley, and fruit, especially grapes. Many sorts of fruit were grown in Kirkuk, Kifri and Shaqlawa, but olives were only grown in the Qadha of Aqra and some villages near Mosul city. Tobacco was produced in most parts of the Mosul vilayet, especially at Qaradagh in Sulaimania Sinjak, as its soil was very suitable.⁶⁷ Cotton was also cultivated in different areas of the vilayet, but the best quality was produced in Shaqlawa and Khaninqin.⁶⁸ Wool and spring wool were produced in Mosul and Kirkuk Sinjaks, and mohair in Sulaimania, Arbil, Zakho and Aqra.⁶⁹ South Kurdistan was also very rich in mineral resources: coal was found in Kifri, to the east of Sulaimania, in the hill areas near Halabja, and in the districts of Zakho and Amadia, but Iron ore was only found in the districts north of Amadia and Zakho.⁷⁰ There were three places near Kirkuk where crude oil was used by the people and also exported to Kifri, Alton Keupri, Arbil and Koia, and there was salt in Tuz Khurmato, and gypsum in the lower hills of Kirkuk the area.⁷¹

⁶⁵ Stansfield, *Iraqi Kurdistan*, p.29; Cengiz Eroğlu, Murat Babuçoğlu and Orhan Özdil (eds.), translated by Ümit Ildan, *Mosul in the Ottoman Vilâyet Salnâmas* (Ankara: Orsam, 2012), pp.33,46,53,86,167,195; *Mesopotamia*, p.91.

⁶⁶ Eroğlu et al., *Mosul in the Ottoman Vilâyet Salnâmas*, p.419; the Secretary, Political and Secret Department, and the Military Secretary in India Office, 'The Future Settlement of Eastern Turkey in Asia and Arabia', 14 March 1915, TNA, CAB/24/1/16, pp.3-4.

⁶⁷ Eroğlu et al., *Mosul in the Ottoman Vilâyet Salnâmas*, pp.127-129.

⁶⁸ *Mesopotamia*, p.77.

⁶⁹ Eroğlu et al., *Mosul in the Ottoman Vilâyet Salnâmas*, p.130.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.84.

⁷¹ Soane, *Report on the Sulaimania District*, p.14.

1.2 Population and social organisation

The Kurds accounted for more than half of the population of the Mosul vilayet, numbering about 380,000 before the First World War. They were Muslim, and most of them were Sunni and practised the Shaf'i sect, which was one of the four schools of Islamic law. This differentiated them from the Sunni Turks and Sunni Arabs, who followed the Hanifi law. However, a considerable number of the Kurds in south Kurdistan were similar to the majority of Arabs in Iraq, and practised 'the orthodox Twelver Sh'ism'.⁷² The Turkmen were another ethnic group who lived in south Kurdistan, and they accounted for about 110,000 of the population.⁷³ Most of them were Sunni and lived in Kirkuk, Kifri and Alton Keupri, but some of them were Sh'ia, and they lived in Kirkuk, Tuz Khurmato, Qaratapa, Tauq and Tla'far.⁷⁴

There were some other Kurdish sects who were minorities in south Kurdistan. The biggest sect was the Yazidis, whose number after the occupation of south Kurdistan by Britain was estimated at between 18,000 and 20,000. They spoke the Kirmanji (Bahdinan) dialect, and most of them lived around Jabal Sinjar (fifty miles west of Mosul), and to the north-west of Mosul. They had a good relationship with the Christians, and they helped the Armenians by sheltering them in Jabal Sinjar after their suppression by the Turks during the First World War.⁷⁵ Other heterodox sects in south Kurdistan were the Ahli Haq (Kaka'iy), Shabak and Failyah, who were closer to the Sh'ia. The location of the first sect was south of Kirkuk,⁷⁶ but the Shabak, who numbered about 10,000, lived 'on the Tigris south of Mosul'. The last sect was the Failyah Lurs, who lived in the border of Badra and Mandali and their surrounding villages.⁷⁷ There were also non-Muslim minorities who lived in south Kurdistan. The largest was the Christians, who numbered 18,559, most of whom were Assyrians and Chaldeans. Their location was around Mosul and east of the Tigris in the Bahdinan areas, and they also lived in the cities of Kirkuk, Sulaimania, Sharazor and Pinjwen.

⁷² Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State: the Social and Political Structure of Kurdistan* (London: Zed, 1992), p.23; *Mesopotamia*, p.11.

⁷³ Soane, *Report on the Sulaimania District*, pp.6-7; *Mesopotamia*, p.11.

⁷⁴ Longrigg, *Iraq*, p.9; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, pp.68-69.

⁷⁵ Gertrude Bell, 'Mesopotamia: Review of the Civil Administration', 27 August 1919, TNA, FO/371/5081, p.49.

⁷⁶ Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, p.24.

⁷⁷ Longrigg, *Iraq*, p.9; *Mesopotamia*, p.8

The Jews were the last non-Muslim minority; their number was 7,687, and they inhabited the same cities, and also Alton Keupri, Halabja and Qradagh.⁷⁸

The Kurdish language is similar to the Turkish and Persian languages, and it was used not only by the Kurds but also by Armenians, Nestorians and Syrians as a common tongue. However, because of the lack of literature as a fixing influence and the isolation of the Kurdish tribes, the Kurdish language divided into some dialects. This was a major cause for its non-development as a written language before 1919, and also the Turks during Ottoman rule made obstacles to this. Their policy was the centralisation of the empire, and they believed that opening Kurdish schools in south Kurdistan would recognise the Kurds as a different nationality.⁷⁹ Geography also played a part in this: because Kurdistan was a mountainous area, this caused difficulties of communication between various groups of Kurds, who spoke various dialects.⁸⁰ As a result, the Kurds, especially in the Sulaimania districts, used Persian as the written language for their affairs, even in the schools and the Bazar, but they spoke Kurdish. The Arabic language was also used by some people, because of the trade connection with the Arabs in Baghdad, but Turkish was not common, and in most places only those who had government posts could speak and write it. However, in the city of Kirkuk and the other places where Turkmens lived, it was used by the people.⁸¹

The administrative structure of Kurdistan during the rule of the Ottoman Empire was divided into four levels. The largest was the Vilayet or province, which was ruled by a Vali (Lieutenant-Governor). The next level was a Sinjaq (Liwa) governed by a Mutasarifi; then a Qadha (district), governed by a Qaimaqam (prefect), and finally a Nahia (sub-district), governed by a Mudir (Mayor). The Mutasarifs were assisted by a council of notables, and had a similar authority to a British Assistant Political Officer, whilst the Mudirs dealt with the people through Aghas or Mukhtars (headman).⁸² During the rule of the Ottoman Empire, Iraq (which was then called Mesopotamia) was divided into three vilayets: Baghdad, Basra and Mosul. The latter included the Sinjaqs of Mosul, Kirkuk and Sulaimania. The first of these comprised the Qadhas of Mosul,

⁷⁸ Soane, *Report on the Sulaimania District*, pp.6-7; Fredrik Barth, *Principles of Social Organization in South Kurdistan* (Oslo: Brodrene Jorgensen A/S-Boktrykkeri, 1953), p.13.

⁷⁹ E.W.C. Noel, *Note on the Kurdish Situation*, Edmonds Mss, Box 7, File 1, July 1919, pp.1,8.

⁸⁰ Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p.7.

⁸¹ Soane, *Report on the Sulaimania District*, pp.15-17.

⁸² W.R. Hay, *Two Years in Kurdistan: Experiences of a Political Officer 1918-1920* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1921), pp.369-370; *Mesopotamia*, p.38.

Duhok, Aqra, Amadia, Zakho and Sinjar. The Kirkuk sinjaq included Arbil, Kifri, Kirkuk, Koia, Rania and Rowandoz, and the Sulaimania sinjaq comprised Gulanber (Halabja), Bazyan, Shehr-i Pazar, Mamure (or Marga, which also included the Pishdar area and Sulaimania).⁸³ After the occupation of south Kurdistan by Britain in 1918, the administrative system of south Kurdistan was reconstructed, as it was divided into three Liwas: Kirkuk, Sulaimania and Mosul, and the three Qadhas of the Lesser Zab were split from Kirkuk and became the Arbil Liwa.⁸⁴

Kurdish society was based on the tribe, which was composed of clans and families.⁸⁵ There were many tribes in south Kurdistan, and their tribal organisation was more or less similar to each other. Bruinessen described the Kurdish tribe as a socio-political unit which linked regional and economic activities and relied upon descent and kinship.⁸⁶ In another definition, Captain Hay, a British Political Officer in south Kurdistan called it a confederation or community, the main duties of which were to defend its individuals and rely on them against outside invasion, and also to maintain the 'old racial customs and standards of life'.⁸⁷ However, the tribal system of the Kurds was the main cause of their divisions, which will be discussed in most of the chapters of this thesis. This was because the chieftains competed with each other to lead their tribes, and for the sake of political and social power some Taifa (which were composed of several Tiras, or groups of closely-linked Individuals) were willing to support their opponents. This gave opportunities to powerful neighbouring states to occupy the territory of the Kurds by supporting some chieftains against others.⁸⁸ The Kurdish tribes were divided into three varieties: nomadic, semi-nomadic and sedentary. The first type did not have their own lands, and moved to the hills in hot season for livestock pasturage, such as some groups in the Harki and Jaf tribes. The semi-nomadic tribes remained in their villages during the winter, and went to their neighbouring hills in the summer, such as the Mamash and Mangor tribes in the Pishdar area. The final category lived in the fertile valleys, and practised pastoral farming.⁸⁹

⁸³ Eroğlu et al., *Mosul in the Ottoman Vilâyet Salnâmas*, pp.21-34.

⁸⁴ Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p.8.

⁸⁵ Meho, *Kurds and Kurdistan*, p.2.

⁸⁶ Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, p.51.

⁸⁷ Hay, *Two Years in Kurdistan*, p.65.

⁸⁸ Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, p.73-74.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.17,54; Command of the Air Council, *Military Report on Iraq, Area 9, Central Kurdistan*, August 1929, TNA, AIR/10/1841, p.153.

The sheikhs were another figure with an important role in Kurdish society. They were considered as a religious class, and they were not part of tribal organisation. Most of them did not have any affinity with other tribes in the region, and most of them came from other regions and established themselves as religious masters. They declared that they were devoted to the worship of God and were not interested in worldly matters.⁹⁰ However, they not only became the leaders of the Kurdish risings, but also ‘attracted a very large number of clients’.⁹¹ For example, the Sheikhs of Barzan gathered many non-tribal members who escaped from the oppressive policy of their neighbouring tribes. They created the Barzan tribe by ‘tribalizing non-tribal people’, although they did not have kinship with these people. This meant that the sheikhs ruled as chiefs, which obliged the aghas to be careful not to lose their position to the sheikhs.⁹²

1.3 South Kurdistan under Ottoman rule, 1908-1918

The Kurds in south Kurdistan were never happy under the Ottoman administration, as they believed that they were a different nation, although governed by the Turks. They did not have loyalty to the Ottoman government and they sought an opportunity to rise against it, because they were not dealt with similarly to the Turks. They were forced to pay road and education taxes, and other sums, but their areas were neglected by the Ottoman government.⁹³ However, as they were Muslim they were linked to the Caliph of Islam, but the announcement of the constitution of 1908 by the Committee of Union and Progress (known as the ‘Young Turks’) had broken this and increased unrest in south Kurdistan. This was because the new regime was against the rule of the Caliph and tried to reduce the role of the sheikhs, who were respected in Kurdistan.⁹⁴ Sheikh Sa’id of Barzinji, a religious man who led the Qadri path in Sulaimania, similarly to the other sheikhs supported Sultan Abdul Hamid. After the announcement of the constitution, he rose against the Committee of Union and Progress, as he believed that they were infidel. However, MacDowell has pointed out that the main aim of his revolt

⁹⁰ Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, pp.59-60.

⁹¹ David MacDowell, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 3rd ed., 2004), p.16.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p.16.

⁹³ Administrative Inspector in Sulaimania to Administrative Inspector in Mosul and et al., 21 February 1925, Edmonds Mss, Box 1, File 2, p.2.

⁹⁴ Civil Commissioner’s Office at Baghdad, ‘Notes on the Tribes of Southern Kurdistan between the Greater Zab and the Dialah’, June 1919, *Ibid.*, Box 3, file 2, p.17.

was that he feared to lose his position and his power.⁹⁵ Sa'id was accused of persecuting the merchants, as he obliged them to pay taxes. The Turkish government, which considered him a menace, argued that as the merchants complained, Sa'id was exiled to Mosul and forced to live there.⁹⁶ On 6 January 1909, he was killed, together with 13 of his followers, by a man named Abu Jasim in circumstances which are unclear. It was said that the people of the town were angry about the attitude of one of Sa'id's followers, and in reaction they killed Sa'id and looted his house.⁹⁷ The death of Sa'id outraged the Kurds, especially the Jaf and Hamawand tribes, and the Barjinzi family also sought revenge the Turkish government.⁹⁸ They refused to pay taxes and attacked Turkish forces in the Sulaimania area.⁹⁹ These tribes, and especially the Hamawand, continued their revolt until the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in 1918.¹⁰⁰

The policy of the Young Turks was against the non-Turkish ethnic groups, and this increased the desire of the Kurds for their autonomy. In north Kurdistan, members of the families of Badir Khan and Shamdhinan, and Ismail agha of Shikak (Simko) in the east of Kurdistan, rose against Ottoman rule.¹⁰¹ Sheikh Abdul Salam was another Kurdish chief in south Kurdistan who was opposed to the Turkish regime. His struggle to unite the other Kurdish chieftains against the Young Turks showed the increase of Kurdish national feeling in south Kurdistan.¹⁰² He asked for the use of Kurdish as an official language in the Bahdinan areas (Duhok, Aqra, Amadia and Zakho), the appointment of Kurdish officials, the compatibility of taxes with Islamic law, and for the development the roads and establishment of schools with a Kurdish curriculum.¹⁰³ The Turkish government feared the growth of his separatist feeling, and to prevent his influence spreading to other areas of south Kurdistan they exploited the feud between

⁹⁵ MacDowell, *Modern History of the Kurds*, p.97.

⁹⁶ Civil Commissioner's Office at Baghdad, 'Notes on the Tribes of Southern Kurdistan', p.17.

⁹⁷ Vice Consul at Mosul to the British Ambassador at Constantinople, 14 January 1909, TNA, FO/195/2308.

⁹⁸ Bell, 'Review of the Civil Administration', p.43.

⁹⁹ Administrative Inspector in Sulaimania to Administrative Inspector in Mosul and et al., 21 February 1925, Edmonds Mss, Box 1, File 2c, p.1.

¹⁰⁰ 'Kurdistan and the Kurds', n.d., TNA, FO/371/4192, p.76.

¹⁰¹ For more information about the Kurdish risings, see MacDowell, *Modern History of the Kurds*, pp.95-100.

¹⁰² Pi Rash, *Barzan waharakat al-wahi al-Qawmi 1826-1914* [Arabic: *Barzan and the Movement of the Kurdish National Consciousness*] (Arbil: unknown press, 1980), p.88.

¹⁰³ Sdiq al-Damaluji, *Emirate Bahdinan al-Kurdiat aw Imarat al-Amadia* [Arabic: *The Kurdish Emirate of Bahdinan or Emirate of Amadia*] (Arbil: Dar Aras, 2nd edition, 1999), p.87.

Barzan and Zibar.¹⁰⁴ Their plan to reduce the power of Abdul Salam was successful, as he was obliged to escape into Persia. However, this did not stop the Turks from seeking to capture him.¹⁰⁵ Eventually, they convinced the Shikak tribe on the Persian frontier, who arrested and surrendered him to Ottoman authority, and he was soon after hanged on 1 December 1914.¹⁰⁶

The entrance of the Ottoman Empire into the First World War on 5 November 1914 as Germany's ally obliged Britain to declare war against the Young Turks on the following day. On the same day, Britain sent a force from India to the Turkish fort at Fao, and two weeks later occupied Basra.¹⁰⁷ This pressured the Turks to stop the threat from Britain and its allies. Although they were against the Islamic power of the Caliph, they tried to use the religious sentiments of the people, as they announced Jihad in Mesopotamia against the infidel and urged that they be driven out.¹⁰⁸ Although the Kurds were against the Young Turks, the announcement of Jihad influenced them to fight against the foreign invaders without considering that British forces included Indian soldiers, many of whom were Muslim and recruited by Britain in the First World War. However, there was no any evidence to prove that the Kurds fought against Indian soldiers because of their assistance to Britain. Mahmud collected thousands of Kurdish irregular horsemen and participated in the battle of Shu'aiba on 12 April 1915, but the Kurdish force was defeated due to the effects of British bombing.¹⁰⁹ The participation of the Kurds in the battle showed that they cared more about their Islamic faith rather than their revenge on the Young Turks. However, after the battle, the Kurds were badly treated, and their religious leaders were humiliated by the Turks.¹¹⁰

The Kurds during the war not only suffered from the Turks, but also from the Russian forces. From January to May 1916, the latter with the assistance of 2,000 to 3,000 Armenians moved from the Caucasus towards Erzurum in north Kurdistan and

¹⁰⁴ Bell, 'Review of the Civil Administration', p.72.

¹⁰⁵ Pi Rash, *Barzan waharakat al-wahi al-Qawm*, p.132.

¹⁰⁶ MacDowell, *Modern History of the Kurds*, p.100; al-Damaluji, *Emirate Bahdinan al-Kurdiat*, p.89.

¹⁰⁷ Simon and Tejirian, *The Creation of Iraq 1914-1921*, p.10.

¹⁰⁸ Arnold T. Wilson, *Loyalties: Mesopotamia 1914-1917: A Personal and Historical Record* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1930), pp.22-23;

¹⁰⁹ Kamal Madhar, *Chand Laparaiak La Mezhoi Gali Kurd* [Kurdish: Some Pages in the History of the Kurds] (Arbil: Institution of Mukrian for Publishing and Printing, 2001), pp.14-22; Bell, 'Review of the Civil Administration', p.43.

¹¹⁰ 'Kurdistan and the Kurds', pp.77-78.

from Persia to Khaniqin and Rowandoz. The Armenian and Russian force occupied Rowandoz for a short time at the end of May. As a result, they massacred five thousands Kurds in Rowandoz, and ruined it and the surrounding villages.¹¹¹ It could be said that the main motive of the Armenian action against the Kurds in Rowandoz was due to their desire for revenge, as the Kurds had participated in the persecution of the Armenians in a campaign led by the Turkish government before and during the war. Moreover, the Russian force caused starvation and disease in Khaniqin, because they took or destroyed the crops which were the main source of food, and dealt with the Kurds as their enemy. This caused the death of many Kurds, and the evacuation of the town to the Kifri area. The Kurds, especially the Talabani, Sharif Baiani and Jaf tribes, complained about the attitude of Russia and asked Britain to protect them. Mustafa Pasha of Bajalan, a Kurdish chief in Khaniqin, was asked by Britain to keep order in Khaniqin and its surrounding area, but he believed that this would happen only by the occupation of the town by Britain, and asked them to appoint a British officer in the area.¹¹² However, the presence of the Russians prevented Britain from occupying the area at that time. Russia aimed to approach Mosul and Baghdad, which was not welcomed by Britain, as this was against the Sykes-Picot agreement, which will be discussed later.¹¹³ At the end of June 1917, the Russian force retired into Persia, which caused the re-occupation of Khaniqin by the Turks. Similarly to the Russians, they looted and destroyed the town, as the Kurds refused to help the Turks, and the persecution of the Kurds continued until the occupation of the area by Britain in December 1917.¹¹⁴ The operations of Russia in south and north Kurdistan caused great losses to the Kurds, who were estimated by Britain to be about 400,000 in total.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Kenneth Mason, 'Central Kurdistan', *Geographical Journal*, 54, no.6 (1919), pp.331,339; Air Staff Intelligence, Air Headquarters of British Forces in Iraq to Air Office, 'Note on Russian Persecutions in the Rowandoz area', 18 January 1923, TNA, AIR/23/343, p.2.

¹¹² 'Kurdistan and the Kurds', pp.78-79; Reports of Administration for Year 1918 of Divisions and Districts of the Occupied Territories in Mesopotamia, vol.1, Wilson Mss, IWM, Box no.69/79/2, p.23.

¹¹³ Wilson, *Loyalties: Mesopotamia 1914-1917*, p.216).

¹¹⁴ 'Kurdistan and the Kurds', pp.78-79.

¹¹⁵ Bell, 'Review of the Civil Administration', p.58.

1.4 British interests in Mesopotamia before and during the First World War

The main interests of Britain in the Middle East before the First World War were trade and the safeguarding of the strategic routes to India through the Suez Canal and to the Persian Gulf via Mesopotamia.¹¹⁶ For the security of its traditional interests in the Persian Gulf, and to prevent the possible clash of interests with Russia, Britain signed an agreement with the Russian Empire in 1907 which divided Persia into zones of interest.¹¹⁷ However, Germany was emerging as another rival power in the area and it threatened British commercial interests in the Persian Gulf and Mesopotamia, especially after obtaining the concession of building the Baghdad railway from the Ottoman government in 1903.¹¹⁸ The main worry for Britain was the possibility of the extension of the line from Baghdad to Basra and the Persian Gulf. Although the time when this line would be finished was not apparent, it was still a real threat to British interests. The line would cross the Indian routes which were commercially controlled by Britain, and would pass by important Sh'ia graves in Mesopotamia which were visited 'by thousands of British Indian subjects'.¹¹⁹ Another fear of Britain about the construction of the Baghdad railway was that it would improve German trade in Mesopotamia, and this might result in establishing 'a German colony of agriculturalists'.¹²⁰ In addition, G. Lowther, British ambassador at Constantinople, wrote to British Foreign Secretary E. Grey that the navigation rights of the company on the Tigris river and its port rights at Basra and Baghdad posed a danger to the 'British monopoly of the Euphrates'.¹²¹ For the security of the Mesopotamian rivers, after the weakness of Turkish influence in the Arabic Turkish areas in 1910, Britain tried intervening in Mesopotamia to control the river transport business on the Tigris by sending its forces to the Persian Gulf under the name of business.¹²²

¹¹⁶ Kent, *Moguls and Mandarins*, p.11.

¹¹⁷ Peter Sinnott, 'Russia from Empire to Revolution: The Illusion of the Emerging Nation State in the South Caucasus and Beyond', in Simon and Tejirian, *Creation of Iraq 1914–1921*, p.126.

¹¹⁸ Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p.3.

¹¹⁹ Kent, *Oil and Empire*, pp.10-11; Kamal Madhar, translated by Muhamad Mala Abdul Karim, *Kurdistan Fi Sanawat al-Harb al-Alamiat al-Aula* [Arabic: Kurdistan in the Years of the First World War] (Arbil: Dar Aras, 3rd edition, 2013), p.36.

¹²⁰ G. Lowther to E. Grey, 1 November 1911, TNA, FO/371/1263, p.1.

¹²¹ Kent, *Oil and Empire*, pp.10-11.

¹²² Townshend, *When God Made Hell*, pp.11-12.

The potential oil resources of the Ottoman Empire, including Mesopotamia and the Mosul vilayet, and the growth of the western powers' interests in the oilfields of south-west Persia, led to increased competition between them. However, no substantial attempt had been made to explore the oil deposits in the Ottoman territory before the war,¹²³ and so it is impossible to say that Britain and other western powers had expected the potential oil wealth of Mesopotamia and south Kurdistan. Since 1901, the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC) negotiators of the Persian oil concession found that 'the Mesopotamian and Persian oil springs and seepages were probably part of similar oil-bearing geological strata'.¹²⁴ Gibson has pointed out that after obtaining the Persian oil concession, Britain devoted much effort to the gaining of the Mesopotamian oilfields.¹²⁵ The Baghdad railway concession, which allowed the Germans to excavate minerals 'in the 20 kilometres on either side of the track',¹²⁶ threatened Britain with German control of the oilfields in the Ottoman territories, especially as at that time Britain decided to adopt oil instead of coal as fuel for its navy.¹²⁷ In 1912, a Royal Commission had been established for the investigation of the issue of oil supplies, and it insisted that Britain should 'become the owners or at any rate the controllers at the source of at least a proportion of the oil which we require'.¹²⁸ This increased the British attempt to control the oilfields of Mesopotamia and south Kurdistan, but there was a constraint, as Germany had the rights to the oil concession in the area of the Baghdad railway.

The importance of oil in the Mosul and Baghdad vilayets caused great competition between various groups, especially after the establishment of the Turkish Petroleum Company (TPC) in 1912 by a consortium of British, Dutch and German oil companies and banks, to prospect for oil in the Ottoman Empire. This motivated APOC to seek a concession for the exploitation of oil in Mesopotamia as well.¹²⁹ However, the attempt by APOC was difficult, as its rivals had the same purpose because they expected that oil would be found in the vilayets of Mosul and Baghdad. The main reason for the insistence of APOC was their fear that if the other groups gained a

¹²³ Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p.3.

¹²⁴ Kent, *Oil and Empire*, p.17.

¹²⁵ Gibson, 'British strategy and oil', p.20.

¹²⁶ Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p.3.

¹²⁷ Gibson, 'British strategy and oil', p.19; Eskander, *From Planning to Partition*, p.23.

¹²⁸ Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p.67.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*; Gibson, 'British strategy and oil', p.37.

concession, this might cause a competition in prices which would reduce the value of Persian oil, for which APOC had already obtained the concession. APOC endeavoured to gain the support of the British government, which they justified on the basis that if they obtained the Mesopotamian oilfields, they would control a cheap oil supply for the Royal Navy and this would also benefit British interests in India. However, this would need the approval of Germany.¹³⁰

For the security of its commercial, financial and naval interests in Persia, Britain had to attempt to secure the Mesopotamian oil concession and contain the potential threat from Germany to the routes to India. In 1913, Britain was successful in signing an agreement with the Ottoman Empire. According to this, it was agreed that Basra would be the terminus of the Baghdad railway, and that without previous agreement with Britain, no railway would be built beyond Basra to the Persian Gulf.¹³¹ On 19 March 1914, the TPC was reformed and APOC was successful in securing 50% of its shares, whilst the Germans obtained 25%. After this, TPC concentrated on obtaining the Mesopotamian oil concession and the Ottoman government seemed to agree with this, but the outbreak of the First World War prevented its conclusion.¹³² Eskander has pointed out that Britain and Germany also signed an agreement to divide their commercial interests into zones, and they agreed that south Kurdistan would become a German zone and Mesopotamia a British one.¹³³

The outbreak of the war foiled Britain's attempt to preserve its interests peacefully in the region, and urged it to take steps against any threat to these.¹³⁴ Before the Ottoman Empire allied with Germany, Britain expected that the Turks might be encouraged by the Germans to damage British interests in the Persian Gulf and block the trade routes to India. After the Turkish declaration of war, Britain hastily sent a force to Basra and occupied it in November 1914. The aim of this operation was that Basra (which had strategic importance because of its connection with Shat al-Arab) would not only prevent an Ottoman threat to British oil and commercial interests in

¹³⁰ Kent, *Oil and Empire*, pp.35-36.

¹³¹ In the agreement Britain also 'controlled river access and egress between the Gulf and Basra, and she had secured participation in port construction at Baghdad and the upstream railways terminus of Basra': Ibid., pp.10-11,101.

¹³² George E. Gruen, 'The Oil Resources of Iraq: Their Role in the Policies of the Great Powers', in Simon and Tejirian, *Creation of Iraq*, p.113.

¹³³ Eskander, *From Planning to Partition*, p.23.

¹³⁴ Wilson, *Loyalties: Mesopotamia 1914-1917*, p.23.

Persia, but it also protected the oilfields of Mesopotamia.¹³⁵ After the occupation of Basra, Britain tried to gain control of the Baghdad vilayet as well, as it had strategic importance to prevent the loss of Basra and commercial importance for the rest of Mesopotamia and north-west Persia,¹³⁶ and for safeguarding the British oil interests in the Turco-Persian frontier.¹³⁷ However, Britain could not attack Baghdad until 1916 because of the strength of the Turkish forces in the vilayet, and fighting the Turkish force which was attacking Egypt.¹³⁸

It seemed clear that at the beginning of the war Britain did not have a plan to hold the whole of Mesopotamia, but the occupation of Basra paved the way to controlling the Baghdad and Mosul vilayets as well. Arnold Wilson argued that if they could occupy Mesopotamia, it could be an Indian colony which would solve the problem of the surplus population of India, and they could give the land of Mesopotamia to the Indian soldiers in reward. In addition, India could develop the irrigation of Mesopotamia to cultivate the desert plants.¹³⁹ The British officers believed that the irrigation project necessitated combining the vilayet of Mosul with Baghdad and Basra, because its rivers were the main source for agriculture. They insisted on controlling the upper Tigris, and argued that the delta should not be under the control of any other power.¹⁴⁰ Due to its strategic importance, it was decided to control the Mosul vilayet as well after their forces had occupied Baghdad. Their interests in Mosul also related to the more suitable weather of the vilayet, rather than that of Baghdad which was so hot, as Mosul would be a good area to station the 'white troops', especially during the summer.¹⁴¹ Mosul also had strategic importance for Britain's business purposes, because the grain products of the vilayet would 'supply a considerable freight westward', and the import of agricultural equipment would 'provide a balance of eastward traffic'.¹⁴² The control of Mosul vilayet, which was very rich in oil resources,

¹³⁵ Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p.4; Simon and Tejirian, *Creation of Iraq*, p.10; Gibson, 'British strategy and oil', p.25.

¹³⁶ Townshend, *When God Made Hell*, p.80.

¹³⁷ Secretary, Committee of Imperial Defence, Report, Proceedings and Appendices of a Committee Appointed by the Prime Minister, 1915, 'British Desiderata in Turkey in Asia', TNA, CAB/27/1, p.9.

¹³⁸ Simon and Tejirian, *Creation of Iraq*, pp.11-13.

¹³⁹ Townshend, *When God Made Hell*, pp.74-75.

¹⁴⁰ 'British Desiderata in Turkey in Asia', pp.44,90.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp.7-45.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p.113.

would also develop British commercial interests by joining the Mosul oilfields to the Mediterranean by a pipe line.¹⁴³ These points were considered by the De Bunsen Committee in 1915, and the Kurds were explicitly discussed by the members of the committee. They were seen as a potential asset in terms of tactics and strategy. This was because the Committee offered the possibility of recruiting the southern Kurds, and like the Indian troops, Britain could potentially use them against Turkish force.

The main aim of the Committee was to define British economic and political interests in the Asiatic territory of the Ottoman Empire. Another purpose of the Committee was the protection of the British position in the Persian Gulf, and the defence of the approaches to the Gulf. The Committee assumed that the 'French and Russia would receive a considerable fillip from the war and that, in the future, Britain would at least face rivalry if not outright hostility from these powers'.¹⁴⁴ The Committee decided to divide the Asiatic territory of the Ottoman Empire before the defeat of the Turks. In addition, it preferred that for the security of the Persian Gulf, the vilayets of Baghdad, Basra and the greater part of Mosul (including south Kurdistan) should not be separated from the British zone,¹⁴⁵ and it understood that the French interest was in Syria.¹⁴⁶ However, Sharif Hussain (who had been in contact with Britain since 1914 to lead an Arab revolt against the Turks) asked for the creation of an Arab State which would include Mesopotamia (including some areas of south Kurdistan), and the areas of Aleppo, Damascus, Hama and Homs. Britain supported the idea of an Arab state under its protection, as a means of keeping Mesopotamia under its control. In addition, the Syrian districts which Hussain requested were not purely Arab, as the Kurds also lived there,¹⁴⁷ and this needed the acceptance of the French, because they had already claimed these areas as their zone of interest.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ Ibid, pp.11-47.

¹⁴⁴ See Fisher, *Curzon and British Imperialism*, p.22.

¹⁴⁵ The British government did not officially approve or fully apply the recommendations of the committee, as some British officials did not agree or backed down on the point of the inclusion of Mesopotamia and south Kurdistan within the British sphere. See Ibid, pp.1-29; Eskander, *From Planning to Partition*, p.25.

¹⁴⁶ 'British Desiderata in Turkey in Asia', p.11.

¹⁴⁷ Townshend, *When God Made Hell*, pp.267-269; Eli Kedourie, *England and the Middle East: The Destruction of the Ottoman Empire 1914-1921* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1978), p.57.

¹⁴⁸ Fisher, *Curzon and British Imperialism*, p.10.

The division of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of an Arab state were not decided only by Britain, because this necessitated an official agreement with her allies. From the end of 1915, Britain negotiated with France, and the result of this was the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916 between the British representative Mark Sykes, and George Picot, the French Ambassador in London.¹⁴⁹ According to this, Britain in Zone A obtained Baghdad, Basra and Khaniqin, and could establish any kind of administration or control there. Zone B was allocated to France, and consisted of part of north Kurdistan, and a substantial part of the Mosul vilayet including the city of Mosul.¹⁵⁰ Without considering the presence of the western Kurds, it was also agreed to establish an Arab state which would extend from Aleppo, Damascus, Hama and Homs to the Persian frontier, although for the purposes of loans and trade it was divided into two spheres, the one in the south for Britain and one in the north for France.¹⁵¹ On 26 April 1916, the Sykes-Picot agreement became a triple treaty, in which Russia obtained Bitlis and Van in north Kurdistan.¹⁵² It could be said that except for western Kurdistan, the agreement did not divide the borders of Kurdistan into other states, because it did not involve the creation of independent states, except the Arab one.¹⁵³ The agreement did not envisage the creation of a Kurdish state similar to the Arab state, because Britain believed that it was impossible to find a suitable Kurdish family to be rulers of Kurdistan.¹⁵⁴

In the Sykes-Picot agreement, Britain abandoned the vilayet of Mosul to France, which was opposed to the recommendation of the De Bunsen Committee to keep it in the British sphere. This related to the safeguarding of Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf against a future Russian threat, in which Mosul would be a buffer zone.¹⁵⁵ However, after the withdrawal of Russia from the war in 1917 and its rejection of the agreement, Britain decided that the buffer zone was no longer needed, and it would

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p.147; David French, *British Strategy and War Aims 1914-1916* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1986), p.147.

¹⁵⁰ Wilson, *Loyalties: Mesopotamia 1914-1917*, p.153; Gruen, 'Oil Resources of Iraq', p.118.

¹⁵¹ C.J. Lowe and M.L. Dockrill, *The Mirage of Power: British Foreign Policy 1914-1922*, vol.2, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p.221.

¹⁵² Wilson, *Loyalties: Mesopotamia 1914-1917*, p.153.

¹⁵³ Fisher, *Curzon and British Imperialism*, p.25; Gruen, 'Oil Resources of Iraq', p.118.

¹⁵⁴ Committee of Imperial Defence, 'The Future Settlement of Eastern Turkey in Asia and Arabia', 14 March 1915, TNA, CAB/24/1/16, p.5.

¹⁵⁵ Gruen, 'Oil Resources of Iraq', p.118.

mean losing the substantial oil potential of Mosul.¹⁵⁶ After occupying the Mosul vilayet in November 1918 (which will be discussed later), Britain tried to annex Mosul with Baghdad and Basra under its administration. When the French President, Georges Clemenceau, visited London on 1 December 1918, Lloyd George tried to persuade him to transfer Mosul and Palestine to Britain. Clemenceau agreed, but in return demanded British support for the French mandate of Syria and Lebanon, and a 50% share of Mosul's oil.¹⁵⁷ However, as this was not an official agreement, their negotiations continued until April 1920, when the agreement of San Remo approved these exchanges by giving France a 25% share of Mesopotamian oil.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Lowe and Dockrill, *Mirage of Power*, p.14.

¹⁵⁷ James Barr, *A Line in the Sand: Britain, France and the Struggle that Shaped the Middle East* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2012), pp.71-72,77.

¹⁵⁸ Gruen, 'Oil Resources of Iraq', p.119; Lowe and Dockrill, *Mirage of Power*, p.264.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SOUTH KURDISTAN AFTER ITS OCCUPATION BY BRITAIN, 1918-1920

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will examine the occupation of south Kurdistan by Britain after the signature of the Mudros Armistice in 1918. It discusses the reasons for Sheikh Mahmud's contacts with Britain, and British aims in the establishment of Mahmud's government. The structure of his government and the effect of this on the Kurdish question will also be considered. The chapter assesses the views of the key British officials in south Kurdistan and Baghdad towards the Kurdish question, and the effects of this on the declining relationship between Mahmud and Britain. Mahmud's consequent rising also will be discussed, together with the reasons for his defeat by Britain. The chapter examines the causes of instability and the Kurdish risings in the Kurdish Qadhas of Mosul, and Arbil and Kirkuk divisions, and will investigate the aims of the Kurdish chieftains in their risings against Britain.

2.2 The establishment of a Kurdish autonomous government in South Kurdistan by Sheikh Mahmud in 1918

The occupation of Tuz and Kifri on 28 and 29 April, and Kirkuk on 7 May 1918 by Britain, compelled the Turks to leave the Sulaimania area.¹⁵⁹ This could have been a great opportunity for the Kurds as they wished to be free from the Ottoman Empire,

¹⁵⁹ Resume of Operations, carried out by 31st Wing RAF from 28 April to 4 May 1918, 11 May 1918, TNA, AIR/1/426/15/260; Arnold T. Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920: A Clash of Loyalties: A Personal and Historical Record* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1931), p.9.

which had occupied their region a long time before. Although Britain conquered Mesopotamia by military action, the Kurds welcomed British forces as a means of achieving their aims. For this reason, the Hamawand tribe sent a letter to the British officers in Kirkuk and Kifri, expressing their gladness at the arrival of British forces near their boundaries, and they offered their assistance.¹⁶⁰ After that, Sheikh Mahmud, as chief of the Barznji tribe in Sulaimania, sent letters to the British political officers in Kifri and Kirkuk with two Kurdish representatives, Said Muhsin Agha and Abdullah Safi Yaqub. In these letters, Mahmud asked Britain to move against the Turks and not to 'exclude Kurdistan from [the] list of liberated people',¹⁶¹ and he showed the happiness of the Kurds about the victories of British forces.¹⁶² It could be argued that this was a diplomatic step of Mahmud to encourage Britain to support the Kurdish desire to establish their own independent state by showing his gladness and offering his assistance in occupying south Kurdistan. From this, Britain considered that he had a friendly attitude towards them.¹⁶³

The reason for his contacting Britain, which had been neglected by other studies, was not only to ask Britain to become the ruler of south Kurdistan, as Bell mentioned,¹⁶⁴ but also to restore the terrible situation of south Kurdistan, particularly in Sulaimania. This was because the people were suffering from decay and impoverishment at that time due to the effects of the First World War, which was discussed in the previous chapter. According to a telegram from the Political Officer in Sulaimania, its general output had declined by about 80%, and the cost of rice and wheat had increased. The town of Sulaimania was in ruins and 80% of its people had fled to be safe from the war.¹⁶⁵ It could be considered that Mahmud attempted to benefit from British help to improve the living conditions of the southern Kurds and to reconstruct Sulaimania. The hostility of Mahmud towards the Turks was another reason for sending the letters, as the Kurds had suffered under Turkish rule, particularly at the

¹⁶⁰ 'Precis of affairs in Southern Kurdistan during the Great War' (Bagdad, 1919), IOR, L/P&S/10/781, p.5.

¹⁶¹ Political Officer in Baghdad to FO, 1 November 1918, TNA, FO/371/3407; Ahmed Khwaja, *Chim Di* (Arbil: Dar Aras, 2013), p.20.

¹⁶² 'Prices of Affairs in Southern Kurdistan', p.5.

¹⁶³ Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920*, p.86.

¹⁶⁴ Bell, 'Review of the Civil Administration', p.48.

¹⁶⁵ Political Officer in Sulaimania to Political Officer in Baghdad, 16 November 1918, TNA, AIR/20/512.

end of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁶⁶ Although Mahmud had assisted the Turks against the Russian forces in 1915, this did not mean that he agreed about Turkish authority. The killing of his father (Sheikh Sa'id) by the Turks in 1909 could also be a strong reason for his mistrust of the Turks and desire for revenge against them.

Mahmud's attempt to contact the British needs further investigation. It could be argued that he hastened to contact them, because the Turkish force did not withdraw from the whole of south Kurdistan, as the war was not finished. When British forces evacuated Kirkuk on 13 May, the Turks re-occupied Sulaimania,¹⁶⁷ and arrested Mahmud because one of his representatives who had been sent to Kirkuk had handed Mahmud's letter to the Turks. They condemned Mahmud for trying to create a relationship with the British as treason. They sent him to Kirkuk and sentenced him to death, but after a short time he was released by the Turkish commander Ali Ihsan Pasha. The main reason for this which earlier researches have not covered very well was that the Turks aimed to secure stability in Sulaimania through the assistance of Mahmud and the majority of the tribes supporting him. The Turks knew that they could not stay in Sulaimania at that time, and so they attempted to influence Kurdish opinion by releasing Mahmud to gain their help against British forces in south Kurdistan. Ahmed Khawaja, who was a well-known Kurd, and had good relations with the Kurdish chiefs states for this reason Ail Ihsan Pasha had given him the military and political authority in Sulaimania to rule under the name of Turkish authority, because he was sure that whilst they had lost Mesopotamia, they did not want to lose south Kurdistan as well.¹⁶⁸

The Turkish forces did not stay in south Kurdistan for long, as British forces reoccupied Kirkuk on 25 October 1918, and in November Britain occupied the rest of the Mosul vilayet under clause 7 of the Mudros Armistice, which allowed the Allies to occupy any strategic area in the Ottoman territories if they considered that there was a threat to their security.¹⁶⁹ Although at first the Turks did not accept this and argued that

¹⁶⁶ Jalal Taqi, *Khabati Gali Kurd La Yadashtakani Ahmed Tagida: Laparaiak La Shorshkani Sheikh Mahmud w Smko w Hastanakai Rowandoz* [Kurdish: The Kurdish Struggle in the Memoir of Ahmed Taqi: a Page in the Revolts of Sheikh Mahmud and Simko and the Rising of Rowandoz] (Baghdad: al-Arabia Press, 1970), p.20.

¹⁶⁷ Political Officer in Sulaimania to Political Officer in Baghdad, 16 November 1918, TNA, AIR/20/512.

¹⁶⁸ Khwaja, *Chim Di*, p.21.

¹⁶⁹ Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920*, pp.17,127.

Britain had occupied Mosul after the armistice, they were obliged to withdraw all of their forces from the vilayet. This was a dispute which continued until 1926, and it will be discussed later. Mahmud accepted the surrender of the Turkish garrison in Sulaimania and sent them back to Turkey,¹⁷⁰ in preparation for the coming of a British force to Sulaimania. This was because Britain decided on 1 November to establish a Kurdish administration under the supervision of Major Edward Noel, the Political Officer in the Kirkuk Division, because of his previous experience of dealing with the tribes from working in Persia. He was informed by Arnold Wilson, the Civil Commissioner at Baghdad from March 1918 to June 1920 (knighted in 1919), that the Kirkuk division of the Mosul vilayet stretched from the lesser Zab to the Diala, and north-east to the Turco-Persian frontier, 'the ultimate disposal of which is under the consideration of H.M.'s Government'.¹⁷¹ At the same time, Noel did not clearly convey to the Kurdish chiefs that it was financially impossible to station a British Army permanently in Sulaimania and its eastern region. For that reason, his task was to co-operate with the local tribal leaders to maintain order in the occupied territory, in order to deprive it to enemy agents and provide the necessary commodities for the British army. According to his instructions, Noel had the authority to appoint Mahmud in Sulaimania, and others in Halabja, Chamchamal and elsewhere in south Kurdistan, as British representatives.¹⁷²

In the middle of November, Noel visited Sulaimania in order to appoint a Kurdish leader in south Kurdistan, and he was warmly welcomed by the Kurds in the town in the hope of establishing a Kurdish government.¹⁷³ Noel arranged a conference of the Kurdish chieftains at the end of November, and showed his sympathy with the Kurds for their freedom from Turkish tyranny. He stated that under the authority of Wilson the Kurds had been liberated, and he recognised Mahmud as the Kurdish Hukumdar (governor) in Sulaimania.¹⁷⁴ Noel as Political Officer, with the assistance of

¹⁷⁰ Telegram from Political Officer in Sulaimania to Secretary of State for India and London, 17 November 1918, TNA, AIR/20/512.

¹⁷¹ Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920*, p.48; Political Officer in Baghdad to Secretary State for India, 31 October 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/781; Political Officer in Baghdad to FO, 31 October 1918, TNA, FO/371/3384.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Telegram from Political Officer in Sulaimania to Secretary of State for India and London, 17 November 1918, TNA, AIR/20/512.

¹⁷⁴ Political Officer in Sulaimania to Secretary State for India and London, 17 November 1918, TNA, AIR/20/512; Sheikh Rashid Sheikh Abdulrahman Qadir, *Baritania, Turkia, Iran, Kurd, 1915-1931* [Kurdish: Britain, Turkey, Iran and Kurds] (Arbil: Haji Hashm Press, 2010), pp.28-29.

Major Daniels as Military Officer, supervised the administration. He appointed Kurdish officials for each minor subdivision, and tried to appoint Kurdish officials instead of Arabs and Turks,¹⁷⁵ and he endeavoured to create a local Kurdish force under Mahmud's administration from Hamawand, Shuan and Jaf tribes. He also appointed Qaimqams from those who had loyalty to Mahmud in Rowandoz, Pishdar and Rania.¹⁷⁶

The structure of Mahmud's administration was tribal,¹⁷⁷ as south Kurdistan was divided into areas which were governed by tribal chiefs.¹⁷⁸ However, this could be considered as a weakness of Mahmud's government which has not been covered by previous studies. It was the policy of Britain, and especially Wilson, at the beginning of the occupation of the Mosul vilayet to control the southern Kurds by means of a strong Kurdish character instead of creating an autonomous Kurdish state under British protection, as this would require more money and the retaining of their forces in south Kurdistan. The main aim of Britain in preserving the tribal system in south Kurdistan was that 'this would best meet the national aspirations and preserve the characteristic features of Kurdistan'.¹⁷⁹ This idea was supported by Noel who believed that this would keep order in south Kurdistan and would follow the principle of Woodrow Wilson to establish an independent Kurdish state led by Mahmud. It could be argued that the re-tribalization of south Kurdistan caused instability, because Britain was later attacked by Kurdish tribes due to this system, which will be discussed later. The chieftains did not accept the authority of government in their areas of influence, because they feared that Britain aimed to decrease their power by the loss of the lands which they had acquired illegally, especially when Britain tried to send the Tapu (Registry of Land Ownership) to Baghdad. Besides, having armed bodies within their

¹⁷⁵ 'Prices of Affairs in Southern Kurdistan', p.9; Kamal Nuri Ma'ruf, *Yadashtakani Sheikh Latifi Hafid Lasar Shorshakani Sheikh Mahmudi Hamid* [Kurdish: The Memoir of Sheikh Latif of Hafid about the Rising of Mahmud of Haifd] (Pirmam: Bureau of the Cultured Centre of Kurdistan Democratic Party, 1995), p.39.

¹⁷⁶ Political Officer in Sulaimania to Political Officer in Baghdad, 19 November, 1918, TNA, AIR/20/512.

¹⁷⁷ The tribal system of south Kurdistan was similar to the 'Sandman Regime', devised by Sir Robert Sandman, which had been applied in Baluchistan to subject the 'trans-Indus' people of the mountain area. The main purpose of this system was to protect the Sind borderland from pillage by the hill men who had settled in the rugged mountains and supported India from foreign occupation. In addition, the Afghans practised the same system, and Britain faced the same problem from the Kurdish tribes as they had encountered from Mahsud: Jwaideh, *Kurdish National Movement*, pp.165-166; McDowall, *Modern History of the Kurds*, p.154.

¹⁷⁸ 'Administration Report of Sulaimaniyah Division for the Year 1919', TNA, CO/730/13, pp.1-2.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

tribes gave them the power to achieve their ambitions, and they used their men against Britain to ensure their grip over the rural areas and villages.¹⁸⁰

Mahmud also supported keeping this system, as he believed that in this way he could control the chieftains and could 'more readily centralise the control in himself, and more rapidly attain the position of absolute power which was his aim'.¹⁸¹ It could be argued that Mahmud was wrong to support reviving the tribal system, because he did not realise that this would be opposed to his aim to establish an independent Kurdish state under his rule. This was because the tribes were more concerned about their own interests than any national one, as some tribes still wanted to remain independent not to lose their inherited power for the sake of Mahmud's administration. For example, the Kifri and Khaniqin tribes had not accepted Mahmud as their leader, and instead they preferred to join with Iraq.¹⁸² The Jaf tribe nearest to the Persian frontier participated half-heartedly when they accepted Mahmud as Kurdish Hukumdar. The Hawamand tribe also did not participate in Mahmud's government completely, and according to a British document, the Mangur and Mamash tribes supported Mahmud only because they thought that Britain desired this.¹⁸³ Another reason behind this disintegration was the rivalry between chieftains, and when one supported Mahmud, directly another chief became opposed to him. For example, in the Pishdar, Babakir Agha supported the British, but his cousin Abas Mahmud Agha supported Mahmud.¹⁸⁴ It could be said that this system had caused the lack of national feeling, which had a historical background in the rule of the Ottoman and Persian Empires, as they had tried to increase Kurdish differences with the aim of controlling Kurdistan by supporting various Kurdish leaders against each other. This was the main cause for not establishing an independent Kurdish state, as most of the Kurdish chieftains were easily persuaded to follow foreign agendas, which will be discussed further in the next chapters.

It could be also argued that another possibility for the re-tribalisation of south Kurdistan was Wilson's aim to use Kurdish disunion as a justification for the

¹⁸⁰ Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920*, p.154.

¹⁸¹ 'Administration Report of Sulaimaniyah Division for the Year 1919', pp.1-2.

¹⁸² A.T. Wilson, 'Self Determination in Iraq', 9 July 1919, Wilson Mss, IWM, Box no.69791.

¹⁸³ 'Administration Report of Sulaimaniyah Division for the Year 1919', p.2.

¹⁸⁴ APO in Koia to Civil Commissioner in Baghdad and PO in Sulaimania, 19 February 1919, TNA, AIR/20/512, p.2; 'Monthly Reports of Political Officers of the Occupied Territories, Sulaimaniyah Monthly Progress Report', August 1919, TNA, FO/371/5070, p.48.

integration of south Kurdistan with an Arab state in Mesopotamia, which was considered by Britain at that time. He visited Sulaimania on 1 December 1918 with the stated aim of arranging Kurdish government affairs, as has been discussed by previous studies,¹⁸⁵ but it can be seen that he exploited the differences of the Kurds to assist his project. Wilson relied on the statements of those who were against Mahmud.¹⁸⁶ However, this did not mean that the majority of the Kurds were against him, because other sections of these tribes agreed with Mahmud's rule, but Wilson did not consider this.¹⁸⁷ Mahmud approved that 40 chieftains accepted him as the Kurdish Hukumdar and wished to stay under British authority in order not to lose the benefits of the federation. He showed that the Kurds would obey Britain's orders and follow its rules, if the British government maintained its protection and assisted them.¹⁸⁸ However, the perspective of the British administration, especially Wilson, was that Mahmud was unpopular and his power was based on the glorification of his family and himself. The satisfying of his personal ambition was seen by Britain to be the main purpose of his policy, whilst he did not care about the improvement and welfare of the Kurdish people.¹⁸⁹ He was criticized that some of the 'busybodies who fill his head with extravagant and silly notions' around him caused the spending of thousands of pounds.¹⁹⁰ Moreover, he placed his followers in important posts throughout south Kurdistan without considering their abilities, such as the council and religious court in Sulaimania, and he eliminated anyone if they did not obey him.¹⁹¹

Noel's view about Mahmud needs more analysis than in previous works, as he had a different view of Mahmud from Wilson. He supported the establishment of Mahmud as the Kurdish ruler, as he stated that he was a 'power in the land and a factor to be reckoned with, and as a stalking horse to get the Northern mountain tribes and those on the Persian border to throw their lot in with us, his appointment [was] distinct

¹⁸⁵ Bell, 'Review of the Civil administration', p.61.

¹⁸⁶ Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920*, p.129.

¹⁸⁷ Noel, Circular Memo, 8 December 1918, TNA, FO/371/4148, p.4.

¹⁸⁸ Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920*, p.129; Political Department in India Office, 'Kurdistan', 14 December 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/781, p.2.

¹⁸⁹ Report of the APO, Jaf, Halabja, on the present Kurdistan Rebellion, 17 June 1919, TNA, AIR/20/512.

¹⁹⁰ Noel, Circular Memo, p.4.

¹⁹¹ 'Administration Report of Sulaimaniyah Division for the Year 1919', p.2.

asset'.¹⁹² He believed that without British co-operation and assistance and the existence of a strong British garrison, the influence of Mahmud would not be stable, and peace would not be kept in south Kurdistan.¹⁹³ However, Wilson's policy was opposed to this, as they wished to withdraw their forces from south Kurdistan. He who was the man on the spot had to ensure that he would faithfully implement government policy as defined in Whitehall or Delhi. He never showed any desire to create an independent Kurdish state, and he preferred that the Kurds should be under direct British control and later to join them with the Arab state of Mesopotamia. For this he decided to abolish Mahmud's government as he believed that Mahmud was opposed to British policy which will be discussed later.¹⁹⁴

It could be argued that from the beginning of the war, Britain had occupied Mesopotamia and Kurdistan as a military action against the Ottoman Empire. Earl Curzon of Kedleston (a former Viceroy of India, and at this time Lord Privy Seal and a member of the Dardanelles Committee of the Cabinet, which decided strategy towards the Ottoman Empire) approved the despatch of British forces to Basra in 1915, but initially they did not have any plan to occupy Mesopotamia permanently, although they later occupied Baghdad and south Kurdistan.¹⁹⁵ In addition, when Noel was despatched to Sulaimania, Wilson showed that Britain did not have a definite plan whether they would stay in south Kurdistan or not, as he indicated that their forces might stay in Sulaimania temporarily which was mentioned earlier. It would be possible to say that Britain accepted the appointment of Mahmud to keep stability in south Kurdistan, rather than creating an independent Kurdish state. Longrigg stated that 'the problem of southern Kurdistan in November 1918 was that of installing a regime better than anarchy'.¹⁹⁶

After five months of occupying south Kurdistan, Wilson tried to decide on a policy, as he believed that 'Britain apparently had no policy in Northern Mesopotamia'. This was because Wilson and other British officials in Mesopotamia and his superiors in London had different ideas concerning the direction of British policy in

¹⁹² Noel, Circular Memo, p.5.

¹⁹³ Ibid., p.1.

¹⁹⁴ Fisher, 'Man on the spot', p.227; Eskander, *From Planning to Partition*, pp.50-55.

¹⁹⁵ Inter-Departmental Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs, 13 April 1920, TNA, FO/371/5068, p.4.

¹⁹⁶ Longrigg, *Iraq*, p.103.

Mesopotamia.¹⁹⁷ In April 1919, three options for the Kurds in the Mosul vilayet were suggested by British officials: first, an area for all of the Kurds alongside the Persian border; second, an area including the qadhas of Alton Keupri, Arbil, Kifri and Kirkuk; and third, an area in which the majority of the population were Arabs. Wilson believed that there were only two alternatives, the first of which was the creation of an independent state in which Mosul would become the capital. The second was the formation of a Mosul province (including Aqra, Arbil and Zakho) as part of Iraq; this would leave ‘a fringe of autonomous Kurdish states round its borders’, such as Amadia, Jazira Ibin-Umar, Rowandoz, Sulaimania, which would be governed by tribal leaders under the guidance of British advisers, who would be directed by the authorities in Baghdad.¹⁹⁸ Wilson favoured the creation of an Arab vilayet of Mosul which would be surrounded by autonomous Kurdish states under the authority of the Kurdish chieftains, under British supervision.¹⁹⁹ However, this was not a definite decision, as on 13 June Wilson recommended that Aqra, Arbil, Koia, Sulaimania and Zakho should be included in Mesopotamia.²⁰⁰ His suggestion was based upon consideration about the security of Mesopotamia. As south Kurdistan was a strategic place for Mesopotamia that was rugged mountains, it would be helpful to keep Mesopotamia from Turkish threats.²⁰¹ Another reason for his recommendation was the economy, especially as some reports showed that the Zakho was rich with oil,²⁰² and they confirmed that there were some oilfields, coal and tobacco in the Sulaimania and Halabja areas. Oil also was found near Tuz Khurmato on the road between Kifri and Kirkuk, and at Chia Surkh ‘in the extreme south-east corner of the area’. It seemed clear that oil was uppermost in Wilson’s views about the Kurdish solution. This drove his opinion that rather than establishing an independent Kurdish state, it was better to integrate south Kurdistan with the Arab state of Mesopotamia, as south Kurdistan would serve the new Arab state economically, as he expected the value of oil to increase in the future.²⁰³

¹⁹⁷ Fisher, *Curzon and British Imperialism*, p.249.

¹⁹⁸ Inter-Departmental Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs, 17 April 1919, TNA, FO/371/4149.

¹⁹⁹ Inter-Departmental Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs, 13 April 1920, TNA, FO/371/5068, p.4.

²⁰⁰ Egypt force to Troopers and General in Baghdad, September 1919, IOR, L/P&S/10/781, pp.2-3.

²⁰¹ Political Officer in Baghdad to FO, 16 October 1918, TNA, FO/371/4209.

²⁰² Civil Commissioner in Baghdad to FO, 28 December 1919, TNA, FO/371/4209.

²⁰³ Political Department in India Office, Kurdistan, 14 December 1918, IOR, L/P&S/10/781, p.1; Civil Commissioner in Baghdad to FO, 29 October 1919, TNA, FO/371/4209.

It seemed clear that Noel did not agree with Wilson, as he had different suggestions. He preferred the settlement of the southern Kurdish question by drawing the frontier line between Kurds and Arabs ethnographically. Although his proposal did not include Kirkuk and Alton Keupri, it comprised the other southern Kurdish areas.²⁰⁴ However, Wilson disagreed, as he believed that it was impossible to draw an ethnographic line between these two nations. This was because the southern Kurds connected with Baghdad and Basra for administration, economy, and trade, and it was in the interests of southern Kurds to be bound with Mesopotamia instead with the hill country of north Kurdistan. Wilson insisted that south Kurdistan be included within Iraq, instead of becoming a possible Kurdish state in the future. He also had another reason, that this arrangement would remove the military importance of the Kizil Robat-Kirkuk railway,²⁰⁵ which he strongly supported building.²⁰⁶ Wilson also denied the possible Kurdish state and believed that the Kurds only asked for peace. He emphasised that mountain ranges scattered them, and without a strong foreign administration they could not be united. Wilson was also against Noel's proposal to leave Kurds to their own devices, and Wilson did not accept Noel's argument that this would make the Kurds pro-British.²⁰⁷ Wilson stated that if the Kurds were left to their own devices, they 'would be a permanent menace to Kifri and Kirkuk and would create a frontier problem requiring more troops than at present'. Moreover, this would also create frontier problems, and would increase Turkish propaganda.²⁰⁸

Before Wilson had made his recommendation to integrate south Kurdistan with Mesopotamia, relations between Britain and Mahmud had deteriorated, and this needs further explanation than has been given previous accounts. This was due to Wilson's actions, as he rejected the eastern Kurds' request to come under Mahmud's administration. Although he had told them that this would be possible, he later stated

²⁰⁴ Secretary of State for India to Civil Commissioner at Baghdad, 22 November 1919, TNA, FO/371/4193.

²⁰⁵ This line was part of creating a railway into south Kurdistan which had also economic importance for Mesopotamia. However, this was a disputed subject which was discussed by Wilson and other British officials, because it would be against the Sykes-Picot agreement; see Fisher, *Curzon and British Imperialism*, pp.247-248, 256-257.

²⁰⁶ Secretary of State for India to Civil Commissioner at Baghdad, 22 November 1919, TNA, FO/371/4193; 'Precis of affairs in Southern Kurdistan', p.19; Secretary of State for India to Political, Baghdad, 22 August 1919, Wilson Mss, IWM, Box no.69/79/1, p.20.

²⁰⁷ Civil Commissioner at Baghdad to Foreign Office, 27 November 1919, TNA, FO/371/4193.

²⁰⁸ Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920*, p.144.

that it would be better for them if they remained under Persian rule.²⁰⁹ This was because he believed that they would be a threat to the security of south Kurdistan, especially Sulaimania.²¹⁰ It could be argued that there were two main obstacles to joining the eastern Kurds with south Kurdistan. First, the Persian government would not accept this, as this would destabilise their frontier with Mesopotamia, which is further discussed in the next chapter. Second, this would increase Mahmud's power, as the Kurdish tribes in Persia, and especially those who lived in the frontier area, had loyalty for Mahmud. This would be against most British wishes (with the notable exception of Noel) as they wanted to decrease Mahmud's influence in south Kurdistan because they thought that Mahmud was opposed to their policies. In the view of British officials, he was seeking British support to increase his power and influence in order to create an independent Kurdish state under British protection and thus be free from control by Baghdad. They also believed that if he obtained independence and control over the whole region, he would become a tyrannical ruler.²¹¹ They first deprived Mahmud of authority over the Levies, which had been created by Britain from the Kurdish tribes as a regular force. This was contrary to Mahmud's wish to have authority over this force to protect his administration, but Britain did not trust him.²¹² They thought that he did not have a good record during the Ottoman period as he constantly rose against the Turks, and that he might use this force against Britain.²¹³ After that, they separated Arbil from Mosul and Kirkuk from Sulaimania,²¹⁴ and restricted his authority to only Sulaimania, Rowandoz, Rania, Koia and Shaqlawa.²¹⁵

Wilson took a further action against Mahmud, which was the replacement of Noel by Major E. B. Soane in March 1919.²¹⁶ This seemed to show that Britain wanted to adopt a new policy, not only against Mahmud but also towards the southern Kurdish

²⁰⁹ Rafiq Hilmi, *Kurdistan at the Dawn of the Century*, volume 1, (London: New Hope, 1998), p.92; Kamal Nuri Ma'ruf, *Yadashtakani sheikh Latifi Hafid*, p.50; Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920*, p.130.

²¹⁰ Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920*, p.144.

²¹¹ 'Administration Report of Sulaimaniyah Division for the year 1919', p.1.

²¹² Bell, 'Review of the Civil Administration', p.11; Qadir, *Britain, Turkey, Iran -Kurd*, pp.32- 33.

²¹³ 'Prices of Affairs in Southern Kurdistan', p.12.

²¹⁴ Bell, 'Review of the Civil Administration', p.76.

²¹⁵ Captain A. Gurdon Walker to the Civil Commissioner in Baghdad, 27 March 1919, TNA, FO/248/1246, p.3.

²¹⁶ Longrigg, *Iraq*, p.104. Soane was familiar with South Kurdistan from before the First World War, when he had stayed in Halabja and Sulaimania under the name of Mirza Gholam Hussain: Khwaja, *Chim Di*, p.28.

question, because it was known that Noel had followed a friendly policy towards the Kurds. After becoming the new Political Officer in Sulaimania, Soane removed Mahmud's authority over the Jaf tribe in Halabja and appointed Captain G. M. Lees as Assistant Political Officer to deal with them directly.²¹⁷ Koia and Rowandoz were also dealt with by Soane as being outside Mahmud's administration.²¹⁸ Moreover, Soane appointed British officers for each department as translators to control Mahmud's followers' action, and he removed Mahmud's supporters from their posts. For example, in the town of Rania, he removed Sheikh Amin Sindolan from the Qaimqam, who was a relative of Mahmud and had already been appointed by him.²¹⁹ The restriction of Mahmud's authority only to Sulaimania caused his fear that Britain sought to divide south Kurdistan into smaller parts, and the result of this was Mahmud's rising, which will be discussed later.

Noel pointed out the cause of this decline, and he criticised Soane and Wilson for failing to assist Mahmud to establish himself as ruler from the borders of Persia to Shamdhinan in northern Kurdistan and Jabal Hamrin in south Kurdistan. However, Wilson recognised his authority over these areas in December 1919.²²⁰ Wilson's justification was that Britain had never promised to create an independent Kurdish state. He declared that when the Kurds and Britain had first made contact, although Longrigg at Kifri and Major Reader W. Bullard at Kirkuk had pledged to support the Kurds, they were not the irresponsible officers.²²¹ Moreover, Noel was considered by most of the British officials to be responsible for encouraging Kurdish aspirations. In their view, his promise to establish an independent state led by Mahmud was against the desire of Wilson to establish an Iraqi state. In the view of most British officials, Noel tried to achieve Kurdish rights in much the same way as Lawrence had for the Arabs during the First World War. However, Lawrence was opposed to Noel's sympathy with the Kurds and believed that his promise for the Kurds was not in favour of Britain, as this would encourage the Arabs to ally with Kemalists against Britain.²²²

²¹⁷ Longrigg, *Iraq*, p.104; 'Prices of Affairs in Southern Kurdistan', p.15.

²¹⁸ 'Administration Report of Sulaimaniyah Division for the Year 1919', p.1

²¹⁹ Longrigg, *Iraq*, p.104; 'Prices of Affairs in Southern Kurdistan', p.15.

²²⁰ 'Note by Maj. E.W.C. Noel', n.d., TNA, CO/730/13, p.1.

²²¹ Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920*, pp.88,135.

²²² Townshend, *When God Made Hell*, p.500; Eskander, *From Planning to Partition*, p.93; Othman Ali, translated by Kamaran Baban Zada, *Chand Lekolinawaiak Darbaray Bzafi Hawcharkhi Kurd*, [Kurdish:

It could be argued that it was true that except Noel British had not made such promises, but the establishment of Mahmud's administration was interpreted by the Kurds as a first step towards creating an independent state, and any action against this would not be accepted by Kurdish nationalists. Noel blamed Wilson for the unfriendly attitude of the Kurds towards Britain which resulted. Noel also criticised Soane, in that two months after his replacement,²²³ the Kurds rose against Britain, which he argued was 'entirely due to the reversal of policy and the manner of its execution by Major Soane'.²²⁴

Kurdish scholars have described Soane as responsible for preventing the establishment of an independent Kurdish state. It was true that his intention was to contain Mahmud's sphere of government, but he later served Kurdish nationalism more than Noel had done. He established a printing press and issued a Kurdish newspaper entitled *Peshkawtn* (Development),²²⁵ which was significant in encouraging nationalism. This was because by publishing essays about the history of the Kurds, they would become more aware of their position. In addition, for the development of the Kurdish language which was a key factor in fostering Kurdish nationalism, he provided an elementary Kurdish reader and a Kurdish Sorani grammar. This actually benefited the southern Kurds, because before this time the Kurds did not have Kurdish grammar and orthographic books. Moreover, it could be the basis for establishing a training college in south Kurdistan, because at that time the Kurdish students could not study at the College in Baghdad because of their reluctance to learn the Arabic language and inability to follow the teaching.²²⁶ However, after the establishment of Iraq in 1921, the Arab government prevented the development of the Kurdish language, which will be discussed in the last chapter. Another step of Soane's was the reconstruction of the Sulaimania division. He first reorganised the division administratively, as he divided Sulaimania into five Qadhas: Sulaimania, Chamchamal, Sharbazher, Rania and Halabja. Each of these was normally under an Assistant Political Officer, and

Some Studies about Contemporary Movements of the Kurds], volume 1 (unknown place: Re Nwe Publishing House, 2010), p.354.

²²³ After his replacement, Noel still commented on Kurdish affairs, as he 'conducted Kurdish affairs in consultation with the British High Commissioner in Constantinople until December 1920'. Eskander, *From Planning to Partition*, p.73.

²²⁴ 'Note by Maj. E.W.C. Noel', p.1.

²²⁵ Khwaja, *Chim Di*, pp.48, 54.

²²⁶ Bell, 'Review of the Civil Administration', p.106.

Sulaimania was overseen by the Political Officer. For each Nahia, Soane appointed a headquarters which included a revenue collector and a small guard of maximum ten horsemen, but in the Qadha they had a more senior revenue collector with a religious court and employees, and they also had a small jail.²²⁷ Soane also tried to revive the economy of Sulaimania, as he increased the production of maize, tobacco and cotton.²²⁸ Due to his reforms, the estimated income was more than the expenditure in the division by nearly £ 2,000.²²⁹

2.3 The Kurdish risings of 1919-1920

After the decline in relations, Mahmud thought that it was impossible to continue under Britain, as his authority had been restricted and British officers controlled the whole of Kurdish affairs. The connection of south Kurdistan to Iraq meant that the Kurds came under Arab rule, which most of the Sulaimania population was not happy about. This was because nationalism was emerging among the Kurds in south Kurdistan and across the Persian frontier. This helped Mahmud to prepare a rising against Britain, and he relied on the Kurdish Persians, especially the Avroman and Mariwan tribes.²³⁰ Mahmud gained 300 men from Mahmud Khan of Dizli, who assembled across the south Kurdistan border to attack Sulaimania. The British forces tried to push them back into Persia, but they did not have enough strength, and the Dizli force entered Sulaimania on 21 May 1919.²³¹ It could be argued that Britain was mistaken, as they had believed that these two Kurdish Persian tribes would not assist Mahmud without the approval of Britain. Wilson did not expect them to help Mahmud, as he anticipated that Mahmud could only raise 500 people from his followers in Sulaimania by paying them money.²³² Moreover, Britain asked Mahmud to arrest Dizli without knowing that they had already planned to rise against Britain. On 22 May Mahmud controlled Sulaimania, and all of the government records and treasures were controlled by him, and to break the contact

²²⁷ 'Administration Report of Sulaimaniyah Division for the Year 1919', pp.5-6.

²²⁸ Ibid., p.11.

²²⁹ Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920*, p.143.

²³⁰ Warren Senna, 2 June 1919, TNA, FO/248/1246.

²³¹ Report of the APO, Jaf, Halabja, on the present Kurdistan Rebellion, p.5; Qadir, *Britain-Turkey-Iran-Kurd*, pp.42- 43; Khwaja, *Chim Di*, p.34.

²³² Civil Commissioner at Baghdad to Foreign Office, 27 November 1919, TNA, FO/371/4193.

of the British officers he cut the telegraph cable.²³³ Major F. S. Greenhouse, who was temporarily responsible due to the absence of Soane, was imprisoned, together with seven British officers and six non-commissioned officers, by the Kurdish rebels.²³⁴ This shows that Britain had not prepared itself to counter any attack by Mahmud, as they did not expect that he would be successful.

The main purpose of Mahmud's rising was the creation of an independent Kurdish state, as he announced himself 'Kurdish chief ruler of all Kurdistan', issued his own stamp, hoisted the Kurdish flag over the government building and appointed his followers to his administration.²³⁵ He was successful in persuading the Kurdish Levies not to fight against him. In addition, the arrival of a Kurdish convoy with guns, horses and treasure at Sulaimania from Kifri strengthened Mahmud's force.²³⁶ After this, his rising extended beyond Sulaimania to Halabja, and on 24 May he appointed Hamid Beg as Qaimqam of Halabja instead of Ahmed Beg who was pro-British and had previously been appointed by Britain. He also aimed to arrest Captain Lees the APO in Halabja,²³⁷ because he thought that his actions were against him, as Lees had tried to deprive his allies of the important positions in Halabja. Many Kurds in Halabja followed Mahmud in the hope of establishing a Kurdish state, and they controlled the town. Lees was obliged to leave and he escaped to Khaniqin, as he did not have enough forces because the Levies had abandoned him.²³⁸

Whilst Mahmud occupied only Sulaimania and Halabja, he could also menace Kirkuk, as he had many supporters there. To prevent this, Wilson ordered the advance of a brigade to Kirkuk immediately, and to push forward a detachment as far as Chamchamal to attack Mahmud's force. However, the Officer Commanding at Kirkuk disregarded the order due to the circumstances. He entered the mountains, but as Mahmud's forces had prepared themselves. In an ambush in the Tasluja Pass, twelve miles from Sulaimania, the British force was easily surrounded by the Kurdish forces,

²³³ Political Officer in Baghdad to Political Officer in Kazvin, 26 May 1919, TNA, AIR/20/646; 'A Weekly Review of the Progress of Revolutionary Movements Abroad' 4 June 1919, TNA, CAB/24/81/0018, p.11.

²³⁴ Wilson, *Mesopotamia*, p.136; HC Deb, 5 June 1919, 116, cols. 2255-6.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ 'Prices of Affairs in Southern Kurdistan', P.16.

²³⁷ Report of the APO, Jaf, Halabja, on the Present Kurdistan Rebellion, p.5.

²³⁸ Ibid.

and was obliged to withdraw with some casualties, including the loss of nineteen Ford vans and four armoured cars.²³⁹ After this, the British reorganised their forces and tried to reoccupy the areas which had been taken by Mahmud, and did as much as they could to rescue their prisoners. For this, Major-General Fraser, commander of the 18th Division; Major-General Cassels, commander of 3rd Cavalry Brigade, and General Morris, commander of the 55th Brigade, were ordered by Wilson to assess Mahmud's force first and then attack them.²⁴⁰

On 17 June 1919, Mahmud's forces were defeated at the Bazian Pass.²⁴¹ In the battle, 38 Kurdish rebels were killed and more than 100 prisoners taken, and Mahmud himself was wounded and captured.²⁴² The British forces occupied Sulaimania on 19 June and Halbja on 28 June without any further opposition, and the British prisoners were released.²⁴³ When Fraser advanced to Sulaimania, he punished the Kurdish chiefs who had supported Mahmud; some of them were killed, and some of them were captured and their property was seized and their houses burned.²⁴⁴ It could be seen that the capture of Mahmud caused the failure of the rising, and that this rising was similar to other Kurdish rebellions, because Mahmud had also relied on tribal forces under the command of their chiefs, which were unorganised. Another cause was that Mahmud's support was gathered across the Persian frontier, because, according to a British source many southern Kurds had lost their faith in him and refused to be mobilised. However, the Hamawand tribe, a section of the Jaf tribe and some Kurdish chiefs supported him, but Mahmud failed due to the death of his best officer, and the abandonment of many Levies, as Mahmud did not pay them. Moreover, the imbalance between Mahmud and the British in numbers and weapons, and the bombing of Mahmud's force, also contributed to his defeat.²⁴⁵

²³⁹ Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920*, p.137.

²⁴⁰ Appendix A, 'Detailed account of various operations in Mesopotamia between March and September 1919, Operation in Southern Kurdistan, Sheikh Mahmud's Rebellion', TNA, AIR/20/716, p.4.

²⁴¹ *Observer*, 6 July 1919.

²⁴² Memorandum to Civil Commissioner in Baghdad, 27 June 1919, TNA, AIR/20/512 ; *The Times*, 23 June 1919; *Observer*, 22 June 1919.

²⁴³ Resume of work carried out by 31st Wing, RAF, 8-21 June 1919, TNA, AIR/20/512; *Manchester Guardian*, 7 July 1919; Fraser's Forces, 10 June 1919, TNA, WO/95/5220.

²⁴⁴ Fraser's Force, 4 August 1919, TNA, WO/95/5220.

²⁴⁵ Memorandum to Civil Commissioner in Baghdad, 27 June 1919, TNA, AIR/20/512 ; *The Times*, 23 June 1919; *Observer*, 22 June 1919.

Mahmud was sent to Baghdad to recover from his injury. On 20 August, as the leader of the rebellion, he was sentenced to death by a military court, but his punishment was reduced to imprisonment for ten years and he was exiled to India, together with Sheikh Gharib who was sentenced to five years. However, Wilson opposed the reprieve, as Mahmud's followers would hope for his return.²⁴⁶ It can be argued that there were several reasons for clemency, as Mahmud had many followers and supporters in Sulaimania and its vicinity, and his death would make people angry and would provoke another uprising. Britain also knew that there was no other charismatic leader among the Kurdish people who could control them apart from him, and that they could bring him back to Kurdistan if they should need him

The arrest of Mahmud did not end the disorder in south Kurdistan, because Britain did not have sufficient military forces to occupy every place, particularly in the mountain areas which were controlled by the chieftains. At that time, the Christians were happy about the entry of the British forces into Kurdistan, because they expected that Britain would protect them and thought that by serving in the Levies they could obtain power against any possible attack. The Kurds were less happy because they thought that their country was being invaded by Christians. It is apparent that the rivalry between Kurds and Assyrians had a long background history in the Ottoman Empire, especially along the border between Iraq and Turkey. Since the uprising of Badir Khan (1843-1845), the Kurds and the Assyrians had become enemies. During the First World War, the conflict was renewed, as the Kurds helped the Turks whilst the Assyrians fought against them and co-operated with the Allies under Russian and French generals.²⁴⁷

After the British administration was established in Zakho, anti-Christian propaganda was spread by the Turks in the north-west part of the Mosul vilayet and the Christian villages between Zakho and Jazira Ibin-Umar became dangerous places. The British administration discussed this threat as they intercepted a letter from Abdulrahman Pasha, Chief of Shernakh, on 17 March 1919, in which he encouraged the Kurdish Goyan to expel the Christians from their villages between Zakho and Jazira

²⁴⁶ Political Officer in Baghdad to Secretary of State for India, 23 August 1919, TNA, FO/248/1248; Political Officer in Baghdad to FO, 23 August 1919, TNA, FO/371/4192.

²⁴⁷ Ex-Commanding in Chief of Assyrian Army of Urmia to General Officer Commanding, 5 August 1918, TNA, AIR/20/513, p.4; Political Officer in Baghdad to India Office, 26 April 1919, IOR, L/P&S/11/197.

Ibn-Umar. Another point which encouraged the Kurds was the promise of Abdulrahman Pasha that the Turkish government would recognize and support a Kurdish movement against Christians. Although Bell claimed that the Kurdish people in Shernakh did not respond to the Turkish officer's promise when they visited the town,²⁴⁸ it seemed clear that the Kurds were influenced by the Turkish propaganda against Britain and Christians. The main reason for this was the conflict between Britain and Turkey about the future of north Kurdistan, especially when Noel visited there, as Turks worried that his presence might encourage the Kurds to seek their independence.²⁴⁹

A.C. Pearson, the APO in Zakho, who was a good linguist and actually had experience of negotiating with Kurdish tribes, tried to convince the Goyan not to fight against the Christians and British. At the same time, he worked to ensure that the Christian villages would be safe and to restore order, especially as some exaggerated reports were received from Mosul which mentioned a massacre of Christians in Goyan territory. For this purpose, he went to the Goyan area, but he was ambushed and killed.²⁵⁰ This was a problem for Britain, because they could not punish those who were responsible for his death. To attack the Goyan territory and occupy Jazira Ibn-Umar would not be easy, firstly because it was a rugged valley, and secondly because it was outside the Mosul vilayet and if they entered it the Turks would attack the British force. The suggestion of asking Turkey to take military action was not adopted, as the British sought that this attack might be a plot on the part of the Turks. Instead, Britain used air forces, and some Goyans were killed.²⁵¹ As Britain could not occupy this area, the Goyans could cross its vicinity easily and threaten the British administration in the Bahdinan area, where the political situation was not stable. It can be seen that there was no decisive act from the Iraqi authorities to end the unrest in south Kurdistan even by using air force. This was because the responsibility of governing southern Kurdish areas belonged to Britain, and there was no any definite decision from Britain to include south Kurdistan with the possible Iraqi state. The Goyan fighting against the

²⁴⁸ Bell, 'Review of the Civil administration', p.63.

²⁴⁹ 'Inter-Departmental Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs, Situation in Kurdistan', 6 September 1919, TNA, FO/371/4192, p.1.

²⁵⁰ Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920*, p.147; Political Officer in Baghdad to FO, 7 April 1919, TNA, FO/608/95, p.1.

²⁵¹ 'Prices of Affairs in Southern Kurdistan', p.15; 'Inter-Departmental Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs, Situation in Kurdistan', p.1.

British paved the way for other Kurdish tribes to fight the British army, because they had found the weakness that Britain did not have enough forces in Kurdistan.

A few months after the Goyan attack, Britain tried to strengthen its position in the frontier areas between south and north Kurdistan. This was because since January, the British troops had been stationed quite far from Amadia, as they felt that this area was not safe because of the possibility of the Kurdish tribe's attack. Amadia was on the mountain and if the Kurds fought against the British, it would be difficult for the British army to defeat them. Moreover, it was difficult for the British forces to stay there, especially in the winter, because they could not feed their army until March. Another problem was that Britain could not station the Assyrian Levies there, because this would increase the idea that Britain would support the Christians against the Kurdish Muslims. The latter had forced Britain to withdraw their forces to the Swara Atika Pass, eighteen miles from Amadia. However, this was a temporary step, as Britain believed that without establishing a gendarmerie post in Amadia, order could not be kept, especially as two rival sects of the Kurds, Haji Shaban agha and Haji Abdul Latif, caused instability there. In addition, at that time the Turks started a rumour that Kurdistan would be invaded by Christians, as they wanted to use religion as a card against Britain. For this purpose, Captain Willey was appointed by Colonel Leachman to be the political officer at Amadia, with Sapper R. Troup and Captain H. Macdonald, the head of gendarmes, to equip and raise a local gendarmerie.²⁵² However, as they could recruit tribal members, this would curb the aghas' power over their followers and the authority of the aghas would be weakened. In addition, British policy also threatened the Kurdish aghas' privileges, as they wanted to collect taxes directly for seed and cultivation, which would remove the merchants from the influence of the aghas as they used to pay this money to their chiefs instead of the government.²⁵³

The new policy of Britain which weakened the position of the aghas was unacceptable to them, and this led to the Kurdish rising in Amadia. On 14 July, gendarmes and people from Amadia, led by Haji Latif agha and his relatives, surrounded Willey's house, and killed him and Macdonald. In the view of the British officers, these murders were an attack against the British administration in Amadia

²⁵² Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920*, p.147--148; 'Operation in Central Kurdistan', 15 July to 9 October 1919, AIR/20/716, p.1; Political Officer at Mosul, 'Notes on the Frontier Affairs in the Amadia-Zakho area', 20 October 1919, TNA, FO/371/4193, p.6.

²⁵³ Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920*, pp.147-148; MacDowell, *Modern Kurdish History*, p.155.

which must be punished.²⁵⁴ They also believed the killings were not related to the personalities of the two British officers as they were popular among the people, and that it was an anti-Christian outbreak, as some Christians in the vicinity were also killed and their villages were looted.²⁵⁵ At the beginning, the British army faced some challenges because they could not overcome the rebellion easily, and so they quickly revised the military plan. They surrounded Bamarni on 1 August, and the result of this was that 17 Kurds were killed and 9 wounded, and Sheikh Bahadin and 5 of his relatives were taken prisoner. British raids continued in the whole area with many casualties between the Kurds and the British forces. Although two of the actual murderers were arrested in Ardinia, the others escaped to the hills where they could threaten the British forces. For example, the British forces were attacked by 300 Kurdish rebels led by Rashid Beg in the Ser Amadia but after assisting an aeroplane with two Assyrian battalions, the Kurds were defeated with the loss of 25 killed and 35 wounded.²⁵⁶ It could be said that these events in Amadia caused the settlement of the Assyrians, which continued to cause disorder in this area until 1931. Due to not assuring the Kurds that their settlement did not mean their invasion, the Turks could easily direct the Kurds against Britain by publishing propaganda. This could be considered as a failure of Britain to reconcile the Kurds and the Assyrians peacefully in one area. Another factor was that Britain did not understand how to deal with the local chieftains, as they challenged their interests, and this caused the continuing outbreak in the vicinity of Amadia. Leachman was considered to be responsible for the troubles in Amadia, as he had not acted wisely with the Kurdish tribes; he was criticised in London as being intolerant of guidance and difficult to manage, and it was decided to relieve him.²⁵⁷

After restoring stability in Amadia, two months later another outbreak started in Barzan. Due to the lack of enough British forces, the Kurds in Barzan and Aqra took this opportunity to rise against the policy of Britain towards them. The main cause of this rising was the tour of J.H.H. Bill the political officer in Mosul vilayet, with Captain K.R. Scott, the Political Officer in Aqra and its vicinity, on 1 November to restore order

²⁵⁴ Political Officer in Baghdad to Secretary of State for India, London, 21 July 1919, IOR, L/P&S/10/833; 'Operation in Central Kurdistan', p.3.

²⁵⁵ Political Officer in Baghdad to FO, 21 July 1918, TNA, FO/608/95.

²⁵⁶ 'Operation in Central Kurdistan', 15 July to 9 October 1919, TNA, AIR/20/716. pp.6, 8-9; Bell, 'Review of the Civil Administration', p.73.

²⁵⁷ Stephenson to Civil Commissioner at Baghdad, 12 December 1919, IOR, Wilson Mss, 52456.

and to check the levies of a local chief. They fined two Zibar chiefs, Faris agha and Babakir agha, because their followers had ‘sniped’ at the gendarmerie. After this, these two chiefs made a plan to attack the British officers, and they asked for help from Sheikh Ahmed of Barzan, who had great power there. Although, they had had hostilities which dated from the nineteenth century about land and power in the area, when Ahmed thought the British administration would place Barzan under Aqra, he was afraid that he might come under Zibar influence or lose his power, also he was ready to send his brother with twenty men to help the Zibari aghas who sought to take action against Britain.²⁵⁸ However, Wilson pointed out another interpretation, as he believed that the Turks encouraged them to rebel against Britain, and he stated that for this reason Haidar Bey, the ex-governor of Van, as a mediator had temporarily stopped the feud between Ahmed and Faris.²⁵⁹ Another cause which encouraged Ahmed to assist Britain’s enemies was their disagreement about Ahmed’s claim, as he had asked to have authority over Raikan, beyond the Zibar River, but this had been refused by the Assistant Political Officer in Aqra. This was because the latter believed that as this area was outside south Kurdistan, it was impossible to put it under British administration.²⁶⁰ These factors led to the killing of Bill and Scott by one hundred Kurdish men on 2 November, and an attack on Aqra, whilst the gendarmerie escaped to Mosul.²⁶¹

Britain tried to prevent the rising from spreading to the other tribes around Aqra, especially in Rowandoz. Captain Kirk, the APO at Batas, was in contact with the Surchi chiefs.²⁶² In addition, with the help of Qadir agha, an influential Zibar chief, and satisfying Said Taha not to assist the Kurdish rebels, the power of Ahmed and Faris was weakened, as this prevented them from raising tribal forces.²⁶³ This helped British forces to occupy Aqra without any resistance and obliged the rebels to escape to the hills. However, due to the nature of this area, the British force could not stay there and

²⁵⁸ Bell, ‘Review of Civil the Administration’, p.73; W. R. Hay, *Two Years in Kurdistan*, p.181; MacDowell, *Modern Kurdish History*, pp.155-156; *Manchester Guardian*, 11 November 1919.

²⁵⁹ Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920*, p.152.

²⁶⁰ Barlow to Civil Commissioner at Baghdad, 4 November 1919, TNA, FO/371/4193.

²⁶¹ Notes from War Diaries, Part DCLV, South Kurdistan, Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force, 4 November 1919. TNA, AIR/1/426/15/260/1; Memorandum from Office of the Political Officer in Mosul to Civil Commissioner in Baghdad, 4 November 1919, TNA, FO/371/4193, p.2; Political Officer in Baghdad to India Office, 4 November 1919, IOR, L/P&S/10/833.

²⁶² Hay, *Two Years in Kurdistan*, p.182; Civil Commissioner in Baghdad to FO, 9 November 1919, TNA, FO/371/4193.

²⁶³ Military Report on Iraq, Area 9, Central Kurdistan, pp.16-17.

compelled to withdraw from Amadia and Zibar.²⁶⁴ It can be seen that similarly to Amadia, Britain did not care about the interests and influence of the chief of Barzan. The Kurds in Barzan often fought against any government who wanted to reduce their power, and their rebellion against the Iraqi government continued in the next decade.

Britain had been successful in persuading the Surchi tribe not to take part in the Barzan rising, but they failed to prevent disorder spreading to the Rowandoz and Arbil areas. Due to Mahmud's movement, the power of the British administration in Rowandoz was decreased, as they did not have enough forces there. The nearest garrison was in Arbil, but this was 68 miles from Rowandoz.²⁶⁵ In these circumstances, controlling the Rowandoz district was quite difficult, especially as there was no single leader to control the whole people, disorder spread more there than in other areas. A. M. Hamilton, a civil engineer who built Hamilton Road in south Kurdistan, stated that Nuri Bawil agha, a chief in Rowandoz and a gendarme officer, refused to obey the British administration after the appointment of Ismail Agha as a ruler of the town. Bawil believed this was to decrease his power, because they had feuded since 1918, and therefore he did not accept this and rose against him and the British administration. Although he was arrested by Captain Hay on 18 June and was sent to Kirkuk, he escaped on 7 July. Hay did not understand the nature of Kurdish society he sent Ismail to arrest Bawil and this caused the situation to deteriorate further. Ismail exploited this opportunity for their feud, because during the operation he killed two sons of Bawil on 29 July without arresting him.²⁶⁶ In reaction, on 12 August, with the assistance of some Surchi tribesmen, Bawil attacked the Levies' camp at Rowandoz. Although his attacks were not successful, this spread instability not only in Rowandoz but also in its vicinity.²⁶⁷

It could be argued that the Bawil rising was the result of a feud, but after contacting Mahmud's followers, the rising became a wider movement against Britain and its direction changed. Ghafur Khan, the chief of Nawdasht, one Pishdar chief, and Ahmed Taqi, who had a good relationship with Mahmud, went to Rowandoz and

²⁶⁴ Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920*, p.153; Political Officer in Mosul to the Civil Commissioner in Baghdad, 11 December 1919, TNA, FO/371/5067; *Observer*, 14 December 1919.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.267-276; A. M. Hamilton, *Road through Kurdistan: The Narrative of an Engineer in Iraq* (London: Faber and Faber, 1958), pp.189-190.

²⁶⁷ Political Officer in Arbil to the Civil Commissioner in Baghdad, 3 September 1920, TNA, FO/371/5232, p.1.

satisfied Bawil that the best way to be free from the British was to bring back the Turks to Rowandoz. They later established their separate administration in the town and contacted the Turks.²⁶⁸ This paved the way for intervention of the Turks in south Kurdistan, which will be discussed in the next chapter. In addition, after joining other Surchi chiefs (such as Mirani Qadir Beg, Sheikh Ubaidullah and others), the movement grew to demand the expulsion of Britain from Kurdistan.²⁶⁹ In August, the Kurdish force crossed the Zab and progressed to Batas, and attacked Dashti Harir, 22 Miles to the west of Rowandoz. On 1 September, Captain Hutchison was obliged to withdraw his forces from Rowandoz to Arbil, and in consequence the town was controlled by the Surchi tribe.²⁷⁰

The Rowandoz rising also threatened the British administration in Arbil and Koia, especially as rumours were spreading there that the British would evacuate from Kurdistan. This obliged Britain to evacuate Koia, but whilst the Surchi and Khoshnaw tribes tried to attack the British officers in Arbil,²⁷¹ as the British position there was quite strong, they only created some instability in the town. This was because other tribes, especially the Dizai tribe, supported Britain, and the Levies force was in a strong position to keep order in the town.²⁷² In addition, Hay convinced the Khoshnaw tribes, who had come to Arbil to attack Britain, to leave the town; after this, the arrival from Kirkuk in August of an infantry force with two troops of Indian cavalry restored order and security in Arbil again.²⁷³

The Kurdish outbreaks in the Kirkuk division were totally different from the previous outbreaks in south Kurdistan, as these related to the revolution in Iraq of 1920, which begun on 1 July in Tala'far and then spread to other Iraqi cities. The aim of the Arab revolt was to gain independence for Iraq, as they announced Jihad to expel Britain from Iraq. However, this did not find support as it had done in the other divisions in the south. As Wilson noted, some of the Kurdish former-Ottoman officers in Arbil believed

²⁶⁸ Taqi, *Khabati Gali Kurd La Yadashtakani Ahmed Tagid*, pp.44-45.

²⁶⁹ Inspector of Customs and Revenue of Rowandoz at Arbil to Political Officer in Arbil, 26 September 1920, TNA, FO/371/5082.

²⁷⁰ W. R. Hay, 'Report of the Disturbances on the Arbil Division', 26 October 1920, TNA, FO/371/5082, p.1-3.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.1-3.

²⁷² Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920*, p.286; Political Officer in Arbil to the Civil Commissioner in Baghdad, 3 September 1920, TNA, FO/371/5232, p.3.

²⁷³ Hay, *Two Years in Kurdistan*, p.345.

that the Turks would soon return, and other people 'had no sort of sympathy with [the] Arab Nationalist idea'.²⁷⁴ However, a group of Kurds in the multicultural city of Mosul who joined al-'Ahd al-'Iraqi called for the founding of an Iraqi state under the authority of one of Sherif Hussain's sons. As members alongside the Arabs, they contacted the Kurds by sending letters to ask them to sign a petition led by prominent Kurds in Duhok and Amadia for the establishment of an Iraqi state, to be presented to the Paris Peace Conference.²⁷⁵

In the Kirkuk Division, because of the mixing in this area of Kurds and Arabs, some Kurds participated in the 1920 Iraqi revolution. On 28 August, Kifri was occupied and Captain G. H. Salmon was arrested when he tried to leave the town; he was taken to the prison, and after a few days there he died. However, after two days, Kifri was re-occupied by British forces.²⁷⁶ In the town of Kirkuk, an anonymous notice appeared which called on Muslims to revolt against the 'British infidels' and some people held meetings for that purpose. In Khaniqin, the house and office of the British political officer were burned, and in the Diala area the railway was damaged and a bridge was destroyed.²⁷⁷ The rebels also attacked the Anglo-Persian Oil Company at Naftkhana, near Khaniqin, and their installation was looted.²⁷⁸ It can be seen that the Kurdish and Arab rebellions did not co-operate with each other, as the Kurds in the Sulaimania and Arbil divisions did not participate in the Iraqi revolution. This was due to the ethnic and geographical differences between the Kurds and Arabs. However, some Kurds in the Kirkuk division who had already expressed their desire to be united with the state of Iraq supported the Iraqi revolution.

²⁷⁴ Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920*, p.286; Wilson to Stephenson, 5 June 1920, IOR, Wilson Mss, 52456.

²⁷⁵ Tauber, *Formation of Modern Syria and Iraq*, pp.265-267; General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia to War Office, 26 August 1920, TNA, CAB/24/111/0029; Tripp, *History of Iraq*, p.40; Civil Commissioner in Baghdad to India Office, 1 July 1920, TNA, FO/371/5130.

²⁷⁶ Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920*, p.284; *The Times*, 8 September 1920; Civil Commissioner in Baghdad to Secretary of State, 16 August 1920, TNA, FO/371/5229, p.1.

²⁷⁷ Hay, *Two Years in Kurdistan*, p.296.

²⁷⁸ Civil Commissioner in Baghdad to FO, 26 August 1920, TNA, FO/371/5229; Civil Commissioner at Baghdad to Secretary of State for India, 16 August 1920, IOR, Wilson Mss, 52459.

2.4 Conclusion

The end of the First World War and defeat of the Ottoman Empire gave an opportunity to the Kurds to escape from Turkish rule. They helped Britain with the aim of establishing their own independent state, but within a short time after the establishment of Mahmud's government they were disappointed, because of two main factors. The first related to the policy of Britain which favoured joining the richest areas of south Kurdistan with Iraq to strengthen the economy of an Arab state in Mesopotamia. They detached some areas first, such as Kirkuk and Kifri, from Mahmud's administration, and later restricted his authority to only Sulaimania, because Wilson tried to decide on a definite British policy. However, this was opposed to the earlier promise of Noel to free the Kurds from the rule of repressive powers. The policy of Wilson led to the deterioration of the situation in south Kurdistan and turned the Kurdish nationalists into enemies of Britain, because they believed that their position would not be changed, as they would be under Arab rule. The second cause of their disappointment was related to the local situation of south Kurdistan, as they were disunited. There was no doubt that if they could unite in their demand to create their own state, as the Arabs did in the revolution of 1920, they might oblige Britain to create an independent Kurdish state. Although Mahmud rose against Britain, the chieftains only sought to protect their own interests, and the majority of them did not support him. This caused the lack of national feeling among the Kurds, which was the result of tribal system. Due to this, most of the chieftains devoted their power to protecting their influence over their tribes instead of working for the establishment of an independent Kurdish state, and most of them did not participate in Mahmud's government.

The decline of the relations between Britain and Mahmud was the result of the neglect of Noel's recommendations. Wilson preferred to use the geographic and economic connection of south Kurdistan as the justification to integrate it with Iraq. In the light of this consideration the replacement of Noel by Soane was Wilson's aim to terminate Mahmud's administration, because his existence would menace Wilson's project. This was a clear signal from the British administration of Mesopotamia that they did not want to create a Kurdish state. However, as British officials did not have a clear policy towards the southern Kurds, the argument continued between them about the Kurdish question and whether south Kurdistan should be become an independent state or not.

CHAPTER THREE

THE BRITISH ADMINISTRATION AND THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN SOUTH KURDISTAN, 1920-1923

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will consider the settlement of the Kurdish issue by Britain and France after the First World War, and will examine what were the obstacles preventing Britain and France from creating an independent state for the Kurds. It will also assess the negotiations between Britain and France in London and at the San Remo Conference in 1920, the recognition of Kurdish rights in the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920, and the main reasons for the abandonment of these rights by Britain. The chapter will also examine the debates amongst British ministers and officials at the Cairo Conference in 1921 and later about the question whether to separate the southern Kurds or to join them with Iraq. It will then consider the Turkish intervention in south Kurdistan and their attempts to attract the southern Kurds. Finally, the chapter discusses the British decision to bring Mahmud back to south Kurdistan and allow him to establish his second government. This will include analysing why Mahmud supported the Turks rather than Britain, and the result of his opposition to Britain.

3.2 The Kurdish question in the Treaty of Sèvres, 1920

After the Armistice of Mudros, the future of Kurdistan was considered by various British departments, such as the India, War and Foreign offices, and between British High Commissioners and other British officials in Iraq and Constantinople who had different opinions on the Kurdish issue. France also considered this issue, because the

settlement of the Kurdish question would not only safeguard British interests in Mesopotamia and Persia, but would also secure French interests in its sphere.²⁷⁹ They agreed that the Kurdish question would be discussed at the Peace Conference in Paris, but they needed to select a Kurdish leader to be the Kurds' representative at the conference. The most suitable Kurdish figure was Sharif Pasha, as he was an educated and cultured person, and had a strong personality. Since the end of the First World War, he had contacted the British government and asked them to adopt a similar policy as that towards the Arabs in Mesopotamia, by giving autonomy to the southern Kurds under British tutelage. He also had a proposal for the collection of all of the Kurds under a British mandate, and wished to install an urgent 'working administration' in Kurdistan before any decision was taken by the Peace Conference.²⁸⁰ However, he did not obtain official British recognition as a Kurdish ruler.

The dual administration of the Foreign office in both London (under Lord Curzon, who had become Foreign Secretary in October 1919) and in Paris (under Arthur Balfour, the previous Foreign Secretary) discussed and debated the future of south Kurdistan.²⁸¹ Moreover, during their meetings Britain and France had discussed the intention of creating a Kurdish state, but the mixed areas of Kurdistan and Armenia created difficulties. They argued about the possibility of an American mandate for Armenia, which would include most of the Kurdish areas. However, this caused fear among the Kurds about the revenge of the Armenians,²⁸² and they were also concerned about the mandates of Britain and France because of their support for the Christians.²⁸³ Sharif Pasha tried to reconcile the Kurds and Armenians, and he believed that the creation of a joint committee with the Armenians would be helpful to their case at the Peace Conference.²⁸⁴ In December 1919, he and Boghos Nubar Pasha (the Armenian representative) sent a memorandum to the conference. They stated that both nations had the same wish, as they tried to escape from Turkish authority. Their main purpose was

²⁷⁹ Ahmed Othman Abubakir, *Keshai Kurd: la Sardami Ashtida Dwai Jangi Yakami Jihani* [Kurdish: The Kurdish Issue: in the Peace Period after the First World War] (Duhok: Mokrian for Researching and Publishing, 2012), p.68.

²⁸⁰ Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920*, p.130; 'Kurdistan and the Kurds', pp.101-102.

²⁸¹ 'Third Meeting: Turkish Settlement', 23 December 1919, TNA, CAB/24/95/77, p.21; *From Planning to Partition*, p.125.

²⁸² Inter-Departmental Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs: Situation in Kurdistan, n.d., TNA, FO/371/4193, p.2.

²⁸³ 'Precis of Affairs in Southern Kurdistan', p.11.

²⁸⁴ Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920*, p.130; 'Kurdistan and the Kurds', pp.101-102.

to obtain the decision of the conference to establish their independent states under the guidance of a great power, and then the conference could draw the frontier lines. This could be considered a great step for the conciliation of the Kurds and Armenians, and was welcomed by some British policy-makers, such as Curzon. However, others had doubts, such as Admiral Richard Webb (assistant to the British High Commissioner at Constantinople), who believed that both representatives lacked the support of the majority of population, especially Sharif Pasha who had last had contact with the Kurdish tribes many years ago.²⁸⁵

The memorandum of Sharif and Nubar raised concern among the Turks about their possible alliance, and so the Turks tried to make a rift between them by publishing anti-Christian and pan-Islamic propaganda in Kurdistan, which affected the Kurds.²⁸⁶ The inability of Kurdish organizations to counter Turkish propaganda and the growth of Turkish influence was because most of the Kurdish intellectuals, such as members of the Badir Khan family, had been obliged to leave north Kurdistan and their contact with the people had been broken. The result of this was the division of the Kurds into two groups: those who supported British protection, and the pro-Turks who were against the Christians and preferred Kurdish autonomy under Turkish safeguards.²⁸⁷ It could be said that the differences of Kurdish opinion not only undermined the Kurdish case at the conference, but also the attempt of Sharif and Nubar to make peace between the ethnic groups. Britain and France did not have a clear policy on this. Britain argued about leaving north Kurdistan to the Turks, but in this case they would have to abandon the Armenians to the Turks as well, because they were inter-mingled, or they discussed putting the Kurds under the domination of the Armenians. M. Berthelot, the Chief Secretary for Political and Commercial Affairs in the French Foreign Ministry, had a different idea. He argued that the annexation of Kurdistan to Armenia was impossible, because this 'would mean putting the far more numerous Kurds under the rule of less numerous Armenians', and he preferred to rely on the Sykes-Picot agreement until they could reach a new agreement about the question.²⁸⁸ Britain emphasised that the only way to settle this issue was the occupation of their designated areas and the

²⁸⁵ Curzon to Robeck, 10 December 1919, DBFP, first series, 4, p.928.

²⁸⁶ *The Times*, 5 March 1920; 'Precis of Affairs in Southern Kurdistan', p.13; Noel to Political, Baghdad, 18 July 1919, Wilson Mss, IWM, Box no.69/79/1, p.15.

²⁸⁷ Eastern Department, Inter-Departmental Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs: Situation in Kurdistan, 19 September 1920, TNA, FO/371/4193, p.4; Political, Baghdad to Secretary of State for India, 13 June 1919, Wilson Mss, IWM, Box no.69/79/1, p.8.

²⁸⁸ Second Additional Note on the Situation in Kurdistan, 10 January 1920, TNA, FO/371/4193, p.3.

establishment of direct administration. However, occupation would be against the principles of the peace settlement, whilst the establishment of Kurdish autonomy was not practicable in the British view.²⁸⁹ They believed that there was no sufficiently eminent Kurdish leader who could rule Kurdistan as one united country, as although there were some Kurdish leaders who had contact with Britain, they each only had influence in limited areas.²⁹⁰ For example, the dominant area of Said Taha was from Van to Arbil, but his uncle Abdul Qadir was his competitor in these districts. Simko's influence was 'further to the East and tends to overspread the border into Persia'. Badir Khan's family were greatly supported by Kurdish intellectuals, whilst Mahmud did not have influence in north Kurdistan.²⁹¹

Another obstacle to the settlement of the Kurdish-Armenian question was the impossibility of drawing a boundary between their districts. The suggestion of Noel to create one administration for them both was not only to reconcile the two nations, as Eskander has pointed out, but it would also have solved the boundary problem. This was because it would collect all of their vilayets under one mandatory power instead of two, and would give them the possibility of separation from Turkish rule in the future. Eskander has highlighted that Wilson suggested creating a Kurdish province from Diyarbakir, Bitlis, Kharput and Van, and he preferred to leave the Armenians to the Turks. This was true, but in fact Wilson had already suggested creating an Armenian province from the vilayets of Terabzon and Erzurum. However, the High Commissioner at Constantinople supported Noel's proposal, as he believed that Wilson's suggestion was unsuitable as it would give the vilayet of Terabzon to Armenia, in which Armenians did not comprise the majority of the population, and that Wilson's suggestion for a Kurdish province included Van and the district of Mush, which were mainly Armenian.²⁹² It would be possible to say that Wilson did not have a fixed idea about the future of Armenia and north Kurdistan, because he was mainly concerned about the security of Mesopotamia. He believed that the future of Armenia relied upon the American mandate, and otherwise it was better to leave them to Turkey.²⁹³ Moreover, Wilson also preferred to allow the Kurds to govern themselves,

²⁸⁹ 'Precis of Affairs in Southern Kurdistan', p.18.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.19.

²⁹¹ 'Mesopotamia: British Relations with Kurdistan', n.d., TNA, FO/371/4192, p.2.

²⁹² Eskander, *From Planning to Partition*, p.91; Eastern Department, Inter Departmental Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs, 19 September 1920, pp.5-6.

²⁹³ Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920*, pp.141-142.

and he believed that the restoration of Turkish rule over Kurdistan or its absence would not affect the security of Mesopotamia.²⁹⁴ The Foreign Secretary reassured him (as he hoped) that if the United States accepted the mandate for Armenia, for political and military reasons its frontier should not extend down to Mesopotamia. Britain refused to accept the mandate of Kurdistan, and did not support any political and military activities beyond Mesopotamia.²⁹⁵

ARMENIAN POPULATION IN EAST MEDITERRANEAN AREA ca. 1800 -1900



Figure 3: Armenian population map

source: http://www.conflicts.rem33.com/images/Armenia/arm_xix.JPG

The policy of Wilson towards south Kurdistan was quite different, as it seemed that he preferred to join it with Mesopotamia. He aimed to create an ‘Arab province of Mosul, surrounded by a fringe of autonomous Kurdish states’.²⁹⁶ In addition, he did not consider the ethnographic frontier between the Kurds and the Arabs, as he declared that geographic and economic factors were more important than race. He believed that the

²⁹⁴ Civil Commissioner at Baghdad to FO, 27 November 1919, TNA, FO/371/4193.

²⁹⁵ Secretary of State to Civil Commissioner at Baghdad, 22 November 1919, TNA, FO/371/4193.

²⁹⁶ Inter-Departmental Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs: Situation in Kurdistan, n.d., p.2.

Kurds, especially the southern Kurds, could never be united, as Arbil and Sulaimania had little in common with each other. He also mentioned that ‘there might be reasons against excluding from such a kingdom the relatively productive districts of Sulaimaniyah [Sulaimania] and Arbil’.²⁹⁷ In addition, he asserted that Arbil did not want to be separated from Mesopotamia, and he noted that during Mahmud’s rising, Arbil had not shown any sympathy for him, and even the people of Sulaimania had agreed to remain under the administration of Mesopotamia.²⁹⁸ The India Office supported Wilson’s plan to retain British forces in south Kurdistan. They believed that the evacuation of south Kurdistan would be a mistake, because of the possibility of a Russian attack on India, Persia or north Kurdistan, which would breach the peace in the Middle East.²⁹⁹

The settlement of the Kurdish issue was difficult matter during the discussions between Britain and France. The Anglo-French Conference on 23 December 1919 outlined their policy regarding Kurdistan, but they did not decide upon their definite policy towards the Kurds. Their suggestion of the possibility of Britain or France having a mandate for Kurdistan raised the possibility of establishing an independent Kurdish state, but it was only a suggestion and it excluded south Kurdistan.³⁰⁰ This was because Britain was most interested in the economic, military and political importance of south Kurdistan for Mesopotamia.³⁰¹ At the London Conference which opened in February 1920, Britain and France still did not have a clear policy, as they discussed the possibility of the return of north Kurdistan to Turkish rule. Whilst they decided not to do this, they preferred not to interfere in the affairs of north Kurdistan because this would require involving their military forces and would be expensive.³⁰² At the San Remo Conference in April 1920, they emphasised their wish not to intervene, but without their assistance the Kurds could not defend themselves against a Turkish attack if they should establish an independent Kurdish state. At this conference, Britain and France discussed again the Kurdish question, because they believed that because of the growing power of the Kemalists, north Kurdistan seemed to be a part of the Turkish

²⁹⁷ Civil Commissioner at Baghdad to FO, 27 November 1919, TNA, FO/371/4193.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Memorandum, unknown title, n.d., TNA, FO/371/4193, p.1.

³⁰⁰ Second Additional Note on the Situation in Kurdistan, 10 January 1920, TNA, FO/371/4193, p.3. For all of the suggestions, see Eskander, *From Planning to Partition*, p.155.

³⁰¹ British Strategy’s Notes of a Conversation, 26 February 1919, DBFP, first series, 7, pp.257-258.

³⁰² British Secretary, Notes of an Allied Conference, 20 February 1920, DBFP, first series, 7, p.159.

state. Curzon did not have a stable opinion about the future of the Kurds. He initially preferred to establish an independent Kurdish state but later changed his opinion against forming such a state.³⁰³ On 6 March he had informed John De Robeck, Gough-Calthorpe's successor as the High Commissioner in Constantinople, that 'it was contemplated that Northern Kurdistan should be severed from the Ottoman Empire and secure its independence.'³⁰⁴ He later argued that it was not clear whether the Kurds wanted an independent state or if they preferred an autonomous state under the protection of the Turks. This was because the Kurds did not have a leader who could collect and represent Kurdish opinion. Sharif Pasha could not obtain the trust of Britain and France, especially as he negotiated also with the Turks about the future of Kurdistan under their authority. The Anglo-French discussion at San Remo inclined towards leaving the northern Kurds under Turkish authority, as they believed that the Kurds were familiar with Turkish rule.³⁰⁵

The negotiations between Britain and France about the future of the Kurds continued until the signing of the Treaty of Sèvres on 10 August 1920. Clauses 62 to 64 of the treaty were devoted to the Kurds, and the treaty admitted some of their rights officially.³⁰⁶ The treaty approved creating an independent state for the Kurds in north Kurdistan, after the drawing of the frontier of Kurdistan by a commission from Britain, France and Italy in Constantinople from February 1921, and it considered the protection of the rights of minorities in Kurdistan. The Turkish government would accept this decision, and the treaty created the possibility of joining the southern Kurds with north Kurdistan, but this would depend on whether the League of Nations' Council considered that the southern Kurds were 'capable of such independence'. In addition, according to the treaty, the allied powers would not object to the combination of north and south Kurdistan, if that took place they had reached a separate agreement with Turkey, who would then abandon their rights in south Kurdistan.³⁰⁷ This meant that in the event of not reaching an agreement with Turkey, the allied powers would not

³⁰³ British Secretary, Notes of a meeting of the Supreme Council, held at the Villa Devachan, San Remo, 19 April 1920, DBFP, first series, 8, p.43; Inter-Departmental Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs on 13 April 1920, TNA, FO/371/5068, p.3.

³⁰⁴ Eskander, *From Planning to Partition*, p.129.

³⁰⁵ British Secretary, Notes of a meeting of the Supreme Council, held at the Villa Devachan, San Remo, 19 April 1920, DBFP, first series, 8, p.43; Inter-Departmental Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs on 13 April 1920, TNA, FO/371/5068, p.3.

³⁰⁶ Cox to Churchill, 9 December 1921, TNA, FO/371/7780, p.1.

³⁰⁷ 'The Treaty of Sevres', 10 August 1920, TNA, FO/93/110/81, pp.183-184.

approve the combination of south Kurdistan with the possible Kurdish state in the north. This was the wish of the British administration in Mesopotamia, as they wished to delay any separation of the Mosul vilayet. At a meeting of the Inter-Departmental Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs on 13 April 1920, the India Office decided to establish 'an independent frontier district of Mesopotamia on the lines of the North-West Province of India', and recommended the separation of the frontier between north and south Kurdistan. In addition, Wilson agreed with them and protested any proposal to split south Kurdistan from Mosul. He stated that this would not only menace British influence in Persia, but would lead to the loss of Mesopotamia. Moreover, there was an effort by Nuri Sa'id Pasha to satisfy British officials that the Kurds would accept being under the administration of Mesopotamia, if Abdullah Hussain ruled them.³⁰⁸ However, there was no indication that the southern Kurds felt loyalty to him as the Mesopotamian Arabs did, and this would be a justification not to merge south Kurdistan with the possible Iraqi state. This idea influenced Curzon and he explicitly showed his opposition to the unity of north and south Kurdistan.³⁰⁹ After this, at the San Remo Conference, he declared that the part of the Mosul vilayet which comprised the southern Kurds would be under the British mandate, and he believed that it would be impractical to separate the Mosul vilayet from Mesopotamia.³¹⁰

The Treaty of Sèvres was an opportunity for the Kurds to establish an independent state, whilst the main deficiency of the treaty was not drawing a border between Armenia and north Kurdistan. In addition, it did not include the western Kurdish areas,³¹¹ which the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916 had allocated to France. However, the western Kurds did not have any response for their exclusion with the possible Kurdish state. Another issue for the future of the Kurds was that east Kurdistan remained a part of Persia, which had been a neutral state in the First World War.

³⁰⁸ Inter-Departmental Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs, 13 April 1920, TNA, FO/371/5068, p.3.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ British Secretary, Notes of a meeting of the Supreme Council, held at the Villa Devachan, San Remo, 19 April 1920, DBFP, first series, 8, p.43.

³¹¹ MacDowell, *Modern History of the Kurds*, p.137.

3.3 British policy after the expulsion of Sheikh Mahmud

After suppressing the Kurdish rising and the Iraqi revolution in 1920, Britain aimed to establish an Arab government and to withdraw its forces from both Mesopotamia and the Mosul vilayet. Regarding this, the Cairo Conference was held in March 1921 with the aim of decreasing expenditure; as MacDowell has stated, the main purpose of the conference was ‘to maintain firm British control as cheaply as possible’.³¹² The Political Committee meetings discussed the question of establishing an autonomous entity for the Kurds. However, British officials were divided into two main groups, one of which preferred to join Kurdistan with Iraq whilst the other supported establishing a Kurdish state. Sir Percy Cox, who was appointed as High Commissioner of Iraq in June 1920 and served until he retired in May 1923, wished to connect the Kurdish areas of the Mosul and Kirkuk divisions with Iraq, and he stated that they should belong to Iraq economically. Cox’s proposal to join the predominantly Kurdish areas with Iraq was supported by Bell, who tried to connect the Kurdish people in Kirkuk with Iraq by their taking part in the election of the Constituent Assembly. However, she doubted if the Kurds in Sulaimania would participate in the election.³¹³

Bell’s ideas were opposed by Major Hubert Young of the Foreign Office, and his proposal to establish a Kurdish state was supported by Noel, Lawrence and Churchill, although they had some differences in their opinions. Young did not wish to give complete independence to the Kurds, but he preferred to maintain British authority by giving them a chance to establish a Kurdish state under the control of Cox, and he supposed that the Kurdish divisions would elect a council in a similar process. Whilst Lawrence believed that the Kurds should not come under Arab rule at that time, he supported trying to arrange this at some point. He was also against Bell’s proposal to set up separate Mutasarifs for Kirkuk and Mosul, instead of just one Mutasarif.³¹⁴ However, a single Mutasarif for Mosul and Kirkuk might be regarded by Britain as the ruler of Kurdistan, which might help the Kurds to become an independent state. If the Kurds had two Mutasarifs, this might cause more divisions among the Kurds and make it easier to incorporate them into Iraq.

³¹² MacDowell, *Modern History of the Kurds*, p.166.

³¹³ Appendix 10, Kurdistan: Fourth Meeting of the Political Committee, 15 March 1921, TNA, FO/371/6343, pp.59-60.

³¹⁴ Appendix 10, Kurdistan: Fourth Meeting of the Political Committee, p.60; Eskander, ‘Southern Kurdistan under Britain’s Mesopotamian Mandate’, p.155; Eskander, *From Planning to Partition*, p.165.

Noel's opinion, which was supported by Churchill, was to set up a buffer state for the Kurds between Iraq and Turkey, because he was afraid of the Turkish threat to south Kurdistan and also he believed that it might be useful as a counterbalance in the case of any movement against Britain in Iraq. Churchill suggested 'it might be possible to subsidise a Kurdish chief and his more influential subordinates and to grant provisional trading facilities in consideration of an agreement that they would prevent the Turks from carrying out a policy in that area adverse to British interests in Iraq'.³¹⁵ It can be seen that the main purpose of Churchill was the withdrawal of the British forces in south Kurdistan for the reduction of their military costs by giving responsibility to a Kurdish leader to govern south Kurdistan. He also believed that if the Kurds were to join with Iraq, their rights would be neglected and they might be oppressed as a minority.³¹⁶ It could be said that by joining southern Kurdistan to Iraq, Britain created a problem state in the Middle East, because as Churchill predicted the Kurds were oppressed by the Iraqi governments, as will be discussed in the last chapter.

Eskander has stated that the Cairo Conference was determined to keep south Kurdistan as a separate buffer zone to protect Iraq.³¹⁷ It is true that the conference decided that southern Kurdistan should not be placed under Arab rule, but this was not for the aim of establishing a Kurdish state. Instead, it resulted from their fear that the Kurds might revolt against Britain because of their joining with Iraq, and this might cause unrest in Iraq. At the conference, the possibility that south Kurdistan could become part of an Iraqi state was discussed. However, the conference ended the southern Kurdish hopes of forming a Kurdish state jointly with northern Kurdistan, the possibility of which depended on clause 64 of the Treaty of Sèvres. The High Commissioner's suggestion for dealing directly with local officials in south Kurdistan until the expiration of the year allowed by article 5 of the Treaty of Sèvres was made because he believed that clause 64 had expired.³¹⁸ Moreover, governing south Kurdistan under the High Commissioner's authority directly until the time when the Kurds might choose joining with or separation from Iraq was the best possible option

³¹⁵ Appendix 10, Kurdistan: Fourth Meeting of the Political Committee, p.60.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Eskander, 'Southern Kurdistan under Britain's Mesopotamian Mandate, p.155; Eskander, *From Planning to Partition*, p.165.

³¹⁸ Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs summoned to meet in Cairo during March 1921, TNA, CO/730/13, p.4.

for joining them with Iraq. Cox was strongly prejudiced in favour of annexing them to Iraq, and his subsequent actions were for this objective.

The Political Committee meetings also introduced a resolution to reduce the size of the garrison in Kirkuk and Mosul from twenty-three to eight battalions, and the British administration focused on the reduction of the garrison in Mosul until 31 May 1922.³¹⁹ Cox tried to use this plan for the purposes of his project.³²⁰ He endeavoured to replace British forces in Mesopotamia with a mixture of Arab, Assyrian and Kurdish Levies, and to replace the British force in Mosul and its outposts by an Arab army, which has not been considered in previous publications. He did not distinguish between them, as he believed that differences of nationality did not make a difficulty for his scheme.³²¹ It can be argued that this might create disorder in south Kurdistan, as these three different entities would not accept each other. The Kurds did not like the Arabs as they had a different nationality, and they were not happy with the Assyrians in south Kurdistan as they had a different religion. For these reasons, Churchill believed that these different nationalities should be ethnically-grouped separately, like the Gurkha units in India, and so Kurdish outposts should be garrisoned by Kurdish levies and Arab outposts should not be garrisoned by Kurdish units. He considered that Britain should keep south Kurdistan as a separate area from Iraq, as Nepal was separated from India.³²²

Churchill emphasized that Mosul, Tala'far and possibly Kirkuk city should stay within the Arab field, and that the Kurdish areas in Kirkuk and Sulaimania and the Kurdish outposts in Mosul should be garrisoned by Kurdish and Assyrian Levies. However, he agreed to the Zakho, Duhok and Aqra Levies being assisted by an Arab army in Mosul.³²³ It seemed that Churchill intended to create a buffer zone against any Turkish threat to Mesopotamia, as previous works have mentioned.³²⁴ However, further

³¹⁹ Colonial Office to Foreign Office, 21 March 1921, TNA, FO/371/6346; 'The Situation in Iraq', Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War, 21 October 1921, TNA, CO/730/16, p.2.

³²⁰ For detailed studies of the Cairo Conference, see Catherwood, *Churchill's Folly*, pp.127-106; Klieman, *Foundations of British Policy in the Arab World*.

³²¹ High Commissioner of Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 9 June 1921, TNA, CO/730/2, p.3.

³²² Secretary of State for the Colonies to the High Commissioner of Iraq, 18 June 1921, TNA, CO/730/2, p.2.

³²³ Secretary of State for the Colonies to the High Commissioner of Iraq, 25 May 1921, TNA, CO/730/2, p.2.

³²⁴ Catherwood, *Churchill's Folly*, p.113; Fontana, 'Creating nations, establishing states', p.6.

investigation is needed about how Britain would prevent this threat, and how this would affect their wish to withdraw their forces from south Kurdistan. Cox was the official who most strongly emphasised retaining forces in Mesopotamia and south Kurdistan, especially after the Turkish garrison in Jazira was increased about by 2000 rifles.³²⁵ He was anxious about the Turkish propaganda against Iraq, as Nihad Pasha, the Turkish Commander, was appointed to create disorder on the northern frontier of Iraq. Cox believed that until Nihad was removed, Britain should not evacuate these areas, because he feared that a withdrawal would be a signal for the Turkish occupation of Zakho and that the Kurds might be encouraged by them.³²⁶ It can be argued that Cox feared that any Turkish intervention would not only create obstacles to the integration of south Kurdistan with Iraq, but also would threaten the British position in Mesopotamia. Curzon supported Cox's view, and stated that evacuation of the troops would be imprudent until the Turkish threat to the northern Mesopotamian border ceased.³²⁷ However, Churchill did not agree with them about retaining British troops in the Mosul vilayet. He declared that the plan of withdrawing troops should not be affected by the inability to leave forces in Zakho, Tele'far and Aqra.³²⁸ He emphasized that the British garrison in Mosul should be reduced to two battalions and local levies should replace them, as the Cairo Conference had agreed. His main consideration was that the Turkish intrigue should not affect the replacement of the British garrison by local forces. He refused to modify the reduction of forces in Mosul, and asked Cox to try to have the Levies ready to replace the British troops without affecting the scheme of withdrawal.³²⁹ In opposition to Churchill's plan, Lawrence believed that giving responsibility to a local force would not decrease the Turkish threat, because this force could not expect military support from a British garrison which was stationed far from the Kurdish areas. He also stated that the possibility of an unwise policy from Faisal in

³²⁵ High Commissioner of Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1 February 1922, Parliamentary Archives, Lloyd George Papers Mss, F/10/1-2, pp.1-2.

³²⁶ High Commissioner of Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 19 April 1921, TNA, FO/371/6344, p.2.

³²⁷ Shuckburgh to the Under-Secretary of State of Foreign Office, 5 May 1921, TNA, FO/371/6346, pp.1-2.

³²⁸ Secretary of State for the Colonies to the High Commissioner of Iraq, 22 April 1921, TNA, FO/371/6346.

³²⁹ Secretary of State for the Colonies to the High Commissioner of Iraq, 4 May 1921, TNA, FO/371/6346.

south Kurdistan could be another cause of both increased Turkish propaganda and a Turkish attack in the spring.³³⁰

Previous studies have considered that the inability of the Arab army to protect Mosul was another reason to postpone the reduction of the British garrison, but there are further points which show the differences of British officials regarding this which were not covered by these earlier researches. The General Officer Commanding believed that it was not possible to reduce the number of the British infantry to less than eleven battalions, until the Arab army was ready to control Mosul vilayet. The main reason for his opinion was that the Arab army could not prevent Turkish aggression across the border until they were properly trained.³³¹ The War Office agreed with this, and believed that the Arab force could only suppress internal disorder, whilst the remaining British forces could repel any expected Turkish attack on south Kurdistan. However, there was an anxiety amongst British officers about the inability of the reduced force to protect Mosul vilayet, and they pointed out that any further reduction might threaten Baghdad and Faisal's position.³³² Another apprehension of British officers in the case of their withdrawing was the threat to the Christian population in south Kurdistan and Mesopotamia. They feared that if the Turks did attack south Kurdistan, they would massacre the non-Muslim people.³³³

Cox tried to use the Turkish threat to Kurdistan to join the southern Kurdish areas with Iraq. He sent a telegram to Churchill in which he wrote that the local experts supported keeping south Kurdistan as a part of Iraq.³³⁴ He had already taken steps towards the annexation of south Kurdistan to the new country of Iraq by re-organising the Kurdish areas administratively under the Iraqi government. He created Sub-Liwas in south Kurdistan under Kurdish Mutasarifs,³³⁵ and declared that he would give local autonomy to the Kurds in Sulaimania Liwa as a minority within Iraq, but this would be

³³⁰ Lawrence to Shuckburgh, 23 October 1921, TNA, CO/730/18, pp.19-20.

³³¹ Colonial Office to Foreign Office, 21 March 1921, TNA, FO/371/6346; 'The Situation in Iraq', Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War, 21 October 1921, TNA, CO/730/16, p.2.

³³² Minutes of War Office, 14 October 1921, TNA, CO/730/13.

³³³ Wigram to the High Commissioner in Baghdad, 2 February 1921, TNA, CO/730/13, p.2.

³³⁴ Secretary of State for the Colonies to the High Commissioner of Mesopotamia, 5 June 1921, TNA, CO/730/2.

³³⁵ Proceedings of the Council of Ministers, 27 June 1921, TNA, CO/370/2, pp.8-9; Eskander, 'Southern Kurdistan under Britain's Mesopotamian Mandate', pp.157-158.

reconsidered after three years.³³⁶ The new interpretation for this is that the real aim of Cox was to convince the Kurds that he would protect their rights if they were joined with Iraq, by not appointing Arab officials in Kurdistan. His promise to establish local autonomy could also be seen as an attempt not to arouse Kurdish opposition, because he knew that the Kurds in Sulaimania Liwa would not easily accept their direct integration with Iraq. However, the creation of this local autonomy in a limited area was not practical, because the Kurds in other Liwas would also ask the same right, which was never accepted by Cox.

Eskander has pointed out that Cox concentrated on joining south Kurdistan with Iraq economically, as its connections with Baghdad were so close and its revenue was not enough to cover its administration.³³⁷ In fact, this is not completely correct, as it was only a justification for annexing the Mosul vilayet to Iraq. This is because of the richness of the agriculture and minerals, especially the potential oil fields in the vilayet, from which Iraq benefited economically. Sluggett has shown that one of the most significant factors for keeping the Mosul vilayet with Iraq, rather than establishing a Kurdish state, was its oilfields.³³⁸ The geographic, economic and ethnographic addition of south Kurdistan to Iraq were significant points which Cox focused on in support of his scheme to join the southern Kurds with Iraq. He argued that the mountains of south Kurdistan were very necessary for the defence of Iraq, as they were linked to the Ararat Mountains and to the mountains of the old boundary between Turkey and Russia. The importance of Mosul on the trade route between India and the European countries was another justification given by Cox.³³⁹ Moreover, similarly to Wilson, he argued that due to the ethnographic mixture of the Kurds, Arabs and Turkmen in the Kurdish areas (in particular, around Kirkuk and Mosul), they could not draw boundary lines between them. The Kurdish district was inhabited by these three nationalities in Arbil, and Kurds and Turkmen also lived in the city. On these grounds, Cox argued that the best solution was to annex these areas to Iraq.³⁴⁰ It could be said that this was not a strong argument, because they could have divided the areas according to the ratio of the

³³⁶ High Commissioner for Mesopotamia to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 21 June 1921, TNA, FO/371/6346, p.2.

³³⁷ Eskander, 'Southern Kurdistan under Britain's Mesopotamian Mandate', p.154; Eskander, *From Planning to Partition*, p.146.

³³⁸ Sluggett, *Britain in Iraq*, pp.71-76.

³³⁹ Intelligence Report Number 21, 1 November 1922, TNA, FO/371/7772, p.18.

³⁴⁰ Secretary of State for the Colonies to the High Commissioner of Iraq, 5 July 1921, TNA, CO/730/3.

ethnicities, as Churchill supported. For example, in the areas where the Kurds were in the majority, they could have been joined with a possible Kurdish state. The crucial point which was the barrier to creating an independent Kurdish state was the nature of the land boundaries with the Arab, Persian and Turkish states, and the lack of any sea boundary of south Kurdistan. These would be the main problems of its commerce and security.

Ali and Eskander believed that eventually Cox convinced Churchill that south Kurdistan should be part of Iraq when Cox tried to pave the way for Faisal to become King of Iraq, as the Cairo Conference had decided.³⁴¹ They mention that Churchill agreed with Cox that securing the selection of Faisal was the first priority and other issues like the Kurdish question were of secondary importance, with the condition of 'not putting Arabs over Kurds'.³⁴² This was not quite true, because Churchill believed that the Kurds eventually would come under Arab rule because of Cox's influence, which has not been covered in other studies. He was critical of the fact that Cox had a dual function concerning south Kurdistan and Iraq, similar to the function of the Governor-General of South Africa in relation to Rhodesia and the native territories. He stated that the Kurds predicted that they would achieve their rights from Britain according to the Treaty of Sèvres, but that Cox would continue directly to govern southern Kurdistan.³⁴³ Moreover, Churchill believed that Britain should not force the Kurds to come under the Iraqi government. He emphasized that the policies of the British government and Faisal were similar, and that neither of them intended to go against Kurdish wishes and impose on them either separation or joining within Iraq. Churchill argued that Britain and Iraq should deal with Kurdistan as a separate area because the alternative to the inclusion of the Kurds in Iraq had not yet been decided.³⁴⁴ This thesis has found that the final decision to join south Kurdistan with Iraq was not because Churchill was convinced by Cox's scheme, which was strongly against

³⁴¹ After a long discussion among the British administration in Mesopotamia to select Amir Faisal or his brother Amir Abdullah as king of Iraq, the Cairo Conference decided to propose Faisal. In July 1921, the Iraqi Council of Ministers under President of Abdurrahman Naqib of Baghdad declared Faisal as King of Iraq, and on 23 August he was crowned in Baghdad; Committee on Iraq, 11 December 1922, TNA, FO/371/7772, p.6.

³⁴² Ali, *Chand Lekolinawaiak Darbaray Bzafi Hawcharkhi Kurd*, volume 2, p.13; Eskander, 'Southern Kurdistan under Britain's Mesopotamian Mandate', pp.163; Eskander, *From Planning to Partition*, p.153.

³⁴³ HC Deb, 14 June 1921, 143, cols. 265-334.

³⁴⁴ Churchill to Cox, 27 July 1922, TNA, FO/371/7771, p.5.

Kurdish separation. However, Churchill's disagreement did not affect Cox's thinking regarding the Kurdish question.

The lack of national feeling amongst the Kurds could be considered as another cause which helped Cox to avoid the establishment of an independent state. If they had been united, they could have had a greater influence on the British, especially Cox, to create a Kurdish state. It could be analysed in a different way that when the Kurds participated in the referendum for choosing Faisal for the throne of Iraq in May 1921 (which was Cox's attempt to connect the southern Kurdish areas with Iraq through their participation), they showed their disunion, because they had dissimilar responses. In Sulaimania, they did not take part in the referendum, but the Kurds in Arbil voted for Faisal. In Kirkuk, only 4 percent of the people voted in favour of Faisal, but this does not mean that the majority of the people there supported an independent Kurdish state.³⁴⁵ Besides the Turkmen in the town, some of the Kurds still had sympathy for Turkish rule. Said Ahmed Khaniqini, who had a great influence through the villages, and the Shuan tribe both preferred Ottoman instead of Arab rule.³⁴⁶ Bell stated that except for a minority of the Kurdish people in Kirkuk, most of them did not like to go with Sulaimania because 'they are bitterly jealous', and due to this they were prepared to swear allegiance to Faisal.³⁴⁷ A deputation consisting of some Kurdish notables, such as Sheikh Habib Talabani and Jamil Beg Baban of Kifri, during their visit to Baghdad on 28 November 1921 proved the lack of national feeling as they showed their desire to join with Iraq if a genuine native government could be established.³⁴⁸

There are also further points about the disunity of the Kurds and the attempts of British officials to satisfy the Kurds about their integration with Iraq which have been neglected by other monographs. Longrigg believed that if the Kurds were properly dealt with, they would willingly come under an Iraqi government.³⁴⁹ In addition, during his trip to Mosul and Kirkuk in November 1921, Young wrote to J.E. Shuckburgh of the India Office (knighted in 1922), and stated that if Britain would take some steps to convince the Kurds regarding joining the Mosul vilayet to Iraq, they would accept Arab

³⁴⁵ Iraq Report on Iraq Administration, October to March 1920, TNA, FO/371/9004,p.15.

³⁴⁶ Bell Mss, University of Newcastle Library, letters to her parents, 9 November and 13 November 1921.

³⁴⁷ Secretary of State for the Colonies to the High Commissioner of Iraq, 5 July 1921, TNA, CO/730/3.

³⁴⁸ Intelligence Report Number 26, 1 December 1921, TNA, CO/730/8, p.4.

³⁴⁹ Bell Mss, letter to her parents, 22 January 1921.

rule. He argued that the main cause of the Kurdish rejection of Arab rule was their fear of repression by the Arab government and Faisal. He believed that if Britain could assure the Kurds that Faisal was really under British control, they would accept him, and that if the Kurds were persuaded that they were really under British protection they would definitely accept their inclusion in Iraq.³⁵⁰ However, it could be argued that in Sulaimania, Kurdish nationalism was so strong that they rejected any union with Iraq. They preferred a Kurdish state under British supervision for their protection, because they feared that Baghdad would be hostile to the interests of the Kurds. According to British documents, the remaining Kurdish areas, such as Arbil, Amadia, Aqra, Zakho and Duhok, agreed to be under the Iraqi government due to their economic, industrial and commercial connections with Mosul and Baghdad. They also accepted the idea of the Sub-Liwa and its arrangements. The Majlis (councils which were established in 1921 in the Kurdish towns to govern their local affairs) of Zakho showed its desire to be under the Iraqi government, but with the conditions that Arab Kurdish speakers should not be selected as officials and that only a Kurdish Qaimaqam would be accepted, although it did not matter if he was Christian or Muslim. The Majlis of Aqra preferred to remain with Mosul and to join with Iraq under British assistance.³⁵¹ These areas were important to strengthen the northern boundary of Iraq, as they were the mountainous area and had an important strategic position. In addition, for the safety of Armenian and Assyrian refugees, Britain preferred to annex them with Iraq, because their rights would be better protected under the Iraqi government than in a possible Kurdish state.³⁵²

After his assumption of the Iraqi throne, Faisal pressured Britain to keep south Kurdistan with Iraq. He knew how important south Kurdistan was for the security of Iraq, and he wished to know the plans of the High Commissioner towards the Kurdish area first. He asked Cox about the readiness of Britain to defend south Kurdistan if it was attacked by an outside force, and Britain's willingness to defend Iraq if it suffered an attack through Kurdistan and if so, for how long? Faisal also asked Cox about British readiness to take action if disorder in south Kurdistan could not be prevented which might threaten Iraq. The King's third question was about British intentions if the Kurdish community showed willingness to join with Iraq, and whether Britain would

³⁵⁰ Young to Shuckburgh, 26 November 1921, TNA, CO/730/16, pp.1-2.

³⁵¹ Intelligence Report Number 14, 1 June 1921, TNA, CO/730/3, p.7.

³⁵² Cox to Churchill, 9 December 1921, TNA, FO/371/7780, pp.1-2.

compel them to remain separate? If that was the case, for how long? The final question was that if Britain accepted a Kurdish state, what form of government would be proposed?³⁵³

The British response to Faisal's questions needs further investigation as it has not been fully explored by previous researchers. Cox wanted to know the views of the War Office and Air Ministry on Faisal's questions. Their answers favoured Faisal, as the War Office responded that the British garrisons, which had already been reduced in Baghdad and Basra, were only to keep internal order and not to defend against foreign attack. In south Kurdistan, keeping internal order would require dispatching reinforcements to Iraq, because British air power was not sufficient to maintain order due to the rugged mountain areas of south Kurdistan. They would also need a large force to protect south Kurdistan from external aggression. The Air Ministry did not give an absolute answer to the questions, but stated that they would do their best to delay any assault.³⁵⁴ It could be discussed that their answers confirmed that there were not sufficient troops to protect south Kurdistan from an invasion, as they had already removed some of their forces. In addition, they did not have any wish to increase them again for the sake of the safety of south Kurdistan. This could be considered as an opportunity for Faisal to seek joining south Kurdistan with Iraq.

The second attempt of Faisal was the participation of the southern Kurdish territories in the elections for the National Assembly.³⁵⁵ He considered that the people of south Kurdistan had agreed to be united with Iraq because they had participated in the referendum and so they should participate in the election as part of Iraq.³⁵⁶ He concentrated Kirkuk first and emphasised that it should not be excluded from Iraq. For this, C.J. Edmonds, the Political Officer in south Kurdistan, was instructed to 'work steadily but unobtrusively to wean Kirkuk from its attitude of aloofness towards full adherence to the Iraqi State'.³⁵⁷ However, Edmonds's duty was not easy, as Mahmud had many supporters in Kirkuk Liwa and they hoped to integrate the city with Kurdistan rather than with Iraq. Edmonds in his letter to Cox on 17 October showed his

³⁵³ Kurdistan, 2 November 1921, TNA, FO/371/6347, p.1.

³⁵⁴ Middle East Committee, 3 November 1921, TNA, FO/371/6347, p.1.

³⁵⁵ 'Extract from Minutes of the Council of Ministers', 11 July 1921, TNA, CO/730/3.

³⁵⁶ Churchill to Cox, 7 July 1922, TNA, FO/371/7771; Intelligence Report Number 21, 1 November 1922, TNA, FO/371/7772, p.10.

³⁵⁷ Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p.303.

fear about the possibility of most of the Kurdish people in Kirkuk liwa voting against joining with Iraq.³⁵⁸ To satisfy the Kurds, especially in Sulaimania, Faisal agreed that south Kurdistan would be an autonomous region administered by Kurdish officials, and to govern south Kurdistan thorough the High Commissioner in Baghdad. Faisal justified that the Kurds would prefer to be governed by a Muhammadan monarch instead of the possible option of a mandate which would be administered by some European country.³⁵⁹ Cox agreed with Faisal that any local autonomy for the Kurds under British supervision was intended to discourage the Turkish propaganda for the recovery of south Kurdistan.³⁶⁰ If there was a separation of south Kurdistan, the Bolshevik threat to Iraq would be increased,³⁶¹ as some Kurds, especially in the north and east of Kurdistan, had contacted Russia to obtain its support for the establishment an independent Kurdish state. Although this contact was not with high ranking Russian officials and did not have a significant outcome, it had the potential to influence the southern Kurds. In addition, in the Angora agreement of October 1921 with the Kemalist regime, the French abandoned their rights in the Ottoman territories, except for Syria. Britain believed that through this secret agreement, the French were seeking to control Mosul's oil by letting the Turks recover the vilayet. Especially after the San Remo agreement in April 1920, in which Mosul came under British authority, they thought that French were trying to recover the Mosul vilayet to their hands.³⁶²

Cox's strategy of the Kurds taking part in the Iraqi Assembly needs more explanation than earlier studies have given. He insisted on submitting the electoral law for electing the Constituent Assembly for approval to the Council of State (which was set up for the mandatory state). He assumed that the electoral law should include the Kurdish district with Iraq permanently, as a necessary step towards discussing the Kurdish issue with the Constituent Assembly in the future.³⁶³ In April 1921, the draft of

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ High Commissioner of Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 20 December 1921, TNA, CO/730/5.

³⁶⁰ High Commissioner of Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 29 October 1921, TNA, FO/371/6347, pp.2-3.

³⁶¹ High Commissioner of Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 26 October 1921, TNA, FO/371/6347; MacDowell, *Modern History of the Kurds*, pp.139-140.

³⁶² Inter-Departmental Committee on Eastern Unrest, 13 August 1921, TNA, FO/371/7790, p.7; Foreign Office to Colonial Office, 17 March 1922, FO/371/7781; MacDowell, *Modern History of the Kurds*, pp.139-140.

³⁶³ 'Clear the line', July 1921, TNA, CO/730/6.

the law was passed for the election. It included the three Kurdish liwas of Kirkuk, Mosul and Sulaimania and the Provisional Government could not modify the law. This was contrary to the Kurdish rights which were recognised in the Treaty of Sèvres. To prevent any counter-reaction by the Kurds, Cox ordered the Divisional Advisors of Mosul, Kirkuk and Sulaimania to clarify to the Kurds that this law would be the same as the referendum on Faisal's selection, and they would be free as to whether they participated in the election of the Constituent Assembly or not.³⁶⁴

Churchill's letter to Cox of 7 July 1922 clarified the policy of the British government about the electoral law, as stated in the House of Commons. Regarding this, whilst Britain did not want to compel the Kurds to participate in the Assembly, the government believed that in the end south Kurdistan would be a part of Iraq as their interests were so close to each other. Churchill defended Kurdish rights and stated that if the Kurdish areas would agree to take part in the election, they should seal an agreement to ensure Kurdish rights within the Iraq. Under this agreement, the Kurds should not be forced to use the Arabic language and Arab officials should not be employed in Kurdistan. The agreement should ensure the rights of the minorities of Iraq to govern themselves by giving 'a wide measure of local autonomy' to the Kurds, Turkmen and Assyrians.³⁶⁵ However, Cox insisted that the Kurds should take part in the election, although the majority of them did not agree. Moreover, the intervention of the Turks in south Kurdistan and their occupation of Rowandoz, which will be discussed in next section, was a serious matter for the British administration and the Iraqi government which delayed the election.

3.4 The return of the Turks to South Kurdistan

The occupation of the Mosul vilayet after the Mudros Armistice had not been forgotten by the Turks. In their national pact they considered Mosul as a part of Turkey and they sought an opportunity to regain it.³⁶⁶ There are some direct reasons which helped the

³⁶⁴ Intelligence Report Number 8, 15 April 1922, TNA, FO/371/7771, pp.1-2.

³⁶⁵ Churchill to Cox, 7 July 1922, FO/371/7771; Intelligence Report Number 21, 1 November 1922, TNA, FO/371/7772, p.10.

³⁶⁶ Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Eastern Unrest, 15 June 1922, TNA, FO/371/9002, p.10.

Turks to operate against Britain in the Mosul vilayet. The first was that the Kemalists defeated the Greek forces in Anatolia on the Sakaria River in September 1921.³⁶⁷ The signing of the Angora treaty with the French in October 1921 was the second, as it gave them the opportunity to attack the Mosul vilayet from Nosibin and Jazira Ibn-Umar, after the French abandoned these areas. Thirdly, the conference of Kars in 1921 settled the issues between Russia and Turkey, and this meant that the Turks did not have to fear a Russian threat and could focus on the security of their border with Mesopotamia by recovering the Mosul vilayet. The final reason was that the withdrawal of British forces from Persia and the process of reducing British strength in Iraq encouraged the Turks to cross into south Kurdistan.³⁶⁸

The interference of the Turks in south Kurdistan has been considered by other studies, but they have given less attention to the local situation of south Kurdistan. The increase of instability in south Kurdistan after sending Mahmud into exile was a major factor in encouraging the Turks to intervene in south Kurdistan. This was because after the Kurds were disappointed by Britain in establishing an independent Kurdish state, they believed that their turning back to the Turks would pressure Britain to give them their rights. A Kurdish league was established under the name *Komalay Sha'bi* to govern the town of Rowandoz, and after the British evacuation it contacted the Turks.³⁶⁹ They sent Ahmed Taqi, the vice president of the league, to Van to request Turkish help against Britain, and the Turks promised to send 50 troops from Persia.³⁷⁰ This gave a good opening for the Turks to begin their moves for recovering the Mosul vilayet. Ahmed Hama agha of Pishdar, one of the notables who joined the League, stated in his memoir that the Kurds knew that the Turks were their enemy, but they did not have any other source of help. He has pointed out that their priority was to collect a great force to expel Britain first and later to establish a Kurdish state led by Mahmud.³⁷¹

³⁶⁷ Secretary of State for War, 'The Immediate Threat to Iraq', 15 March 1922, TNA, FO/371/7781.

³⁶⁸ Secretary of State for War, 'Possibility of a Turkish Offensive in Northern Iraq', 21 November 1921, TNA, CO/730/16, p.1.

³⁶⁹ The president of the League was Sheikh Raqib Bejel, Nuri Bawil agha was Head of Security, and Sheikh Ahmed was appointed as a Qaimaqam of Rowandoz. Taqi, *Khabati Gali Kurd la Yadashtakani Ahmed Taqida*, p.55.

³⁷⁰ Assistant Political Officer in Rania to the Political Officer in Sulaimania, 2 July 1922, TNA, AIR/23/340; Bristow in Tauris to High Commissioner in Baghdad, TNA, AIR/20/708.

³⁷¹ Abdul-Raqib Yosef and Sdiq Salih, *Birawariakani Ahmedi Hama aghai Pishdari* [Kurdish: The Memoir of Ahmed Hama agha of Pishdar] (Sulaimania: Azad Publishing House, 2001), p.54.

The Kurdish contact with the Turks paved the way for their attack on south Kurdistan. They sent a small group of around 27 soldiers led by Muhedin, an ex-officer of the Gendarmerie, to Rowandoz on 27 May 1921.³⁷² Their main purpose first was to attract the anti-British chiefs, especially of Zibar, Surchi and Barzan, and to direct them against Britain, and then to promote disorder in south Kurdistan.³⁷³ They promised that they would free the Kurds from the British yoke, and attempted to encourage them against Britain by telling the Kurds that a great Turkish reinforcement to help them would soon come to Kurdistan.³⁷⁴ Jihad had been another way to attract the Kurds, led by Euz Damir, who was appointed by the Kemalists to lead their military operation in south Kurdistan.³⁷⁵ It is true that Euz Damir attracted some of the Kurds under the name of Islam.³⁷⁶ However, most of the pro-British tribes were not affected by Jihad and they were still loyal to Britain, but they could not take action against the Turks because of the lack of British forces in these areas to protect them. The Turks threatened them to make them join, and the pro-British tribes did not have any alternative but to accept the Turkish order peacefully.³⁷⁷

The Turks also tried to achieve Kurdish support by showing their desire to give local autonomy to the southern Kurdish people. However, this was only a tactic for obtaining Kurdish help against Britain, as the Turks considered that after the growing Kurdish spirit for independence in south Kurdistan, they could not deny the Kurdish rights because they needed their help.³⁷⁸ This led the Kurds in the areas of Arbil, Sulaimania and Kirkuk, and among such Kurdish tribes as the Surchi, Zibari, Khoshnaw, Zangana, Hamawand and Pishdar, to support the Turks.³⁷⁹ Moreover, some

³⁷² General Head Quarters to British Military Attaché, Teheran, 6 June 1921, TNA, AIR/20/708; Intelligence Report Number 15, 15 June 1921, TNA, FO/371/6352, p.5; 18th Division to G.H.Q., 5 June 1921, TNA, AIR/23/366; High Commissioner of Iraq to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 5 August 1921, Parliamentary Archives, Lloyd George Papers Mss, F/9/3.

³⁷³ Intelligence Report Number 20, 1 September 1921, TNA, CO/370/5, p.10.

³⁷⁴ Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p.245.

³⁷⁵ Intelligence Report number 14, 15 July 1922, TNA, FO/371/7771, pp.9-10.

³⁷⁶ According to the Divisional Adviser in Mosul, until February 1922 the number of the Turkish troops was about 400 soldiers with 4 guns: Divisional Adviser in Mosul to High Commissioner in Baghdad, 1 February 1922, TNA, AIR/20/712.

³⁷⁷ Intelligence Report number 14, 15 August 1921, TNA, FO/371/6353, p.14.

³⁷⁸ Intelligence Report number 11, 1 June 1922, TNA, FO/371/7771; News Summary, 21 December 1921, TNA, CO/730/8, p.1.

³⁷⁹ High Commissioner of Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 30 December 1921, TNA, CO/730/8; MacDowell, *Modern History of the Kurds*, p.140.

of them were Mahmud's followers who had participated in the 1919 rising and they still sought revenge upon Britain. For example, Karim Fatah Beg of Hamawand (who was considered by Britain as a trouble-maker), after killing two British officers, Captains R. K. Makant and S. S. Bond, in Chamchamal on 18 June 1922, joined with the Turks in Rania with 120 rifles on 16 August.³⁸⁰

The Kemalists established an administration in Rowandoz and on 17 March 1922 appointed as Qaimqam Ramzi Beg, an Ottoman ex-officer.³⁸¹ They hurriedly raised an irregular Kurdish force after the joining of some ex-officers in Sulaimania, and Sheikh Ubaidullah of Surchi, Faris agha of Zibar and Sheikh Ahmed of Barzan.³⁸² It could be argued that their main aim was to make disorder in south Kurdistan by raising the Kurdish tribes as a card in their hands in their possible negotiations with Britain to prove that the Mosul vilayet was a part of Turkey. The Kurds actually preferred to help the Turks instead of being integrated with Iraq. The attack on a post of Arab police at Batas on 31 July 1921, and at Dashti Harir later,³⁸³ could be interpreted as their unhappiness with the presence of an Arab force in their area. This was a consequence of the policy of Cox, who endeavoured to replace the British garrisons with Arab army on the northern frontier of Iraq, instead of recruiting Kurdish Levies as the Cairo Conference had suggested. However, the capture of these areas proved the inability of Arab force as mountaineers and Britain could not assist them urgently, as their troops were garrisoned in Kirkuk and Mosul. Britain relied on bombing and aerial attacks after giving responsibility to the Royal Air Force to keep internal order.³⁸⁴ From 2 to 12 August, they attacked Batas and Rowandoz from the air without any success, which has not been covered by earlier studies.³⁸⁵ This failure was because these districts were mountainous areas and the aircraft could not see the rebels clearly from the air. Any discrimination between innocent civilians who took refuge under the rock and the hostile forces was quite impossible.³⁸⁶ In addition, as there was no potential

³⁸⁰ Political Officer in Sulaimania to High Commissioner in Baghdad, 28 June 1922, TNA, AIR/23/339; Intelligence Report Number 23, 1 December 1922, TNA, FO/371/7772, p.11.

³⁸¹ Bell Mss, letter to her parents, 20 December 1921.

³⁸² Intelligence Report Number 20, 1 September 1921, TNA, CO/370/5, p.10.

³⁸³ War Office, Communique, 18 August 1921, TNA, CO/730/13.

³⁸⁴ H.W.G. to Shuckburgh, 26 November 1921, TNA, CO/730/18, pp.16-17.

³⁸⁵ War Office, Communique, 18 August 1921, TNA, CO/730/13.

³⁸⁶ Bell Mss, letter to her parents, 20 December 1921.

landing ground in the Rowandoz area and the lack of transport operating beyond Arbil, sending the Levies was quite difficult.³⁸⁷

Young showed the weakness of Britain and stated that without the support of forces on the ground, bombing operations against the Kurdish and Turkish forces would not be effective. This was true, because after using levies and police from Arbil together with the assistance of air attack, Britain defeated the rebellions in Batas and Dashti Harir on 12 August 1921.³⁸⁸ However, they could not expel the Turks from Rowandoz. The significant point which was not discussed by previous researchers is why Britain did not try to expel the Turks from Rowandoz, although this would have decreased or ended the disorder. Britain understood the aim of the Turks, and believed that the dispute with the Turks about the question of the Mosul vilayet could not be solved by military action. Some British ministers, such as Curzon, stated that the Turkish threat would not cease until the start of negotiations with Turkey.³⁸⁹ It can be suggested that Britain may have been concerned that if they fought the Turks forces in Rowandoz, this might lead to a new war with the Turks, who were powerful after their triumph against the Greeks. However, whilst the Turks remained in Rowandoz, this fostered disorder in south Kurdistan. The pro-Turks occupied Derband of Rania on 31 August 1922, which obliged Britain to evacuate Rania on 1 September³⁹⁰ and Sulaimania on 5 September. Sheikh Abdul Qadir, the brother of Mahmud, was entrusted to govern the Sulaimania administration as head of the Council.³⁹¹

Previous studies have discussed the success of Qadir in preventing the pro-Turks from controlling Sulaimania. However, Cox did not agree to leave the city until he was certain about this, and because of his advice the pro-Turkish members of the Council were arrested, and pro-British figures were appointed as the heads of the police, customs and treasury.³⁹² Moreover, the evacuation of Sulaimania was only a temporary

³⁸⁷ Bell Mss, letter to her parents, 16 July 1922.

³⁸⁸ High Commissioner of Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 17 September 1921, TNA, CO/730/5.

³⁸⁹ Colonial Office to Foreign Office, 21 March 1921, TNA, FO/371/6346.

³⁹⁰ Political Officer in Sulaimania to High Commissioner in Baghdad, 28 June 1922, TNA, AIR/23/339.

³⁹¹ Sheikh Abdul Qadir was released in 1921 and was given permission by Cox to live in Sulaimania on condition that he did not participate in politics. Intelligence Report Number 18, 15 September 1922, TNA, FO/371/7772, p.1; Intelligence Report Number 15, 1 August 1922, TNA, FO/371/7771, p.11; High Commissioner in Baghdad to Divisional Advisor in Mosul, 7 September 1922, TNA, AIR/23/367.

³⁹² High Commissioner of Iraq to the Secretary of the State for the Colonies, 9 September 1922, TNA, FO/371/7781.

step until they could return to the city, and was done to protect the non-Muslim government officials, who were conveyed to Kirkuk by air.³⁹³ Previous studies have suggested that the British evacuation led to an increase in Turkish power in Kurdistan, as the Turks occupied Taqtaq and Koia in September, but they did not consider that these areas were of strategic importance for Britain.³⁹⁴ The Turks could attack Alton Kupri from Taqtaq, and this could possibly threaten Kirkuk and cut the British lines of communication to Arbil.³⁹⁵ Further, Britain did not let the Turks stay in Koia, because from there Britain could bomb the Kurdish and Turkish forces in Derband of Rania and the town heavily, as this give descending ground for nearly half of the distance and the aircraft could reach the hostile places in a short time.³⁹⁶ In addition, Britain was concerned about the safety of the Christians who lived in Harmota, near Koia, because the Turks tried to use them to stop the British bombardment and threatened to massacre them.³⁹⁷

The Turks also tried to occupy Amadia because the town had a key strategic position on the frontier and was a link between Zakho and Aqra. As a result, they attempted to occupy the town with the assistance of a Kurdish tribal force from Sherwan, Mzuri Bala and Barzan, and the help of Haji Abdul latif, the former Qaimqam of the town. However, Britain vanquished the Kurdish attackers with 200 Assyrians and local Kurdish levies, but the defeated Kurdish forces during their retreat harmed the local Christian population.³⁹⁸ After that, afraid that the unrest might cross to Arbil and Kirkuk, the British decided that the return of Mahmud would have a great influence in preventing disorder, which will be discussed in the next section.³⁹⁹

³⁹³ Intelligence Report Number 18, 15 September 1922, TNA, FO/371/7772, pp.1,8.

³⁹⁴ Report on Air Operation against Turkish Forces in Kurdistan, 1 to 18 October 1922, TNA, AIR/23/563.

³⁹⁵ Resume of Recent Operations and General Situation, 1 October 1922, TNA, AIR/23/563.

³⁹⁶ Air Headquarters in Baghdad to Chief Staff Officer, 11 October 1922, TNA, AIR/23/569, p.4.

³⁹⁷ Intelligence Report Number 20, 15 October 1922, TNA, FO/371/7772, p.6.

³⁹⁸ Ibid., p.9; 'Commanding 2nd Btn. Iraq Levies to General Headquarters, Levies (Baghdad)', 28 September 1922, TNA, AIR/23/367.

³⁹⁹ Intelligence Report Number 18, 15 September 1922, TNA, FO/371/7772, p.6.

3.5 The return of Sheikh Mahmud from exile and the Turkish influence on the Kurdish question

After exiling Mahmud to India, Britain found it impossible to find a suitable leader to unite the Kurds. There were several Kurdish leaders who could have led a Kurdish government, if they had been accepted by Britain at the same as they appointed Faisal to the Iraqi throne. This has been considered by earlier researchers, but without taking into account that the Turks were a barrier to the selection of a Kurdish ruler in south Kurdistan. For example, Britain tried to use Hamdi Beg of Baban as an alternative to Mahmud, because his family was respected amongst the Kurds due to their historical background in Sulaimania. Euz Damir sent him a letter which threatened that unless Britain left Mosul, the Turks would recover it by force, and he was told about the risk of helping Britain, as the aim of Britain was not to create a Kurdish state. As a result, Britain regretted appointing him as Hukumdar.⁴⁰⁰ Britain also contemplated selecting Said Taha, the son of Sheikh Abdul Qadir of Shamdhinan, who was a Kurdish leader in north Kurdistan, as Hukumdar of south Kurdistan, on condition that he should admit the suzerainty of Iraq over south Kurdistan. Taha would be accepted by the Kurds, especially those from the Pishdar, Jaf and Hamawand tribes, but when Britain discovered that he had a good relationship with Simko, who was supported by the Turks and was against Britain at that time, they declared that he was not suitable for this post.⁴⁰¹ Instead of this he was used for another purpose, which will be mentioned later.

The growth of the Turkish threat and the defeat of British forces in the previously mentioned areas of south Kurdistan caused some British officials to consider returning Mahmud to Sulaimania. Bell condemned him as a 'robber baron', but she believed that if they allowed him to return with good terms, he would make a barrier between Turkey and Iraq by making himself the governor of Kurdistan, although this could not prevent the Turkish threat.⁴⁰² The Secretary of the High Commissioner was also against the return of Mahmud to Sulaimania. When he visited Sulaimania on 12

⁴⁰⁰ Hamdi Beg was very intellectual and could speak English, French and Turkish, but he could not speak the Kurdish language perfectly as he was born and had lived in Istanbul. Rafiq Hilmi, *Yadash* [Kurdish: Memoirs] (Sulaimania: Sardam Publication, 2003), pp.194-207; Intelligence Report Number 22, 1 October 1921, TNA, FO/371/6353, p.6.

⁴⁰¹ Intelligence Report Number 16, 15 August 1922, TNA, FO/371/7772, p.12; Intelligence Report Number 15, 1 August 1922, TNA, FO/371/7771.

⁴⁰² Bell Mss, letter to her parents, August 1922.

July 1922 to discuss the situation, he believed that ‘the worst choice would be Mahmud’, whom he described as an unstable and violent character who had caused the rising of 1919.⁴⁰³ Cox was also against bringing Mahmud back from exile and he believed that until the political future of Sulaimania was more certain, Mahmud should not be released.⁴⁰⁴ In the light of Cox’s view Mahmud was not permitted to return immediately directly to Sulaimania, and instead resided temporarily in Kuwait under police surveillance.⁴⁰⁵ Previous works have mentioned that after the signing of *Mathbatahs* (petitions) by some Kurdish tribes, Britain decided to return Mahmud to Kurdistan on 30 September 1922. However, there were others who had different opinions and did not support his return. Tawfiq Wahbi Beg, who was a Kurdish officer in the Iraqi Army and pro-British at that time, preferred Hamdi Beg as Hukumdar of the Kurdish administration.⁴⁰⁶ In addition, two representatives of moderate Kurdish nationalism sent letters to Simko on 28 February and 1 May, which stated that they would recognize him as the Kurdish ruler, and the influential Kurds in Sulaimania would accept him if he would stop raiding and looting, and would encourage commerce and agriculture.⁴⁰⁷ Britain was also aware that Mahmud might take some action against them as revenge. However, they preferred to bring him back instead of losing Mosul vilayet and its oilfields to the Turks. Appointing Qadir as the head of Sulaimania Council was a temporary matter until the return of Mahmud, because he did not have as much influence as the latter. Especially after the British evacuation of Sulaimania, Karim Beg of Fatah Beg, who had killed two British officers and had helped the Turks, tried to make further disorder. He appeared in Sulaimania with 50 to 60 horsemen and asked Qadir to give him arms. Said Muhammad Jabari also tried to occupy Chamchamal on 8 September.⁴⁰⁸

After his return, Mahmud recognized himself as Hukumdar of Kurdistan and set up his cabinet in Sulaimania on 10 October 1922.⁴⁰⁹ The significant point which is

⁴⁰³ Intelligence Report Number 15, 1 August 1922, TNA, FO/371/7771, p.12.

⁴⁰⁴ High Commissioner of Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 26 August 1921, TNA, CO/730/4.

⁴⁰⁵ Intelligence Report Number 26, 1 December 1921, TNA, CO/730/8, p.5.

⁴⁰⁶ Intelligence Report Number 12, 15 June 1922, TNA, FO/371/7771, p.10.

⁴⁰⁷ Intelligence Report number 15, 1 August 1922, TNA, FO/371/7771, p.13.

⁴⁰⁸ Intelligence Report number 18, 15 September 1922; Intelligence Report number 20, 15 October 1922, p.10, TNA, FO/371/7772; Bell Mss, letter to her parents, 14 September 1922.

⁴⁰⁹ Intelligence Report Number 21, 1 November 1922, TNA, FO/371/7772.

absent in earlier studies is that Cox and Faisal did not have problems with this, as Hilmi pointed out that both of them accepted Mahmud as Hukumdar because they did not want to break their relationship with him and they hoped to take action against the Turkish forces in Mosul vilayet.⁴¹⁰ The main duty of Mahmud was to prevent disorders and the Turkish influence on Sulaimania, and to try to expel the Turks from south Kurdistan.⁴¹¹ However, Mahmud did not take any real action against the Turks, when Britain forced them to evacuate Rania, Qaladza and Koia due to bombardment from aircraft between 8 and 18 October 1922.⁴¹² After that, Mahmud wanted to increase his power by taking over the administration in Rania and Koia, but this demand was refused by Cox.⁴¹³ He justified this by stating that Koia was outside the scope of Mahmud's authority, and Rania was re-occupied after an air raid, without Mahmud's help. Although his administration there was legal, Britain was reluctant to give him control of Rania.⁴¹⁴

Ali has pointed out that the British refusal to increase Mahmud's powers was a major reason for the next breach in relations between Mahmud and Britain.⁴¹⁵ Mahmud understood that his role was to assist the British to expel the Turks from south Kurdistan. Moreover, Britain feared that Mahmud's power over Rania and Koia might cause him to deal with the Turks in Rowandoz directly.⁴¹⁶ Another reason for problems in the relationship between Britain and Mahmud which has not been mentioned in earlier studies was the condition of arresting Karim Fattah Beg.⁴¹⁷ Mahmud was not only reluctant to take steps to arrest him, but also gave him money from his government.⁴¹⁸ This changed the British perspective that Mahmud was trying to increase his power by allying with British enemies instead of punishing them.

⁴¹⁰ Hilmi, *Yadasht*, pp.331-333.

⁴¹¹ Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p.260.

⁴¹² Report on Air Operation against Turkish Forces in Kurdistan from 1 to 18 October 1922, 20 October 1922, TNA, AIR/23/563; High Commissioner of Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 22 October 1922, TNA, FO/371/7781.

⁴¹³ Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p.314.

⁴¹⁴ Intelligence Report Number 1, 1 January 1923, TNA, FO/371/9009, p.8.

⁴¹⁵ Ali, *Chand Lekolinawaiak Darbaray Bzafi Hawcharkhi Kurd*, volume 2, p.44.

⁴¹⁶ Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p.314.

⁴¹⁷ Intelligence Report Number 18, 15 September 1922, TNA, FO/371/7772, p.1.

⁴¹⁸ Intelligence Report Number 23, 1 December 1922, TNA, FO/371/7772, p.11.

Mahmud tried to have a good relationship with the Turks. However, this was not due to any fear that the Turks might punish him if they reoccupied Mosul, as previous studies have suggested.⁴¹⁹ The main aim of Mahmud was to achieve Turkish support against Britain in order to establish an independent Kurdish state. He wrote a letter to Euz Damir dated 1 November 1922 which showed his eager loyalty to the Turks, and he contemplated obtaining Turkish help to attack Kirkuk, Kifri and Koia, whilst he promised not to interfere with affairs in Arbil and Kirkuk.⁴²⁰ On 15 November 1922, Mahmud complained to Cox that he had nothing with which to establish a Kurdish state, whilst Cox demanded that he take action against the Turks.⁴²¹ Mahmud declared himself as King of Kurdistan in November 1922, which was unacceptable to Britain. They believed this action was against his pledge, as he had accepted that Sulaimania would be the only area of his activity.⁴²²

Mahmud hoped to collect the whole of the Kurds around him, but the absence of a national and united Kurdish project made it impossible. After being warmly welcomed by the Kurds and after accompanying the Kifri chieftains, Mahmud thought that the Kurds would assist him in establishing a Kurdish state, as earlier works have discussed.⁴²³ However, these accounts have neglected the reaction of the pro-British elements who did not agree with Mahmud, especially about his relations with the Turks. Edmonds received mathbatas from the Kirkuk Sheikhs who were Mahmud's relatives, who complained that Mahmud had forced them to sign a letter stating that they were agreed to establish a Kurdish state led by him.⁴²⁴ Even Mahmud's brother, Qadir, did not support him. They all believed that Kurdish interests did not lie with the Turks, and that Britain was the only power that could establish a Kurdish state under its supervision, and they also supported having friendly relations with Iraq.⁴²⁵ The Kurdish intellectuals also supported British supervision, whilst they refused Arab rule. After getting permission from the Political Officer in Sulaimania, they established a Kurdish

⁴¹⁹ Ali, *Chand Lekolinawaiak Darbaray Bzafi Hawcharkhi Kurd*, volume 2, p.44.

⁴²⁰ Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p.260; Intelligence Report Number 6, 15 March 1923, TNA, FO/371/9009, p.5.

⁴²¹ Intelligence Report Number 23, 1 December 1922, TNA, FO/371/7772, p.11.

⁴²² Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p.301.

⁴²³ Eskander, *From Planning to Partition*, pp.160.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.301.

⁴²⁵ News Summary, 5 January 1923, TNA, FO/371/9003, pp.3-4(5); Edmonds, 'The Situation in Kurdistan', 4 January 1923, TNA, FO/371/9004, pp.3-5.

Society under the name *Jam'iaty Kurdistan* on 21 July 1922, led by Mustafa Pasha, an ex-officer in Sulaimania. Eskander has mentioned the society and its publication of a weekly paper under the name *Bangi Kurdistan* on 22 August to counter Turkish propaganda and to spread education in south Kurdistan.⁴²⁶ However, as Mustafa Pasha was against Mahmud, the latter dismissed him and changed the name of the paper to *Rozhi Kurdistan*, which then wrote in favour of Mahmud.⁴²⁷

Mahmud was considered to have finally supported Turkey, so Britain tried to use Said Taha to expel the Turks from Rowandoz and end the relationship between the Turks and Mahmud.⁴²⁸ Said Taha still hoped to be appointed by Britain as Hukumdar in south Kurdistan, and showed his readiness to support Britain against the Turks, without considering that this would oppose Mahmud's interests and his wish to establish a Kurdish state. He came to Arbil on 28 October 1922, and went to Baghdad on 6 November to see Cox.⁴²⁹ He argued that the eviction of the Turks from Rowandoz would not be difficult, as he believed that their numbers were few, if Britain would assist him with air support, guns, munitions and money. His scheme (which has not been mentioned in previous works) was to raise the Harki tribe near Aqra and enlist the support of some Kurdish chieftains who had loyalty to him, and Sheikh Ahmed of Barzan also promised to assist him. The first step of his scheme was his attack on Sheikh Raqib and Sheikh Ubadullah, and following this to force the Turks to withdraw from Rania through Persia.⁴³⁰ Britain accepted his plan and gave him a detachment of around 50 to 60 Kurdish troops who had served in the Iraqi army as volunteers, with a few guns.⁴³¹

However, Said Taha was not successful in his operation, which has not been adequately covered in earlier studies. Unusually wet weather had been mentioned by them as a barrier against Said Taha's attack, because it rained persistently continued for three weeks. However, they have neglected significant points about his failure to attract

⁴²⁶ Eskander, *From Planning to Partition*, p.177.

⁴²⁷ Intelligence Report Number 14, 15 July 1922, TNA, FO/371/7771, p.9; Hilmi, *Yadasht*, pp.304-306; MacDowell, *Modern History of the Kurds*, p.174.

⁴²⁸ Intelligence Report Number 22, 15 November 1922, TNA, FO/371/7772, p.11.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ Ibid., p.12; High Commissioner of Iraq to the Secretary of State of the Colonies, 14 November 1922, TNA, FO/371/7782; Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, pp.305-306; The Kurdish Situation, 4 January 1923, TNA, FO/371/9004.

⁴³¹ Intelligence Report Number 23, 1 December 1922, TNA, FO/371/7772.

the support of Kurdish tribes, which was due to Mahmud's declaration. He stated that Said Taha was against Kurdish nationalism as he aimed to join the Kurdish areas with Iraq under the name of expelling the Turks, and this badly affected Taha's influence.⁴³² The second point is that Britain tried to reoccupy Rowandoz by means of a small Kurdish force, without further reinforcement or air assistance.⁴³³ This was because Britain did not want to become involved in fighting the Turks or to support Said Taha directly, and instead they concentrated on organizing a complete Kurdish movement against the Turks.⁴³⁴ The British government and Churchill did not support Said Taha's scheme, because they believed that the negotiations with the Turks at Lausanne would determine what steps should be taken by Britain. Churchill believed that they might sign an agreement with the Turks and this would stop disorder in south Kurdistan.⁴³⁵ However, Cox emphasized that the agreement with the Turks would not stop propaganda and irregular attacks in south Kurdistan. He preferred continuing to support Said Taha's project at a slower speed and increased expense, against the pretensions of Mahmud.⁴³⁶

Britain also contemplated using Simko of Shikak, because he was not only one of the most influential Kurdish leaders in east Kurdistan, but he also had influence in south Kurdistan. He came to south Kurdistan at the end of October 1922, with the main aim of obtaining of British help against Persia and Turkey. This was because of the failure of his fight against Persia, which had caused the loss of his wife and the capture of his six-year-old son. He wanted revenge against the Turks, as they had abandoned him during his revolt against Iran.⁴³⁷ After this, Simko sent letters to Mahmud which asked him to assist Britain rather than the Turks, and argued that only Britain could give independence to the Kurds. In reply, Mahmud declared his doubts about this, although he did not declare his allegiance to the Turks.⁴³⁸ It could be argued that as Mahmud had an earlier experience with Britain, this attempt by Simko would not

⁴³² Intelligence Report Number 1, 1 January 1923, TNA, FO/371/9009, p.7.

⁴³³ Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p.308.

⁴³⁴ 'Clear the Line', November 1922, TNA, FO/371/7782.

⁴³⁵ Secretary of State for the Colonies to High Commissioner for Iraq, 22 December, 1922, TNA, FO/371/7782; HC Deb, 24 July 1922, 51, cols.697-703.

⁴³⁶ High Commissioner of Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 24 December, 1922; High Commissioner of Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 15 December 1922, TNA, FO/371/7782.

⁴³⁷ Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, pp.305-307.

⁴³⁸ Khwaja, *Chim Di*, pp.102-103.

change his decision to rely on Britain. However, Mahmud understood that Simko had his own reason for assisting Britain, as mentioned above, and he expected that Simko would return to the Turks. He was right, as by sending a delegation to Sulaimania the Turks persuaded Simko to assisting them, and in return they helped him to secure a pardon from the Persian government. The latter also promised to release his son and give him lands in Shamdhinan and Van to inhabit with his family.⁴³⁹ This could be interpreted as Britain's failure to break the relationship between Mahmud and the Turks. Britain prepared itself to resist Mahmud's threat to south Kurdistan.

Edmonds feared that if Mahmud captured Sulaimania, he might then threaten Arbil and Kirkuk. He suggested to Cox that an independent Kurdish government be set up, with its boundary to be settled by an agreement later.⁴⁴⁰ Cox agreed, and persuaded the Iraqi government that they had to take steps to decrease the Turkish power which had grown in south Kurdistan, especially after the failure of Said Taha's plan to expel the Turks from Rowandoz. They published an unofficial statement that both Britain and Iraq would give the Kurds the rights to establish a Kurdish state within the Iraqi borders, and they hoped that the different Kurdish elements would decide to select their delegations and send them to Baghdad to discuss their political and economic relationships with Iraq and Britain.⁴⁴¹ It could be argued that although this statement was intended to calm down the Kurdish nationalists, it was actually against Mahmud's hope of a completely independent Kurdish state, as it was an indication that the Kurdish issue should be settled with the Iraqi government instead of with the Turks. It is also possible to say that although this statement was unofficial, it showed the British administration's policy of preferring to join south Kurdistan with Iraq. Cox declared that he did not have the authority to make any official and public declaration about the independence of south Kurdistan without consulting first the British government and second the Iraq government, but that he could promise to establish a national government including Iraq.⁴⁴²

Noel was not happy with the statement (his view has not been mentioned by earlier works) and believed that it would be an admission of the British 'failure to find

⁴³⁹ Hilmi, *Yadasht*, pp.345-347; High Commissioner of Iraq to the Secretary of State of the Colonies, 19 December, 1922, TNA, FO/371/7782; General Appreciation of Sulaimania Situation, AIR/23/344, p.4.

⁴⁴⁰ Advisor in Kirkuk to High Commissioner in Baghdad, 18 December 1922, TNA, AIR/23/342.

⁴⁴¹ News Summary, 5 January 1923, TNA, FO/371/9003, p.5.

⁴⁴² Intelligence Report Number 22, 15 November 1922, TNA, FO/371/7772, pp.10-11.

an antidote' to the threats of Mahmud. He also believed in this case that the people of Sulaimania would not accept Iraqi authority and would demand the appointment of Mahmud.⁴⁴³ He was right, as the Kurdish nationalists believed that the declaration was opposed to their wishes and would force them to join with Iraq. Some Kurdish chieftains in Sulaimania held a meeting on 13 and 14 January 1923, and signed a petition which demanded the establishment of an independent Kurdish state under British protection and led by Mahmud as the king of their state.⁴⁴⁴ For this purpose, on 19 January a Kurdish delegation went to Kirkuk with A.F. Chapman, a political officer in Sulaimania, but after an interview with the Divisional Advisor they did not obtain the answer that they wished, as they were told that any discussions with the Iraqi government and the British administration should be based on the 24 December proclamation.⁴⁴⁵ This meant that the Kurds were allowed to establish a Kurdish government within the Iraqi boundary. Mahmud was also warned by Chapman that the Kurds should deal with the Arabs directly.⁴⁴⁶ This disappointed Mahmud, and left him with only two options: to accept joining with Iraq or take action against Britain.

The reaction of Mahmud needs more explanation than previous researches have given, when he stood out against any attempt to integrate south Kurdistan with Iraq and declared that all of the Kurdish area (including the Turkmen towns) should be an independent Kurdish state, ruled by him. The British administration refused this and said that the Turkmen in Arbil and Kirkuk would not like to become the appendages of remote or ignorant villages, as they would be if ruled by Mahmud. They also did not wish come under Arab government, but desired Turkish rule or failing that British rule. On 5 January 1923, Mahmud sent a letter to Euz Damir in which he showed his mistrust for Britain, as he said that Britain used Kurdish independence 'as a toy'. He asked for Euz Damir's help to achieve Kurdish independence, and told him that achieving Kurdish autonomy was the only way to pacify the Kurdish people. The main aim of Mahmud was to gain ammunition and soldiers from the Turks.⁴⁴⁷ Moreover, he sent a request to the Kemalists in February 1923 and declared that if they would recognize him as Hukumdar of south Kurdistan, he would help them against Britain.

⁴⁴³ Noel to High Commissioner in Baghdad, 19 December 1922, TNA, AIR/23/342.

⁴⁴⁴ Intelligence Report Number 2, 15 January 1923, TNA, FO/371/9009, pp.1-4.

⁴⁴⁵ Intelligence Report Number 1, 1 February 1923, TNA, FO/371/9009, pp.5-4.

⁴⁴⁶ Khwaja, *Chim Di*, p.105.

⁴⁴⁷ Sulaimania to the Turkish Commander, 5 January 1923, TNA, AIR/23/345.

The British had evidence that Mahmud was preparing to attack Kirkuk in March, and he tried to capture Koia as well.⁴⁴⁸ To prevent any undesirable action by Mahmud, Cox invited him to visit Baghdad to settle the Kurdish problem, but Mahmud refused to go to there as he feared that Britain might arrest him. After that, he was alerted by a proclamation in the form of leaflets which were dropped on Sulaimania by air on 23 and 24 February, which required Mahmud and the members of the Sulaimania Council to go to Baghdad via Kirkuk by 1 March without any delay or excuse.⁴⁴⁹

Mahmud's ambition of claiming sovereignty over the whole of south Kurdistan was unacceptable to Britain and the Iraqi government, which has not been covered effectively in previous studies. His relations with the Turks were considered by Cox to be for the purpose of achieving his personal goal, and he condemned Mahmud for tyranny and oppression in Sulaimania. Cox thought that Mahmud's promise to assist the Turks against Britain was a foolish action and he should be punished.⁴⁵⁰ He was accused of the death of Jamil Arfan, the late Secretary to the Divisional Council, who was pro-British,⁴⁵¹ and of arresting Izat Beg of Jaf, and Ahmed Beg of Jaf, the sons of Adila Khanm of Halbja. In addition, the relationship of Mahmud with Abdul Karim of Qadir Karam and Abdul Qadir of Sangaw was broken. They had withdrawn their followers from Sulaimania because they feared that Mahmud might arrest or kill them, and even Sheikh Qadir, who played a key role in the return of Mahmud, declared that his life was in danger.⁴⁵² Most of the previously mentioned chiefs asked Britain to abolish Mahmud's government, and declared that all kinds of injustice, crime and oppression were observed in his government.⁴⁵³

It could be argued that the estrangement of the pro-British element meant that Mahmud decided to break his relationship with Britain, even though he could not obtain recognition from the Turks. His decision to support the Turks was mistaken, as they refused to recognize Kurdish independence, even though most of the Kurds in

⁴⁴⁸ Commanding British Force in Iraq to Air Ministry, 22 May 1923, TNA, AIR/1/2132/207/136/2, p.1.

⁴⁴⁹ Acting High Commissioner of Iraq to the Secretary of State of the Colonies, 31 March 1923, TNA, FO/371/9002; Intelligence Report Number 5, 1 March 1923, TNA, FO/371/9009, p.4.

⁴⁵⁰ High Commissioner of Iraq to Advisor in Kirkuk, 2 March 1923, Edmonds Mss, Box 3, File 2.

⁴⁵¹ Intelligence Report Number 1, 1 January 1923, TNA, FO/371/9009, p.7.

⁴⁵² Intelligence Report Number 1, 1 January 1923, TNA, FO/371/9009, p.8; Intelligence Report Number 4, 14 February 1923, TNA, FO/371/9009, p.7; Administrative Inspector at Kirkuk to the Advisor to Ministry of Interior, 29 December 1923, Edmonds Mss, Box 1, File 1b, p.3.

⁴⁵³ Air Headquarter at Baghdad to High Commissioner of Iraq, 20 February 1923, TNA, AIR/23/571.

northern Kurdistan supported the establishment of a new Turkish government, in the hope that the Turks would give them their rights. However, the Turks would not recognize any separate nation, because they considered the Kurds to be Turks, which will be discussed further in chapter four. For its part, Britain did not accept a Kurdish independent state which would have included all of the southern Kurdish areas, but instead Faisal and Britain proposed the establishment of an autonomous Kurdish government within the Iraqi state, as already mentioned.⁴⁵⁴ Britain believed that the close economic union of south Kurdistan with Iraq did not pose any difficulty and that they could also find a formula for a political union. For fiscal arrangements, the Kurdish treasury would be independent as the Kurdish government could collect its ordinary revenue income (except for the tobacco excise, which would be a joint service), with 'all takings being credited in the first place to the Iraqi government'. Judicially, the Iraqi government would recognize the Kurdish law courts.⁴⁵⁵ The latter is mentioned by Eskander, but his study does not include that the departments of works, Tapu, Auqaf, pensions, police and education would be separated from their 'corresponding Iraqi departments', although foreign policy and defence would not be. Edmonds considered the latter two were not an issue, as in practice they would be a British responsibility.⁴⁵⁶

Britain decided to end Mahmud's authority in Sulaimania, as they were now in direct negotiation with the Turks at the Lausanne Conference. The prominent Kurdish leaders were told that Mahmud's administration was cancelled, and a new administration was formed in south Kurdistan to control the area of Sulaimania and restrict Mahmud's power. The British appointed their followers to be in charge of keeping order and collecting the regular government taxes. Sheikh Abdul Qadir of Sangaw was given responsibility to govern Sangaw and Qara Dagh. Halabja was separated from Sulaimania, and they asked Adila Khan, the lady of the Jaf, to try to convince all of the Jaf Bagzadas to help Britain. Rania was temporally severed from the Sulaimania administration under the direction of the Qaimqam of Koia, and Swara agha

⁴⁵⁴ Bell Mss, letter to her parents, 5 January 1923; McDowell, *Modern History of the Kurds*, pp.188-191.

⁴⁵⁵ Eskander, *From Planning to Partition*, pp.56,148,183.

⁴⁵⁶ Edmonds, 'The Kurdish Situation', 4 January 1923, TNA, FO/371/9004.

was given charge of governing Rania and Bitwen, and Babakir agha of governing Pishdar.⁴⁵⁷

Mahmud was warned that if he did not leave Sulaimania, the city would be heavily bombed. At first, he indicated his readiness to return to one of his own villages, and asked for a few days to withdraw his family from Sulaimania. However, this was basically a tactic to gain time, and he refused to leave the city because he thought Sulaimania would not be bombed, as the threatened attack had been postponed due to bad weather.⁴⁵⁸ As a result, the city was bombed on 3 March, and on the next day Mahmud left Sulaimania for Surdash, taking a large number of Levies and the treasury.⁴⁵⁹ Sulaimania was administrated by Sheikh Gharib, brother-in-law of Mahmud, and Abdulrahman agha and Riza Bey, both of whom had been Qaimaqam under the British regime.⁴⁶⁰

3.6 Conclusion

One of the most serious questions in the Middle East after the end of the First World War was the Kurdish one. Although the Allied powers arranged some conferences to find a solution to this question, they did not come to any decision. The main difficulty in front of them was the inability of the Kurds to self-govern. The Kurdish and Armenian problem was another cause of the Kurds losing the chance of independence. If both nations had united, their efforts would have had more effect on the Allies to decide in their favour. However, the Turks had previous experience of exploiting their conflicts, and it was not difficult for them to use it as leverage in seeking to recover the Mosul vilayet. The Treaty of Sèvres was a great opportunity for the Kurds to establish their independent state. However, the separate clause about the southern Kurds in the treaty was a potential problem because it left open the possibility for Britain not to join the southern Kurds with the possible Kurdish state. At the Cairo Conference in 1921,

⁴⁵⁷ Intelligence Report Number 5, 1 March 1923, TNA, FO/371/9004, p.4; Air Head Quarters in Baghdad, 20 February 1923, TNA, AIR/23/571.

⁴⁵⁸ Advisor in Kirkuk to High Commissioner of Iraq, 28 February 1923; Manning to Wing Commander, 26 February 1923, p.4, TNA, AIR/23/571.

⁴⁵⁹ Note on Sulaimania Situation, 7 March 1923, TNA, AIR/23/345; Acting High Commissioner of Iraq to the Secretary of State of the Colonies, 5 March 1923, TNA, FO/371/9002.

⁴⁶⁰ Intelligence Report Number 8, 15 April 1923, TNA, FO/371/9009, pp.3-4.

the powerful group led by Cox advocated the necessity of merging them with Iraq. Although he took the responsibility of governing south Kurdistan directly, Cox was not unbiased and did not consider the idea of those who preferred separating the southern Kurds from Iraq.

The growth of the power of the Kemalists led them to intervene in south Kurdistan, and they had a key role in the deterioration of the southern Kurdish situation. The return of Mahmud could have been a new opportunity to settle the Kurdish issue, although within the Iraqi state. However, Mahmud did not accept this option, and because of this he supported the Turks, which could be considered the major cause of losing this chance. The pro-British elements declared their hostility to this, as they understood that relying on the Turks would not lead to any consequence, because they learnt that the policy of the Turks was only to use the Kurds for their own self-interest. However, others also supported Britain against the Kurdish nationalists, but their aim was to increase their influence in their own areas. They were unhappy with the presence of Mahmud, as they felt that their power had decreased because of him. They had an important role in detaching their influential areas from Sulaimania, and even in the deterioration of Mahmud's relations with Britain, because of their personal aims. They hoped to be given the responsibility by Britain to govern their areas, and to collect their own taxes, instead of paying them to Mahmud.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE MOSUL QUESTION AND SOUTH KURDISTAN BETWEEN 1923 AND 1926

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will examine the discussions between the British and Turkish delegations at the Lausanne Conference of 1922-1923. It will consider how they used the Kurdish question in their own favour, and will investigate the importance of the Mosul vilayet for Iraq and Turkey, and why were they insistent upon incorporating it in their country. The chapter discusses British efforts to evict Turkish forces from the north-eastern districts of the vilayet, and thereby restrict the threat from Mahmud and avoid losing the vilayet to the Turks. It will then investigate the main reasons for the failure of the negotiations between Turkey and Britain to settle the Turco-Iraqi frontier, and the reference of the Mosul question to the League of Nations. The chapter will examine the decision of the Council of the League of Nations to settle the Mosul question by sending a commission to the vilayet, and will investigate why the Kurds were unable to persuade the Council to an independent state. Finally, it will analyse the procedure of the League Commission and the causes of its decision in favour of Iraq, the Turkish reaction to this and the final resolution of the frontier dispute by a directly-negotiated agreement in 1926.

4.2 The neglect of Kurdish rights at the Lausanne Conference

The Lausanne Conference of 21 November 1922 to 24 July 1923 between the Allies and the Turkish government ended the Kurdish hopes of establishing their own independent state, and officially divided Kurdistan into four parts between Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria. The main reasons for holding the conference was the triumph of

the Turks over the Greeks, the fall of the Coalition government led by Lloyd George in October 1922, and the succession to the premiership of the Conservative Party leader, Andrew Bonar Law, who decided to seek a peace agreement with the Turks. The main aim of Bonar Law was the reduction of financial costs by evacuating British forces from Iraq and south Kurdistan, due to the economic problems in Britain.⁴⁶¹ At the conference, the Mosul vilayet was a priority for both the British delegation, led by Curzon, and the Turkish delegation, led by Ismet Pasha, both of whom tried to use south Kurdistan for their own interests in the negotiations.

The Turkish delegation attempted to regain the Mosul vilayet, which had been occupied by Britain since the Armistice, and they insisted that based on their National Pact, the vilayet was a part of Turkey. This was rejected by Curzon as an illegal demand because the Turks could not decide this instead of the population of Mosul. In addition, he insisted that the vilayet had been occupied on 3 November by British forces before the Turkish Commander was ordered on 9 November to evacuate the vilayet, which was a necessary step according to clause 7 of the Armistice.⁴⁶² The commercial links of the vilayet was another point which was considered by both sides, as Ismet tried to connect it with Anatolia and Curzon with Baghdad.⁴⁶³ However, some parts of south Kurdistan, such as Duhok and Zakho, had close commercial relations with Anatolia rather than Baghdad because their location was nearer to Anatolia. In addition, these places were rugged mountain areas, and the lack of roads discouraged commercial relations with Baghdad.

Ismet argued that if Britain asked the people of the vilayet, they would prefer to be a part of Turkey. Curzon replied that Britain had already asked the people of the Mosul, Baghdad and Basra vilayets in 1919, and they preferred to be united in one state. In addition, in 1921 Mosul vilayet (except for the areas of Sulaimania and Kirkuk) had voted for Faisal to be their king.⁴⁶⁴ However, it can be seen that there was no referendum in 1919 to ask the Kurds whether they wanted to be separate from the Arab state or not, and whilst some Kurdish areas showed their desire to be united with

⁴⁶¹ Eskander, 'Southern Kurdistan under Britain's Mesopotamian Mandate', p.172; Ali, 'The Kurds and the Lausanne Peace Negotiations', p.523.

⁴⁶² CO to FO, 1 November 1923, TNA, FO/371/9007; Curzon to Secretary of State for the Colonies and President of the Board of Trade, 1 December 1922, IOR, Curzon Mss, Eur.F/112/294.

⁴⁶³ Speech by Curzon on 23 January 1923 respecting Mosul, IOR, Curzon Mss, Eur.F/112/293, p.5.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

Iraq, others supported an independent Kurdish state. Moreover, in the referendum of 1921 for choosing Faisal, the majority of the Kurds had not desired Arab rule. The *New Age* review criticized Curzon's speech about Mosul, and described it as a 'false statement'. The journal pointed out that in 1919 Britain had not received a single answer from the Kurds in Mosul vilayet, and that some tribes outside the vilayet, such as the Khaniqin and Mandali sheikhs and notables, and other minorities, had protested against an Arab ruler. The paper also stated that Curzon based his view on only the desire of some tribes in Kifri and Kirkuk who desired to unite Baghdad, Basrah and Mosul in one state.⁴⁶⁵

The referendum of 1921 has been considered by new research to be an unreliable result and it has been described as a fake referendum.⁴⁶⁶ It could be said that the referendum was Cox's plan to establish an Arab state including Mosul vilayet, and he declared that most of the vilayet had accepted Faisal as their king, whilst the majority of Mosul town was Arab and had voted for Faisal. Britain knew that the majority of the Kurds did not accept Arab rule, but they insisted on annexing them to Iraq. Curzon refused Ismet's demand for a plebiscite in the Mosul vilayet because he was certain that the Kurds would vote for independence. However, he justified his refusal on the grounds that the Kurds were a nomadic people and sometimes travelled into Persia, and that the majority of the Kurds and most of the Arabs were quite uneducated and did not know how to vote. He also stated that it would be impossible because there was no British army in the vilayet to keep order whilst the referendum took place.⁴⁶⁷

During his negotiations with Britain, Ismet tried to use the assistance which the Kurds in north Kurdistan had given to Turkey during their war against the Greeks to prove that the Kurds wanted to be under Turkish sovereignty. Ismet emphasized that the Kurds were not a different nation from the Turks, as he declared that they were united with the Turks by reasons of religion, ethnicity, customs and manners, and that the Kurds historically had lived with the Turks willingly and were governed by them. However, after 1919 they had suppressed a Kurdish rising which demanded

⁴⁶⁵ *New Age*, 1 February 1923, TNA, FO/371/9149. No specific author name was given for the review.

⁴⁶⁶ Tripp, *History of Iraq*, p.47; Townshend, *When God Made Hell*, p.484.

⁴⁶⁷ Curzon's reply to Ismet respecting Mosul, 23 January 1923, TNA, FO/371/9061, pp.2-3.

independence, especially in Bitlis and Dersim.⁴⁶⁸ It can be said that the main aim of Ismet's argument was to show that the northern Kurds were happy with the Turks and that the southern Kurds would accept them if Mosul vilayet was joined with their state, whilst both Curzon and Ismet did not mention any rights of the Kurds, either in north or south Kurdistan. Curzon denied Ismet's statement and declared that the Kurds were different from the Turks in race, language, features, their relations with women and their customs, and they lived in mountain areas and resisted any invasion from the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁶⁹ The main aim of Curzon was to keep the Mosul vilayet within Iraq, and in order to come to an agreement with the Turks, he was ready to abandon the rights of the Kurds in the Treaty of Sèvres.⁴⁷⁰

The Turks also tried to appoint some Kurds from south Kurdistan, especially from Mahmud's followers, as members of their Grand National Assembly, to prove that it included the Kurds in the Mosul vilayet.⁴⁷¹ Ismet declared that a Kurdish deputation had participated in the Parliament at Angora, whilst Curzon rejected this as no one had come from south Kurdistan, and they had not been elected by a 'popular constituency'.⁴⁷² It can be seen that the Turkish intention to recover the vilayet was due to their fear that if they lost Mosul, any activity in south Kurdistan under the Iraqi government would affect the stability of north Kurdistan, and so would be a danger to the security of Turkey. In the light of this consideration, Ismet tried to prove that Mosul vilayet was not an Arab province. He declared that the ethnographical composition of the vilayet necessitated returning it to Turkey, and he presented statistics to prove that the majority of the population of the vilayet were Kurds and Turkmen, rather than Arabs. According to his figures the population of the vilayet was 503,000 people, of whom the number of Kurds was 263,830, of Turks 146,960 and of Arabs 43,210.⁴⁷³ The figures were rejected by Britain as inaccurate, because they were based only on religion and had been made by the Ottoman Empire for conscription during the First World War. Curzon brought forward different statistics furnished by a British

⁴⁶⁸ Draft of the twenty-first meeting of Territorial and Military Commission, 23 January 1923, TNA, FO/424/256, pp.1-4.

⁴⁶⁹ Speech by Curzon on 23 January 1923 respecting Mosul, p.4.

⁴⁷⁰ Devonshire to High Commissioner of Iraq, 1 November 1923, TNA, FO/371/9007.

⁴⁷¹ FO to Henderson in Constantinople, 25 May 1923, TNA, FO/371/9078.

⁴⁷² Speech by Curzon on 23 January 1923 respecting Mosul, p.4.

⁴⁷³ Territorial and Military Commission, Draft Minutes of the Twenty-first Meeting, 23 January 1923, TNA, FO/424/256.

delegation in 1921 which were based on ethnicity as well as religion. According to these, the population of the whole vilayet was 785,468, of which the Kurds were 425,720, the Arabs were 185,763, the Christians and the Jews were 78,590 and the Turkmen were only 65,895.⁴⁷⁴ However, it can be said that they both agreed that the number of the Kurds was more than fifty per cent of the vilayet. Instead of mentioning Kurdish rights, both of them tried to use this fact for their own interests.

Curzon insisted on signing an agreement with the Turks to settle the frontier question before evacuating British forces from south Kurdistan. He suggested giving up some parts of south Kurdistan to Turkey, including Sulaimania, Koia and Rowandoz, whilst Zakho, Aqra and Duhok would remain with Iraq.⁴⁷⁵ Curzon's suggestion could be considered as the exigencies of diplomacy to settle the Mosul question, because he supported the inclusion of the vilayet within the Iraqi state. However, this proposal was rejected by the Cabinet because Britain had never accepted returning any part of the Mosul vilayet to Turkey, as this would be contrary to the pledge given to Faisal to keep the whole vilayet under Iraqi control. This plan also threatened the position of Britain in Iraq, because it endangered the line of communication between Baghdad and Mosul. In this case, guarding the Iraqi frontier with Turkey would be difficult because it would be extended by joining these areas with Turkey. This endangered not only the British garrison in Mosul, but also the inhabitants of the Assyrian and Christian areas. Britain was also afraid that if these areas were handed over to the Turks, the disorders might be increased by the Kurds rising against both Turkey and Britain, who might then be embarrassed by the severity of the Turkish response.⁴⁷⁶ Cox also did not agree with this proposal and believed that it was impossible because the Kurds had been encouraged by Britain to seek their autonomy within Iraq, and he stated that it would be 'a signal breach of faith' if Britain was to deliver them to Turkey without consultation.⁴⁷⁷ In

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.; Minutes of the Meeting of Committee of Investigation on the Iraq Boundary, 25 November 1924, TNA, FO/371/10081, p.2.

⁴⁷⁵ High Commissioner of Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 10 December 1923, TNA, AIR/5/556; 'Notes on a proposal to hand part of Kurdistan to the Turks', 6 December 1922, TNA, AIR/5/556; FO to Curzon, 15 December 1922, IOR, Curzon Mss, Eur.F/112/286; Curzon to Walter, 15 January 1923, Parliamentary Archives, Bonar Law Mss, BL/112/26/6.

⁴⁷⁶ 'Lord Curzon's tentative proposal regarding cession of portion of Kurdistan', 7 December 1922, TNA, FO/371/7772; FO to Curzon, 8 December 1922, IOR, Curzon Mss, Eur.F/112/294.

⁴⁷⁷ High Commissioner of Iraq to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 10 December 1923, TNA, AIR/5/556.

addition, the Iraqi government also showed its opposition to this proposal and insisted upon not losing any part of the vilayet to Turkey.⁴⁷⁸

Oil was another important element which caused the neglect of Kurdish rights and the integration of south Kurdistan with Iraq. However, this was not discussed between the British and Turkish delegations.⁴⁷⁹ Curzon stated that he did not have any information about Mosul's oilfields and did not know the amount of potential oil in the vilayet, but much of the world's press emphasized that Britain wished to keep the vilayet with Iraq for the sake of its oil policy.⁴⁸⁰ Previous studies have pointed out that Britain certainly knew that the vilayet was an area with rich deposits of oil, although the oilfields of the vilayet had not yet been developed. Sluglett has pointed out that Curzon was aware of the Mosul oilfields, but denied this because he did not want to have another crisis with Turkey regarding the Mosul question.⁴⁸¹ Cox also had information that the Mosul region was rich in oil, and he proposed to share Mosul's oil as part of a peace agreement with the Turks.⁴⁸²

Yet the British intention to retain the vilayet with Iraq was not only for the sake of its own oil policy but was also to develop Iraq economically, because even in the case of returning the vilayet to Turkey 'the rights of British oil interests could be maintained'.⁴⁸³ MacDowell has pointed out that Britain had been willing to yield 'half the Anglo-Persian Oil Company's 70 per cent holding in Mosul to Standard Oil to get US support for Britain retaining Mosul in 1923'.⁴⁸⁴ Britain also agreed to recognize and confirm the right of the Turkish Oil Company to the oilfields in the Mosul vilayet by a clause in the Treaty of Lausanne, on condition that they should recognize that Mosul vilayet was a part of Iraq.⁴⁸⁵ However, Faisal was not happy with this, because he was aware of the richness of Mosul vilayet. He asked that an Iraqi representative participate in any negotiations relating to Mosul's oilfields and demanded that Britain should not

⁴⁷⁸ Curzon to FO, 5 December 1922, IOR, Curzon Mss, Eur.F/112/285.

⁴⁷⁹ FO to Curzon, 8 January 1923, IOR, Curzon Mss, Eur.F/112/285.

⁴⁸⁰ Speech by Curzon on 23 January 1923 respecting Mosul, p.6.

⁴⁸¹ Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p.72.

⁴⁸² High Commissioner of Iraq to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 10 December 1923, TNA, AIR/5/556.

⁴⁸³ 'Committee on Iraq', 11 December 1922, TNA, FO/371/7772, p.4.

⁴⁸⁴ MacDowell, *Modern History of the Kurds*, p.143.

⁴⁸⁵ Board of Trade (Petroleum Debt) to FO, 1 January 1923, TNA, FO/371/8994, p.2; B.P.R. to British Delegation in Lausanne, 2 January 1923, Ibid.

take any decision about Mosul's oilfields without his consent.⁴⁸⁶ Churchill stated that the Iraqi government should make oil concessions to Turkey according to the San Remo Agreement, which 'provided for Iraq [sic] Government or native interests acquiring share capital up to maximum of 20%'.⁴⁸⁷

The question of Mosul was not settled by Britain and Turkey, and according to Article 3, Subsection 2, of the draft of the Lausanne Treaty, the frontier between Iraq and Turkey was to be settled by them within nine months. If they did not reach an agreement in this period, the dispute was to be referred to the Council of the League of Nations.⁴⁸⁸ However, when the treaty was signed on 19 July 1923, Articles 37 to 40 were about the rights of minorities, without mentioning their names. The treaty did not mention Kurdish rights which had been part of the Treaty of Sèvres, and it recognized the new Turkish Republic.⁴⁸⁹

4.3 South Kurdistan during and after the Lausanne Conference

During the Lausanne Conference, both the Turks and Britain tried to control all parts of south Kurdistan and use their occupation of the area as a factor in the negotiations. Euz Damir tried to attack Arbil, Koia and Kirkuk, and for this he needed passage for reinforcements from Urmia in Persia to Rowandoz, because the Turkish route between Van and Rowandoz is blocked by heavy snow in the winter.⁴⁹⁰ However, his plan was not supported by the Angora government as they agreed to resolve the Mosul question during one year, and Euz Damir was instructed to conceal himself in Avruman or Bitwata.⁴⁹¹ This did not mean that the Turks would abandon their propaganda and their campaign against Britain in south Kurdistan, but they struggled to use their occupation of Rowandoz as a lever to recover the Mosul vilayet in the negotiations at Lausanne. In

⁴⁸⁶ Board of Trade (Petroleum Debt) to Weakly, 2 January 1923, TNA, FO/371/8994, p.1.

⁴⁸⁷ Secretary of State for the Colonies to High Commissioner of Iraq, 2 January 1923, TNA, FO/371/8994, p.1.

⁴⁸⁸ Forbes Adam, 'Ismet Pasha's Representations Regarding our Recent Operations round Rowandoz', 7 May 1923, TNA, FO/371/9005, p.5.

⁴⁸⁹ 'Draft Terms of Peace Presented to the Turkish Delegation at Lausanne', 31 January 1923, TNA, CAB/24/158/68.

⁴⁹⁰ 'Salmon to Secretary Air Ministry', 22 May 1923, TNA, AIR/1/2132/207/136/2, pp.1-2.

⁴⁹¹ Ramzi to Euz Damir, 9 April 1923, TNA, AIR/23/370.

addition, they would be aware that such an attack would be the opposite of maintaining the status quo in south Kurdistan, and might cause the end of the peace with Britain.

After leaving Sulaimania to the neighbourhood of Surdash, Mahmud tried to raise a force to attack south Kurdistan, and he chose the Pishdar area for this.⁴⁹² This was because Pishdar was quite remote from British forces and he could benefit from the Pishdar aghas' help in his attack, except Babakir agha who was pro-British. Mahmud tried to obtain Turkish help, which has not been included in previous studies. He clarified his plan to Ramzi that the Pishdar tribe would be gathered in Derband, Marga and Rania, and the attack would take place on 22 April in Kirkuk and Koia. Mahmud also tried to persuade Ramzi to save the Kurdish Muslims from Britain, and to rescue Mahmud as he stated that his life was in danger. However, the Turks did not help him, and they did not give him the ammunition for his attack which he requested many times.⁴⁹³ It seemed clear that the Turks hoped to settle the question of Mosul with Britain by peaceful negotiation, and their declaration of Jihad in south Kurdistan was intended to turn the Kurds against Britain, as a tactic for regaining the vilayet.

Britain did not accept any barriers to the integration of south Kurdistan with Iraq. After ejecting Mahmud from Sulaimania, they had tried to reorganise its affairs by establishing a new administration for the town. Edmonds gathered the pro-British chieftains in Kirkuk and appointed 10 notables for governing Sulaimania. However, he was not successful as the notables resigned, stating that they were unable to manage the administration of Sulaimania.⁴⁹⁴ The main reason for this was fear of Mahmud, as although he had left the town he still had many supporters there, and they expected the return of Mahmud as he had not yet been arrested. The administration's members did not feel that they would be safe because there was no British military force in the town, and a part of the Levies who were responsible for maintaining order had joined Mahmud. According to British reports, only 70 disarmed Levies and 65 police remained in the town.⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹² 'Salmon to Secretary Air Ministry', 21 June 1923, TNA, AIR/1/2132/207/136/2, pp.1-3.

⁴⁹³ Commandant in south Kurdistan to Commandant National Movements of Al Jazira and Iraq, 18 and 19 April 1923, TNA, AIR/23/350; Commandant in south Kurdistan to Commandant National Movements of Al Jazira and Iraq, 9 April 1923, TNA, AIR/23/350.

⁴⁹⁴ Note on Sulaimania Situation, n.d., TNA, AIR/23/571; Dobbs to Edmonds, 25 June 1923, Edmonds Mss, Box 3, File 2, p.3.

⁴⁹⁵ Adviser in Kirkuk to High Commissioner in Baghdad, 4 March 1923, TNA, AIR/23/571.

Britain also took steps to prevent the threat from the Turks and Mahmud to Arbil and Kirkuk, and they attacked a Turkish force at Sarkabkan, near Rania. The result was that most of the Turks retreated to Rowandoz,⁴⁹⁶ which prevented a direct connection between them and Mahmud in Pishdar. It can be said that this British attack was the first step towards expelling the Turks from Rowandoz, where they were the main cause of disorder and from where they sought to occupy all of south Kurdistan. After this, Britain decided to expel the Turks permanently from Rowandoz, which would end the Turkish claim for the town to be in their occupation area. Captain R. F. Jardine, a British officer was informed by the Air Officer Commanding in Iraq that any villages which showed opposition to British forces would be ruined, but if the chieftains welcomed Britain's call and behaved properly, no action would be taken against them.⁴⁹⁷ Britain sent a proclamation to Aqra on 31 March 1923 requesting the chiefs of the tribes to attend there and promise allegiance, and this was quite successful as most of the powerful chiefs showed their readiness to help the British forces.⁴⁹⁸

The result of the tribes ceasing to help the Turks was the re-occupation of Rowandoz by Britain on 22 April without any opposition. Euz Damir and his forces crossed the Persian frontier, and were sent back to Van by the Persian government after being disarmed.⁴⁹⁹ It seemed clear that Euz Damir did not expect any attack from Britain during the negotiations at Lausanne, and he even did not re-organize the Turkish forces after their defeat at Rania. The Turks did not accept the re-occupation and it caused great discontent among the Angora government. Lancelot Oliphant of Foreign Office pointed out that the Turks blamed Britain for violating the status quo in the northern frontier of Iraq, as the town was as on the Turkish side of the de facto boundary. Ismet Pasha was instructed to 'warn them of the grave consequences which the present operations might involve'.⁵⁰⁰ However, Britain insisted that its forces had withdrawn from Rowandoz in 1921 as a temporary measure and the re-occupation was 'an administrative measure to preserve public security'.⁵⁰¹ To govern the town and end

⁴⁹⁶ Intelligence Report Number 9, 1 May 1923, TNA, FO/371/9009, p.5.

⁴⁹⁷ Notes of Visit to Arbil, 10 April 1923, TNA, AIR/23/347.

⁴⁹⁸ Special Service Officer in Arbil to Aviation in Baghdad, 6 April 1923, TNA, AIR/23/347.

⁴⁹⁹ 'Salmon to Secretary Air Ministry', 21 June 1923, TNA, AIR/1/2132/207/136/2, p.1; Air Officer Commanding in Iraq to Air Ministry, 25 April 1923, TNA, FO/371/9004.

⁵⁰⁰ Oliphant to FO, 10 May 1923, TNA, FO/371/9005,p.2.

⁵⁰¹ FO to Rumbold in Lausanne, 5 May 1923, TNA, FO/371/9005.

Turkish influence, Said Taha was appointed as Qaimaqam and was directly linked with the Iraqi government.⁵⁰²

The re-occupation of Rowandoz not only evicted the Turks from the area, but also prevented the Pishdar tribes from supporting Mahmud in raising his forces, because they were informed about the Turkish retreat from Rowandoz by the dropping of proclamations from the air, and so Mahmud was obliged to return to Surdash. After this, Britain was afraid that his next step might be to attack Sulaimania, and to prevent this and to re-establish an administration in Sulaimania led by Sheikh Qadir, British forces occupied the town on 17 March 1923.⁵⁰³ However, British fears about Mahmud's threat to Sulaimania were not ended, because they believed that Mahmud had crossed into Persia near Mariwan on 19 May accompanied by some Pishdar aghas, and that there was a possibility of his attacking Sulaimania again, as Mariwan was not very far from it.⁵⁰⁴

The High Commissioner of Iraq and the Air Office Commanding proposed to keep British forces in Rowandoz and levies in Sulaimania until the situation in these towns was again stable. This was to prevent any incursion by the Turks to recover their position in the Mosul vilayet as well as the threat from Mahmud, and for the sake of the Lausanne negotiations.⁵⁰⁵ To secure the Kirkuk Liwa, the Administrative Inspector in Kirkuk also preferred that British forces should remain in Sulaimania, apart from the return of one Indian regiment which had been operating there.⁵⁰⁶ It is not quite true that the British intention was to hold south Kurdistan by force until the association of the region with Iraq, because after the initial occupation in 1918 south Kurdistan was not settled by military force. Whilst some of the tribes used the lack of British forces to spread disorder, the areas under Mahmud's administration were quite stable. The main problem of instability in south Kurdistan was the British agenda to integrate the region with Iraq, which was opposed by Mahmud. Churchill did not agree with Cox and the Air Office Commanding, as he did not believe that the retention of their forces in

⁵⁰² High Commissioner of Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 11 May 1923, TNA, FO/371/9005, p.2.

⁵⁰³ 'Salmon to Secretary Air Ministry', 21 June 1923, TNA, AIR/1/2132/207/136/2, pp.2-3; 'Sulaimania Operation from the end of April to the Beginning June 1923', TNA, AIR/23/352, p.1.

⁵⁰⁴ Intelligence Report Number 11, 1 June 1923, TNA, CO/730/40, p.5.

⁵⁰⁵ Shuckburgh to FO, 17 May 1923, TNA, FO/371/9005, pp.1-2.

⁵⁰⁶ Intelligence Report Number 14, 5 July 1923, TNA, CO/730/40, p.4.

Sulaimania would prevent the Kurds from gathering around Mahmud, and so he supported an earlier withdrawal of British forces. He also blamed Cox that British troops had moved to re-occupy Sulaimania without consulting him beforehand, and he declared that retaining it even for political reasons could not be considered by Britain in any way.⁵⁰⁷ After that, Air Officer Commanding promised that British troops would leave Sulaimania by the end of June.⁵⁰⁸

To join Sulaimania liwa with Iraq before the withdrawal of British troops, Abdul Muhsin Beg, the Iraqi Prime Minister, and Cox met with the Sulaimania council in June, and agreed that only Kurdish officials would be appointed in the Sulaimania administration and that the Kurds in Sulaimania could participate in the Constituent Assembly in Baghdad without swearing allegiance to King Faisal. They decided to recruit four hundred Kurdish gendarmes for the Liwa, to be financed by the Iraqi government, but the council asked for the stationing of British troops against Mahmud's possible intervention. The British and Iraqi governments agreed about Kurdish autonomy in Sulaimania, on condition that the Kurds would accept their association with Iraq, the forms of a customs union and their boundaries with Iraq. However, they could choose their own ruler and the system of the Kurdish government. The last condition meant that Britain would recognize the return of Mahmud as the head of a Kurdish state, but this was refused by the Iraqi government and Faisal because they believed that this would be an obvious triumph for Mahmud and the downfall of British and Iraqi interests. They believed that it would also cause great instability in the Kirkuk and Kifri districts as disorders would cross into these areas. They also feared that if the Commission of the League of Nations came to south Kurdistan to decide the fate of the Mosul vilayet, the Commission would decide to assign south Kurdistan to Turkey, as they would believe that Iraq was unable to control Kurdistan.⁵⁰⁹ On 6 June 1923, Faisal and the Iraqi ministers decided to find another figure to head a local administration in Sulaimania, as they believed this would prevent Mahmud from returning to power again.⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁷ High Commissioner of Iraq to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 9 June 1923, TNA, CO/370/40.

⁵⁰⁸ Dobbs to Edmonds, 25 June 1923, Edmonds Mss, Box 3, File 2, p.9

⁵⁰⁹ High Commissioner of Iraq to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 7 June 1923, TNA, FO/371/9005.

⁵¹⁰ Intelligence Report Number 13, 21 June 1923, TNA, FO/371/9009, p.6.

It seemed clear that the Iraqi government was very concerned about the withdrawal of British forces before Sulaimania was joined with Iraq, as they believed that the Kurdish tribes still had sympathy for Mahmud, and that further disorders would encourage their closer association with him. They considered that if they enlisted four hundred Kurds from districts outside of Sulaimania and stationed them in the town, these forces would be ‘unaffected by gusts of local sentiments’.⁵¹¹ They believed that if the chieftains would pledge their support to the Sulaimania administration, the power of Mahmud would be ended and order would be maintained by the new force in the Liwa. The pro-British elements, such as Babakir agha, also feared the consequences of the withdrawal of British troops from Sulaimania. He believed that after this Mahmud might come back to Sulaimania from the Persian frontier and seek to recover his position. Babakir feared that ‘unruly elements’ from the Kurdish tribes might join Mahmud, and in that case it would be difficult to defeat him.⁵¹²

Although Cox was informed by Faisal that the whole ministry would resign if the troops were withdrawn from Sulaimania, Britain still insisted on evacuating the town.⁵¹³ They were certain that Mahmud would return to Sulaimania as he still had followers in the Pishdar and Rania areas, but they hoped that the retention of the Levies in Rowandoz, and the detachment of Rania, Chamchamal, Qaladza and Halabja, and some Nahias from Sulaimania to the Arabil and Kirkuk Liwas, would restrict Mahmud’s power and prevent his return. After British forces left Sulaimania on 19 June, the Sulaimania Council resigned and the pro-Turkish elements again controlled the town.⁵¹⁴ Karim Fattah Beg declared himself as governor of Sulaimania under the name of Mahmud, and he published a warning under Mahmud’s name to punish the pro-British elements and a promise to the people of Sulaimania that their lives would be safe.⁵¹⁵ On 11 July 1923, Mahmud returned to Sulaimania, and this was considered by Britain to be the failure of the plan for the association of Sulaimania with Iraq. Although accepting Mahmud’s authority over Sulaimania as the ‘de facto ruler of the

⁵¹¹ Intelligence Report Number 12, 7 June 1923, TNA, CO/370/40, p.6.

⁵¹² Ibid.

⁵¹³ High Commissioner of Iraq to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 7 June 1923, TNA, FO/371/9005; High Commissioner of Iraq to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 9 June 1923, TNA, CO/370/40.

⁵¹⁴ Intelligence Report Number 13, 21 June 1923, TNA, FO/371/9009, p.6.

⁵¹⁵ Intelligence Report Number 14, 5 July 1923, TNA, CO/730/40, pp.4-5.

central core of Sulaimania', for the sake of the integration with Iraq, Britain detached the districts of Qadhas and Nahias.⁵¹⁶

Ali has pointed out that after his return, Mahmud interfered with the Qadhas Rania, Qaladza, Halabja and Chamchamal, and due to this he was warned by Edmonds that action would be taken against him if he was to continue. Ali has also mentioned that Mahmud tried to re-establish his administration in Kurdistan, as he attacked Halabja and Chamchamal to transfer them to his authority.⁵¹⁷ Another reason for his intervention was the collection of the taxes in these areas, as he tried to establish Qaimaqam under his authority in some areas outside Sulaimania such as Penjwin, Khormal and Warmawa, and instructed them to collect taxes, especially the tobacco tax.⁵¹⁸ Edmonds feared the increase of Mahmud's finances due to the collection of taxes, and warned that Mahmud's influence would be increased because many of the tribal leaders would follow him 'to get their share'.⁵¹⁹ It can be seen that Britain did not accept the collecting of taxes by Mahmud outside of Sulaimania, and this was considered by Britain to be an illegal action as these Qadhas and Nahias had been transferred to the control of the Iraqi government. However, by collecting taxes from these areas, Mahmud did not accept their separation from Sulaimania and tried to prove that he was still Governor of Kurdistan.

The pro-British also feared the growth of Mahmud's power, especially his propaganda claim that the League of Nations would recognize Kurdish independence under his leadership, and they demanded that action be taken by Britain against him.⁵²⁰ The result of Mahmud's later intervention was the bombing of his headquarters in Sulaimania on 16 August,⁵²¹ which was protested by Mahmud and the Turks, but Britain insisted that this was for the protection of public security and did not breach the

⁵¹⁶ Intelligence Report Number 15, 26 July 1923, TNA, FO/371/9009, p5.

⁵¹⁷ Ali, *Chand Lekolinawaiak Darbaray Bzafi Hawcharkhi Kurd*, volume 2, p.74.

⁵¹⁸ Administrative Inspector in Kirkuk to High Commissioner of Iraq, 15 August 1923, TNA, AIR/23/352.

⁵¹⁹ 'Memorandum by H.E. the High Commissioner of Iraq on Situation of Sulaimania', 11 December, 1923, TNA, AIR/23/355.

⁵²⁰ Intelligence Report Number 17, 6 September 1923, TNA, FO/371/9009, p.5; Administrative Inspector in Kirkuk to High Commissioner of Iraq, 4 August 1923, TNA, AIR/23/352.

⁵²¹ According to British documents, as a result of the bombing operation 35 people and 6 to 7 of Mahmud's followers were killed, and many people left the town for Kirkuk, Khaniqin and the areas around Sulaimania. Captain S.S.O. in Baghdad to Air Headquarters, TNA, AIR/23/352, p.3.

status quo.⁵²² However, this British action against Mahmud did not finish his power in Sulaimania. In order to join Sulaimania with Iraq, Cox summoned Mahmud to come to Baghdad on the conditions that he would accept the governing of Sulaimania by the Iraqi government, give an undertaking that he would remain only in the town, abandon the title of King, and bring a son or brother with him to Baghdad who would remain there as a hostage if they reached an agreement.⁵²³ It can be said that these conditions were quite impossible as they conflicted with Mahmud's agenda of establishing an independent Kurdish state. In addition, at that time, he could not leave Sulaimania because his enemies would then control the town, which would legitimate their participation in the election for the Iraqi Assembly on 12 March 1924.⁵²⁴

After the election, Mahmud sought an opportunity against Britain, and the outbreak at Kirkuk was a good opportunity for him to increase his power. This occurred on 4 May 1924, after two companies of an Assyrian Levy battalion set fire to a coffee shop in the town.⁵²⁵ Mahmud protested this incident against Muslims and declared that this had 'broken the heart of the world of Islam'.⁵²⁶ He asked the Kurds to help Islam, and to resist any Assyrian attacks on Sulaimania he declared Jihad against Christians; as a result, many Kurdish tribes united with him.⁵²⁷ It can be seen that Mahmud was quite successful in stopping any possible attack on Sulaimania because Britain relied on the Levies to keep order in south Kurdistan. Any attempt to send the Assyrian Levies to Sulaimania would cause disorders in south Kurdistan against Christians, and this would weaken British power as the Kurdish Levies would follow Mahmud because of their

⁵²² Intelligence Report Number 17, 6 September 1923, TNA, FO/371/9009, p.6; High Commissioner of Iraq to Ministry of Interior, 18 December 1923, TNA, AIR/23/352.

⁵²³ Proposal for Dealing with the Situation, 11 September 1923, TNA, AIR/23/352; Administrative Inspector at Kirkuk to Advisor to Minister of Interior, 22 October 1923, Edmonds Mss, Box 1, File 1b, p.2.

⁵²⁴ In the election, nine members were elected in Sulaimania and Kirkuk, one of whom was Sheikh Qadir: Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p.383.

⁵²⁵ Before this outbreak could spread to other areas as a Christian-Muslim conflict, the situation was controlled by sending an armoured car to the town, and with the assistance of Talabani Sheikh, the Assyrian Levies force was removed to Chamchamal. According to the investigation of the Court of Inquiry which was headed by Air Commodore Hearson, with the Counsellor of the High Commission in attendance, 48 Kirkuk Muslims had been killed and 66 wounded, and the next day, in revenge 5 Assyrian levies were killed and 4 wounded. A special court sentenced 8 Assyrian Levies who had been concerned in the Kirkuk rebellion to imprisonment for life, and 9 others were given five years' penal servitude. Intelligence Report Number 10, 15 May 1924, pp.8-11; Intelligence Report Number 11, 29 May 1924, p.12; Intelligence Report Number 21, 16 October 1924, p.1, TNA, FO/371/10098.

⁵²⁶ Mahmud to Chapman, 22 May 1924, TNA, AIR/23/359.

⁵²⁷ Intelligence Report Number 11, 29 May 1924, TNA, FO/371/10098, p.15.

Muslim feeling. However, Britain could not send an Iraqi force to Sulaimania at that time, as they were seeking the ratification of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty by the Iraqi National Assembly, and they needed the Kurdish members to vote for it.

To prevent the people from assisting Mahmud, after demanding that the pro-British in Halabja take action against him, Britain bombed Sulaimania on 27 and 28 May, which caused the majority of the population to flee outside the town.⁵²⁸ After the ratification of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty on 10 June 1924,⁵²⁹ Britain decided to finish the threat from Mahmud by occupying the town permanently. On 19 July 1924, two regiments of Iraqi Cavalry, 100 Iraqi police, and some Assyrian levies occupied Sulaimania without any opposition. Chapman was placed in political and administrative charge of the town, and Sulaimania like Rowandoz was administrated by the Iraqi government.⁵³⁰ Ali has stated that Mahmud fled to areas outside Sulaimania in Penjwen, Sarbazher and Qala Cholan, and as he was so familiar with the mountain areas, the Iraqi forces could not finish his activities.⁵³¹ However, the main aims of Britain were the reduction of the source of Mahmud's revenue by preventing his collection of taxes from Kurdish tribes, and the reduction of his power by banishing him to the Persian border.⁵³² It can be said that arresting Mahmud did not have any place in the British agenda because it would increase the disorders in south Kurdistan before the settlement of the Turco-Iraqi frontier question, and such unrest would help the Turkish propaganda on behalf of their demand for the restoration of the Mosul vilayet by the League of Nations.

The British agenda against Mahmud was successful in reducing his revenue, which affected the numbers of his followers as he could not pay them. Moreover, after the occupation of Sulaimania, the power of Mahmud was reduced, and he only made some weak and sporadic attacks around Sulaimania in September 1924.⁵³³ After that, due to the pursuit of Mahmud by an Iraqi force, many of his followers abandoned him

⁵²⁸ Intelligence Report Number 12, 12 June 1924, TNA, FO/371/10098, p.15; Chapman to the Administrative Inspector in Kirkuk, 19 May 1924, TNA, AIR/23/359.

⁵²⁹ Six of the nine Kurdish deputies voted in favour of the ratification of the Anglo-Iraq Treaty. Memorandum on the Frontier between Turkey and Iraq, n.d., p.6, TNA, FO/371/10079.

⁵³⁰ Intelligence Report Number 14, 24 July 1924, TNA, FO/371/1009, p.4.

⁵³¹ Ali, *Chand Lekolinawaiak Darbaray Bzafi Hawcharkhi Kurd*, volume 2, p.81.

⁵³² Operation Order Number 40, 7 July 1924, TNA, AIR/23/359, p.1.

⁵³³ Squadron Leader, Air Staff, Air Headquarters in Baghdad to Officer Commanding, No.1 (Fighter) Squadron, RAF Hinaidi, 6 September 1924, TNA, AIR/23/359, p.1.

and by December 1924 the total size of Mahmud's force was only 80 men.⁵³⁴ Additionally, after the occupation of east Kurdistan by the Persian government in 1923, Mahmud could not obtain Kurdish support from there, especially from Simko of Shkak.⁵³⁵ However, Mahmud Khan of Dizli and Muhammad Rashid Beg, who was one of the Avruman chiefs, helped him in his sniping against the Iraqi force, but they were obliged to abandon their help of Mahmud after being warned by the Persian government.⁵³⁶

4.4 The question of the Turco-Iraqi frontier and the League of Nations

As the Lausanne Conference had not settled the question of Mosul, it had been agreed there that negotiations between Britain and Turkey regarding the Turco-Iraqi frontier should begin and be completed within nine months. Britain appointed Cox to lead the British delegation to start negotiations with Turkey, whilst the Turks had not yet appointed their representatives. Both Britain and Turkey had different views about the start of the nine month period; according to article 7 of the evacuation protocol, this period commenced on 5 October 1923, but the Turks denied this and stated that the period had not yet started.⁵³⁷ In February 1924, Ismet pointed out that they would not appoint any delegates to start the negotiation until the ratification of the Treaty of Lausanne had taken place.⁵³⁸ It seemed clear that the Turkish government at that time doubted that Britain might try to create an independent Kurdish state. However, the signing of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty in April 1924 made the Turks decide to abandon this pre-condition, as the treaty guaranteed to keep the Mosul vilayet within Iraq instead of abandoning it to the Turks.⁵³⁹ After that, the Turks showed their readiness to commence the discussion in May 1924 and appointed a delegation led by Fethi Bey, an ex-Prime

⁵³⁴ Administrative Inspector in Sulaimania to High Commissioner of Iraq, 3 December 1924, TNA, AIR/23/365.

⁵³⁵ 'Appreciation of the Sheikh Mahmud Situation', 21 December 1923, TNA, AIR/23/355, p.3.

⁵³⁶ Sartip Amanullah Mirzah to Ovey, 22 September 1924, TNA, AIR/23/363.

⁵³⁷ Henderson to Curzon, 7 January 1924; Henderson to FO, 10 January 1924, TNA, FO/371/10075.

⁵³⁸ Lindsay to FO, 25 February 1924, TNA, FO/371/10075.

⁵³⁹ *Yorkshire Post*, 10 May 1924, TNA, FO/371/10077.

Minister and the President of the Grand National Assembly at that time.⁵⁴⁰ The discussion began at Constantinople on 19 May 1924, with the participation of Taha al-Hashimi as unofficial Iraqi representative.⁵⁴¹

It can be said that during the negotiations at Constantinople, the Turks feared that they would lose the Mosul vilayet due to the participation of the Kurds in the Iraqi Assembly, as south Kurdistan would be administered by the Iraqi government. They declared that by holding the election Britain had breached the status quo, and they accused Britain of threatening the people of Sulaimania by bombing to force them to participate in the election. However, this was denied by Cox, as the vilayet since the signing of the Lausanne conference was ‘under the effective administration of the Iraq government’.⁵⁴² The Turks emphasised that the vilayet should be returned to them, and stated that the Mosul deputy had ‘affirmed the determination of the population of Mosul to revert to Turkey’.⁵⁴³

As the extreme nationalists were so strong, the Turkish government would not pledge to abandon their claim to Mosul. In the Turkish National Assembly, Ismet stated that the question of Mosul was ‘intimately linked with national sentiment’, and he declared that the vilayet was desired by Britain because of its oilfields.⁵⁴⁴ After the change of government in Britain from the Conservatives to the Labour Party in January 1924, the Turks believed that a socialist Foreign Secretary would not be strong enough to sustain the British claim. The Turks insisted that the vilayet should be restored to them, and stated that the Jbal Hamrin should be the boundary between Iraq and Turkey.⁵⁴⁵ However, according to the rider of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, to maintain the treaty, Britain had to protect Iraqi rights within the Mosul vilayet.⁵⁴⁶ In the light of this consideration, and to force the Turks to concede the Mosul vilayet, Cox tried to make the boundary between Iraq and Turkey along the northern border of the Mosul vilayet. He claimed three qadhas of the Hakari vilayet in north Kurdistan as the frontier

⁵⁴⁰ Lindsay to FO, 26 April 1924, TNA, FO/371/10076.

⁵⁴¹ Lindsay to FO, 22 May 1924, TNA, FO/371/10077; Thomas to FO, 30 April 1924, TNA, FO/371/10076.

⁵⁴² Lindsay to FO, 22 May 1924; Speech of Cox at fourth Meeting, n.d., TNA, FO/371/10077.

⁵⁴³ Lindsay to Dobbs and Cox, 29 April 1924, TNA, FO/371/10077.

⁵⁴⁴ Foreign Office, Eastern Department, ‘The Mosul Question’, 22 October 1924, TNA, FO/371/10080, p.1.

⁵⁴⁵ *The Times*, 29 May 1924, FO/371/10077.

⁵⁴⁶ MacDowell, *Modern History of the Kurds*, p.143.

between Iraq and Turkey, which was unacceptable to the Turks. He stated that as the Treaty of Lausanne did not mention the name of Mosul, it was possible to discuss the frontier line outside the vilayet.⁵⁴⁷ Both Britain and Turkey still had the same agendas as at Lausanne, and the negotiations ceased on 3 June 1924, with Cox leaving Constantinople on 9 June. He believed that as the Turks insisted on obtaining the whole of the vilayet, if negotiations were to be continued with them then they would assume that ‘the situation in Iraq seems likely to develop in their favour’.⁵⁴⁸

On 23 June 1924, the Turco-Iraqi frontier question was referred to the League of Nations by Britain. However, the Turks desired to continue the negotiations to settle the frontier question,⁵⁴⁹ as they believed that referral of the frontier question to the League of Nations was not yet necessary. The Turks feared that the League might decide on behalf of Iraq.⁵⁵⁰ It can be said that after Cox’s claim to settle the frontier line inside north Kurdistan, the Turks were afraid that they might lose some of the territory which they already occupied. Nevile Henderson, the Acting High Commissioner in Constantinople, believed that the Turks would not accept the transfer of the frontier question to the League of Nations unless Britain assured them that ‘they would not press for territories beyond present administrative frontiers of Iraq’.⁵⁵¹

On 25 August 1924, the Council of the League of Nations held its next meeting, but it delayed the discussion of the frontier question to the following session in September because the Turks had not sent their representative to Geneva.⁵⁵² When the Turkish government was officially notified that the Allied governments had ratified the Treaty of Lausanne, they showed their willingness to participate in the discussion of the Council’s sessions and sent Fethi Bey to Geneva.⁵⁵³

⁵⁴⁷ Henderson to FO, 6 June 1924, TNA, FO/371/10077; *The Times*, 9 June 1924, TNA, FO/371/10078.

⁵⁴⁸ HC Deb, 16 June 1924, 174, cols. 1712-3; Question of the Frontier between Turkey and Iraq, 21 October 1925, TNA, FO/371/10826, p.14; Lindsay to FO, 25 May 1924, TNA, FO/371/10077, p.2.

⁵⁴⁹ Henderson to Adnan Bey, 23 June 1924, TNA, FO/371/10078; The King’s Speech on Prorogation of Parliament, 9 October 1924, TNA, CAB/24/168/75

⁵⁵⁰ Henderson to FO, 7 July 1924, TNA, FO/371/10078.

⁵⁵¹ Henderson to FO, 7 July 1924, TNA, FO/371/10078, p.2.

⁵⁵² Question of the Frontier between Turkey and Iraq, 21 October 1925, TNA, FO/371/10826, pp.14-15.

⁵⁵³ Extract from Minutes of 30th Session of Council of League of Nations at Geneva, 30 August 1924, TNA, FO/371/10079; Swedish Representative, Frontier between Turkey and Iraq, August 1924, TNA, FO/371/10080.

It can be said that the Turks were obliged to participate in the sessions of the Council, because if they caused difficulties for the Council they would be blamed for this and would lose the confidence of the League. Moreover, as Turkey sought to become a member of the League, it might lose the support of the Great Powers, especially Britain. However, the Turks hoped that the League would find some reason to refuse Britain's wish to keep the vilayet with Iraq, and would decide on their behalf. As Ismet wrote to Fethi, 'we hope, and consider it likely, that the League of Nations, which has already suffered some checks and attracted the hostility of some nations on account of its unjust decisions, will hesitate to decide against the Turkish claims'.⁵⁵⁴

After the attack of the Turkish regular and irregular forces on the Assyrian villages in the Goyan area in the north of Iraq in September 1924, according to British documents some 8000 Assyrian refugees escaped to south Kurdistan and were transferred by Britain to the Amadia area.⁵⁵⁵ The Council of the League of Nations on 29 October 1924 decided that whilst there had been some small differences in the territory occupied by Turkey and Iraq since 24 July 1924, the Brussels line would form a frontier between them until the final resolution of the issue.⁵⁵⁶ It can be seen that the first step of the Council was to calm the frontier situation by maintaining the status quo in north and south Kurdistan to prevent undesirable events from occurring. The Council also informed Britain and Turkey that pending the decision regarding the frontier question, no military or other action should take place in the frontier area 'which might modify in any way the present state of the territories' whose final destiny 'would depend upon that decision'.⁵⁵⁷ It also decided that any districts administered or occupied by Britain or Turkey after the date of the signing of the Lausanne agreement until 15 November should be evacuated.⁵⁵⁸

The Council decided to establish a commission to examine the frontier line by having its neutral members visit the disputed areas. Their main duty was the submission of all information and suggestions to the Council which might assist its

⁵⁵⁴ The Mosul Negotiations, 11 June 1924, TNA, FO/371/10078.

⁵⁵⁵ Intelligence Report Number 21, 16 October 1924, TNA, FO/371/10098, p.1; HC Deb, 21 December 1925, 189, cols. 1931.

⁵⁵⁶ 'Minutes of the Third Meeting (Public) of the League of Nations Council, 31st session', 29 October 1924, TNA, FO/371/10826, p.1.

⁵⁵⁷ Thirteenth Session of the Council of the League of Nations, 20 September 1924, TNA, FO/371/10079, p.16; *The Times*, 31 October 1925, TNA, FO/371/10822.

⁵⁵⁸ 'Third Meeting (Public) of the League of Nations Council, 31st session', p.1.

decision about the frontier between Turkey and Iraq.⁵⁵⁹ The commission comprised Count Teleki, the former Prime Minister of Hungary; M. de Wirsén, the Swedish Minister Plenipotentiary, and M. Paulis, a Colonel in the Belgian Army, accompanied by four officials of the League as their secretariat. Jardine was appointed by Britain to be attached to the Commission in Iraq to assist them as an interpreter, because he knew the Kurdish and Arabic languages very well.⁵⁶⁰

After having been appointed as the Turkish representative and arriving to Geneva in October, Fethi Bey was instructed by Ismet to maintain their claim to Mosul and their demand to have a referendum in the vilayet.⁵⁶¹ It can be seen that whilst this demand was refused by Curzon in the negotiations at Lausanne, the Turks still believed that it was the best way to regain the vilayet, as they thought that the majority of its people, especially the Kurds and Turkmen, still had sympathy for them and might vote in favour of them. Moreover, the Turks believed that they could be successful in their claim to Mosul, especially after Fethi Bey assured Ismet that the majority of the members of the League were hostile to British policy regarding the Mosul question. He declared that the Soviet government would give military support in their engagement over the Mosul question, and that France also would support their claim 'in return for an accommodating attitude on the part of Turkey in the economic, financial and political questions which were the subjects of discussions'.⁵⁶²

The High Commissioner of Iraq was strongly against the proposed plebiscite, and argued that Britain should oppose this. He believed that a plebiscite would not represent the real wishes of the voters, as they would vote for Turkey because of the Turkish threat in the past and the fear of their revenge.⁵⁶³ For this reason, the British representative suggested at the commission's meeting on 25 November that the proper way to settle the frontier question would be to investigate the actual facts regarding 'the races affected by the frontier and their traditional tendencies and political interests',

⁵⁵⁹ Secretary of State for the Colonies to High Commissioner of Iraq, 2 October 1924, TNA, FO/371/10080.

⁵⁶⁰ Acting Secretary-General to FO, 17 November 1924; High Commissioner of Iraq to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 17 November 1924, TNA, FO/371/10081.

⁵⁶¹ Foreign Office, Eastern Department, 'The Mosul Question, etc.', 24 October 1924, TNA, FO/371/10080.

⁵⁶² Foreign Office, Eastern Department, 'Eastern Summary: The Mosul Question', 29 October 1924, TNA, FO/371/10080.

⁵⁶³ High Commissioner of Iraq to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 30 September 1924, TNA, FO/371/10080.

rather than by holding a plebiscite. Teleki replied that as the commission had all of the documents relating to the previous negotiations and the other relevant documents dealing with the question, it had the authority to hold the plebiscite or to follow any other method of procedure.⁵⁶⁴

After visiting London, Constantinople and Angora, the Commission which arrived in Baghdad on 16 January 1925 comprised the three Commissioners, two secretaries, three assistant secretaries, and three Turkish experts. Britain objected to the appointment of two of the Turkish experts, Nazim Beg and Fattah Beg, the brother-in-law of Mahmud, as they were originally Kurdish. The first one was accused by Britain of leading the Turkish Committee in Kirkuk and being involved in a plan to attack Kirkuk and Arbil with Mahmud in 1923, and the second to have encouraged the tribal leaders in Sulaimania to rise against Britain in 1921.⁵⁶⁵ It can be said that the main fear of Britain was that they would spread disorder in south Kurdistan and encourage the Kurdish people to ask the commission for their return to the Turkish state. The British and Iraqi governments protested against the presence of the two experts because they were familiar with south Kurdistan, and believed that they were dangerous to the security of Mosul. They therefore asked the Commission to withdraw them, but as they did not prove this, the Commission did not insist on their withdrawal. After that, to restrict them from visiting every place in the Mosul vilayet, the High Commissioner of Iraq demanded that the Turkish experts had to inform the police before making any visit and be accompanied by Iraqi police. However, this demand was refused by the Commission, which gave them full liberty to visit any places in the vilayet without being monitored by the police.⁵⁶⁶

The refusal of this British and Iraqi demand by the Commission raised doubts in the British and Iraqi governments that the Commission might report in favour of the Turks. The newspaper *Al Alam al Arabia* on 24 January showed its astonishment about the appointment of Teleki to the Commission. The paper referred to Count Gontaut Biron's writing about the close link between the Turkish and Hungarian nations. It also

⁵⁶⁴ Minutes of the Meeting of Committee of Investigation on the Iraq Boundary, 25 November 1924, TNA, FO/371/10081.

⁵⁶⁵ Intelligence Report Number 2, 22 January 1925, TNA, FO/371/10833, pp.1-2.

⁵⁶⁶ Farmer to the Advisor to the Ministry of Interior in Baghdad, 25 January 1925; Notes of an Interview between High Commissioner of Iraq and the Frontier Commission, 17 January 1925; Delegation of the Frontier between Turkey and Iraq, pp.8-9, TNA, FO/371/10824.

pointed out that the correspondent in Paris of the *Karmal* had indicated that Teleki was a professor in the University of Buda Pesth. One of his students who was an Iraqi from Mosul stated to the correspondent that Teleki desired 'a Turanian union of all nations Turanian by origin, Asiatic or European'. He also stated that Teleki had relations with the Ottoman and Angora governments, and he was 'president of a Turco-Hungarian Committee for the purpose of educating a few enlightened young Turks of Hungary'.⁵⁶⁷

British and Iraqi doubts were increased when the Commission decided to divide up the Commissioners, together with experts from the sub-commission, to visit any place in Kirkuk and Arbil separately without notice to the local authority.⁵⁶⁸ It can be said that whilst the Commission had to remain unbiased, the visit of the Turkish representatives to the Kurdish districts made the Kurds hesitate. For instance, their visit to Kirkuk had shaken the confidence of the people as some of them believed that they would return to Turkey, and the pro-Turk propaganda increased that the Turks would occupy Mosul if Commission decided in favour of Iraq. They declared that all of the Kurdish tribes who assisted the Turkish forces would be armed with modern rifles and ammunition by Turkey. Others who had served under the Arab government of Iraq or intrigued against Turkey since 1919 'would be pardoned for all their misdeeds on swearing alliance to Turkey and taking up arms against the Iraq Government when the Turkish forces attack the frontier'.⁵⁶⁹ Moreover, the Turkish emissaries had approached the Kurdish chiefs in Rowandoz to not pay taxes to the Iraqi government because they declared that the town would be returned to Turkey by the League of Nations.⁵⁷⁰

The Iraqi Government believed that the great cause of the spread of Turkish propaganda in the vilayet was the putting of two questions by the Commissioners when they interviewed people, as to whether they would choose Iraq or Turkey. The Iraqi Prime Minister stated his objection that 'such questions were based on misconception of the political situation'.⁵⁷¹ They believed that this had caused the petition signed by 700 notables and chieftains in Mosul and Sulaimania, sent to the League via Angora, to

⁵⁶⁷ *Al Alam al Arabia*, 258, 24 January 1925, TNA, FO/371/10824.

⁵⁶⁸ High Commissioner of Iraq to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 11 February 1925, TNA, FO/371/10824, p.1.

⁵⁶⁹ Intelligence Report Number 7, 2 April 1925; Intelligence Report Number 19, 17 September 1925, p.6, TNA, FO/371/10833, p.3.

⁵⁷⁰ High Commissioner of Iraq to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 8 May 1925, TNA, FO/371/10821.

⁵⁷¹ Intelligence Report Number 9, 30 April 1925, p.5; Intelligence Report Number 4, 19 February 1925, p.2, TNA, FO/371/10833.

return the Mosul vilayet to Turkey. It can be said that the main purpose of the Turkish propaganda was to reduce the consequences of the abolition of the Caliphate by Kemal in 1924.⁵⁷² This removed their ability to influence Kurdish feeling by appealing to Islam, and instead of this they published propaganda to obtain Kurdish votes during their interviews with the Commission and to encourage the Kurds to demonstrate their feeling in favour of Turkey.

The Turks accused Britain of making a barrier to the pro-Turks in Mosul vilayet expressing their views freely. On 10 April 1925 *Hakimiet-i-Millieh* published a statement by Mahmed Nuri, who was ‘Deputy of Mosul and Representative at Angora of the Committee for the Liberation of Mosul’, against the British attitude towards the pro-Turks. He stated that even whilst the Commission was at Mosul, Britain had acted against those who showed a feeling in favour of Turkey, and as a result many of them had left Iraq and sought refuge in Turkey.⁵⁷³ The Turkish Government also claimed that the majority of pro-Turks were imprisoned or terrorised by Britain, and that after the Commission departed ‘wholesale revenge’ started again against those who had declared for Turkey. They stated that the Royal Air Force had bombed the Duhok–Amadia district several times as revenge against the pro-Turks when they had demonstrated against their inclusion with Iraq. However, Britain refuted this and stated that they were imprisoned because they planned ‘an armed pro-Turkish demonstration’, and as they tried to make disorder many Christian families had left for Baghdad. Britain pointed out that they did not know who had declared for Turkey because the Commission addressed the question to the witnesses in secret.⁵⁷⁴

It can be said that the Turkish Government was happy with the examination made by the Commission, but they did not trust the League Council, as they believed that it would decide in favour of Britain for the reasons discussed previously. Although they had sent their representative to Geneva and had agreed that the League would decide the fate of the Mosul vilayet, Shefki Pasha, the first Secretary to the Turkish Legation, suggested instead resolving the Mosul question outside the Council and without waiting for its decision. He insisted that the Mosul question could only be settled by direct negotiation between Britain and Turkey, and that this was to the

⁵⁷² Intelligence Report Number 9, 30 April 1925, pp.2-3, TNA, FO/371/10833.

⁵⁷³ Lindsay to High Commissioner of Iraq, 14 April 1925, TNA, FO/371/10825.

⁵⁷⁴ FO to Secretary General of the League of Nations, 24 August 1925, TNA, pp.1-2, FO/371/10825.

benefit of both of them.⁵⁷⁵ The Turks believed that the main interest of Britain was oil and if it was offered economic and commercial concessions, Britain would agree to restore the vilayet to Turkey. They made an offer to Britain to explore the Mosul oil-fields, and Shefki Pasha emphasised that this would settle their conflict over Mosul because Turkey would not accept the decision of the League if it was adverse to them.⁵⁷⁶ However, this was refused by Britain as it believed that Turkey might not refuse the decision of the League about the vilayet. In addition, as the matter had been referred to the League of Nations, a direct negotiation with Turkey would be ‘an underhand deal behind the back of the League of Nations’, and this would affect the reputation of Britain in the League and the world. Moreover, Britain did not trust the Turks, as they did not show any concessions from their previous negotiations about the frontier question and they insisted on retaining the whole of the Mosul vilayet with Turkey.⁵⁷⁷

It can be said that because Britain had to fulfil the condition in its treaty with Iraq of keeping the Mosul vilayet, the security of Iraq was their first priority. Britain attempted to make clear to the Commission that the vilayet had strategic importance for Iraq. The British considered that if south Kurdistan went to Turkey it would be very difficult to resist an attack from the foothills into the plains. In the case of restoring the vilayet to Turkey, Britain would have to protect Iraq by force.⁵⁷⁸ Austen Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs emphasised that it would give the Turks control from the mountain areas of south Kurdistan into the plains, especially after the withdrawal of British forces.⁵⁷⁹

Britain also focused on the military importance of south Kurdistan to Iraq. If the mountainous areas of south Kurdistan were under Turkish control, the Iraqi army would not be able to pursue any aggressive tribes and the Air Force could not bomb them due to the terrain.⁵⁸⁰ It can be said that to secure the Iraqi boundary, Britain sought to keep the Assyrians within the Iraqi state. After many of them had escaped to south

⁵⁷⁵ Turco-Iraqi Frontier, 29 September 1924, TNA, FO/371/10080.

⁵⁷⁶ Chamberlain to Lindsay, 21 January 1925, TNA, FO/424/262.

⁵⁷⁷ ‘Memorandum of Zeki Bey’s Suggestion regarding Mosul’, 14 January 1925, TNA, FO/424/362, pp.1-2; Rice to Lindsay, 25 November 1924, TNA, FO/371/10081.

⁵⁷⁸ Dobbs to Amery, 2 February 1925, TNA, FO/371/100826.

⁵⁷⁹ Memorandum by Chamberlain, 2 November 1925, TNA, FO/371/10826 p.2.

⁵⁸⁰ Dobbs to Shuckburgh, 16 March 1921, TNA, FO/371/11460, p.1.

Kurdistan, Britain emphasised to the Commission that they would not be safe to return to Turkey. The General Staff of the War Office and the Air Staff believed that the Assyrian Levies were strongly hostile to Turkey and would serve in the Iraqi army, and so they insisted that the inclusion of the Assyrian areas with Iraq had great military value for defending the Iraqi border. They declared that if the Assyrian Levies were returned to Turkey, they would break down and would be turned against Iraq.⁵⁸¹

Britain assured the Commission that the Assyrians wished to live permanently in Iraq and did not desire to return to Turkey. Britain declared that the Assyrians demanded to be given lands, and that the Iraqi government had agreed 'to assign vacant government lands to the north of Duhok and in Amadia and the northern highlands, upon which the Assyrians from beyond the proposed frontier could be permanently settled'.⁵⁸² The Iraqi government also guaranteed the Assyrians that they would be free to manage their internal affairs, such as 'the choice of their own village headmen'. Britain was successful in convincing the Commission, as Count Teleki stated on 17 February 1925 that the Assyrians would not go back to Turkey.⁵⁸³

Britain accused the Turks of expelling, robbing and killing the Assyrians and destroying their villages.⁵⁸⁴ Colonial Secretary Leo Amery complained that the deportation of the Assyrians was a violation of the status quo which might change the present situation of the territories, and this action was creating unrest along the whole frontier. Britain asked the Council to investigate the eviction of the Christians, but Turkey refused any investigation of the situation north of the Brussels line, as they believed that this district was not part of the disputed territories, and so it could only be a minorities question, which was outside the scope of the question before the Council.⁵⁸⁵ It can be said that the main fear of the Turks was the inclusion of the Assyrians in Iraq to the south of the Brussels line, because they feared that they might cause a problem to their security by assisting the Assyrians in Turkey. The Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs accused the refugee Assyrians that 'they were affiliated

⁵⁸¹ 'Air Staff Memorandum on Proposed Strategical Line for a Frontier between Iraq and Turkey', 10 March 1924, TNA, FO/371/10076, p.3.

⁵⁸² 'Questionnaire for the British Government, with Answers', 29 November, 1924, FO/371/10081, p.5.

⁵⁸³ Ibid.; Intelligence Report Number 5, 5 March, TNA, FO/371/10833, p.2.

⁵⁸⁴ Gracey to High Commissioner of Iraq, 25 October 1925, TNA, FO/371/10822.

⁵⁸⁵ Amery to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations, 22 September 1925, p.1; Amery to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations, 26 September, 1925, p.1, TNA, FO/371/10822.

with the intelligence service against Turkey which had been organised along this frontier'. He stated that numerous incursions had been made to the north by armed Nestorians who were maintained by Britain in the south.⁵⁸⁶

Another point which the British and Iraqi governments emphasised in order to keep south Kurdistan with Iraq was the importance of the Kurdish nation in keeping the balance of the Iraqi Parliament as previously discussed. Britain did not wish to lose the pro-British Kurdish members of the Iraqi Assembly who had supported the ratification of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty. If they did lose the Kurdish Sunnis, Faisal and the Iraqi government might have problems with the majority of Shi'as in the Assembly.⁵⁸⁷ It can be seen that if the Mosul vilayet was restored to Turkey, the Iraqi throne would not be safe for Faisal because the majority of the population of Iraq would be Shi'a, whilst Faisal was a Sunni. In this case, the Persian Shi'as could dominate Iraq as they followed the same doctrine, and Persia was interested in the country because the majority of the holy graves of the Shi'a Imams were in Iraq. In the light of this consideration, Abdul Muhsin Beg, the Iraqi Minister of the Interior, tried to convince the Commission that the difference of doctrine between Shi'a and Sunni was not a barrier to them living in one country. He stated that all of the inhabitants of Iraq were 'Iraqi patriots first and adherents of various religions only in the second place'.⁵⁸⁸

The economic issue was another aspect which the British and Iraqi governments considered should be examined by the League. It is possible to say that investigating this point would influence the Council in favour of Iraq, as the commerce of the vilayet was linked more with Iraq than with Turkey or other countries. After he became the High Commissioner of Iraq, Cox had emphasised that if the Kurds were to be outside Iraq, they would not have enough resources for their life. Contrarily, Britain also argued to the Commission that in the case of the cession of the vilayet, the remaining part of Iraq would be too weak.⁵⁸⁹ It can be said that because of the richness of the vilayet due to oil, it was expected by Britain that the oil would be valuable resource for the economy of Iraq. Faisal stated that after examining the economic and other aspects,

⁵⁸⁶ Tawfiq Kemal to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations, 24 October 1925, TNA, FO/371/10822, pp.1-2.

⁵⁸⁷ Dobbs to Shuckburgh, 16 March 1921, TNA, FO/371/11460.

⁵⁸⁸ Dobbs to Amery and et al., 22 January 1925, TNA, FO/371/10824, p.10.

⁵⁸⁹ Air Staff Memorandum on Proposed Strategical Line for a Frontier between Iraq and Turkey, 10 March 1924; Note by the General Staff on the Turco-Iraq Frontier, 7 March 1924, TNA, FO/371/10076.

such as geographical and strategic points, the Commission would find that Iraq without Mosul vilayet would not have a natural frontier. He believed that the vilayet was an inseparable part of Iraq, and described Mosul as the head 'to the rest of the body' of Iraq.⁵⁹⁰ The Chamber of Deputies of Iraq also sent a telegraph to the League of Nations at Geneva stating that the Iraqi state could not exist without the inclusion of the Mosul vilayet.⁵⁹¹

It can be said that by emphasising economic factors, the British and Iraqi governments were successful in obtaining the decision of the Council in favour of them. The Commission of the League decided to keep south Kurdistan with Iraq, as they found that Mosul and Baghdad 'naturally work together on a single trade system'.⁵⁹² The main proof of the Commission was the lack of trade between south and north Kurdistan, as the mountains of Van had separated the latter districts from south Kurdistan. They stated that the mountains prevented any economic relationship with south Kurdistan due to the lack of routes.⁵⁹³ The Commission did not raise the issue of independence for south Kurdistan because Britain, Iraq and Turkey had not asked it to consider this. Therefore, when the Commissioners took evidence from the Kurds, they asked only whether they wished to be part of Turkey or of Iraq, and did not offer the option of an independent state.⁵⁹⁴ As a result, apart from the Zangana tribe and the Kurdish intellectuals in Baghdad who declared for an independent Kurdish state, the majority of those interviewed declared for Iraq, and only a few for Turkey.⁵⁹⁵

⁵⁹⁰ Faisal to the Iraq Frontier Commission, 17 January 1925, TNA, FO/371/10824, pp.5,8.

⁵⁹¹ Intelligence Report Number 13, 17 December 1925, TNA, FO/371/10833, p.2.

⁵⁹² Debate in House of Commons on 21 December 1925, TNA, FO/371/10826, p.2144.

⁵⁹³ Dobbs to the President of the League of Nations Enquiry Commission, 26 January 1925, TNA, FO/371/10824, p.10.

⁵⁹⁴ Bourdillon to Amery and et al., 10 February 1926, TNA, FO/371/11460, p.2; MacDowell, *Modern History of the Kurds*, p.144.

⁵⁹⁵ Intelligence Report Number 22, 13 November 1924, TNA, FO/371/10098, p.2; Intelligence Report Number 3, 30 April 1925, TNA, FO/371/10833, p.3.

4.5 The decision of the League Council and the attitude of the Turks

Before the declaration of the final conclusion of the Council, the Turks still hoped to regain the vilayet, especially after the Genj Revolt led by Sheikh Sa'id in February 1925 in most of the northern Kurdish region, as the Turks believed that Britain had encouraged the revolt. Due to this, the fear of the Turks increased in regard to the safety of their border, and they hoped to settle the question of the Mosul vilayet soon.⁵⁹⁶ However, they did not want to concede the vilayet to Iraq, because they were endeavouring to establish a moderate and secular country, and to develop this, the richness of Mosul's oil-fields would be of great value.⁵⁹⁷ According to R.C. Lindsay, the British ambassador to Turkey, Ismet Pasha emphasised that if the frontier line did not include south Kurdistan in Turkey, it would cause permanent trouble in its eastern vilayets and would be the crux of the menace to Turkish security.⁵⁹⁸

The Turkish action of deporting the Christians from north of the Brussels line, the fleeing of many Kurds from the Goyan area due to actions against them, and the announcement of martial law in north Kurdistan to suppress Sheikh Sai'd's revolt, all decreased their chance of recovering the vilayet.⁵⁹⁹ To prevent an undesirable decision by the Council, in September 1925 the Turks showed their doubts about the extent of the authority of the Council, and they declared that its decision about the frontier should be a recommendation and not an arbitration.⁶⁰⁰ This question should be considered by Britain because this would give a chance to the Turks to refuse a negative decision by the League Council. The question was then referred to the Permanent Court of International Justice at the Hague as to whether the nature of the decision would be an arbitral award, a recommendation or a simple mediation; whether the decision must be unanimous or could be taken by a majority, and whether the representatives of the interested parties could participate in the vote.⁶⁰¹ The Court gave its opinion in November 1925 which was against the Turkish wishes in that the decision of the Council of the League would be a binding decision, and under article 15

⁵⁹⁶ Enclosure 1 in Number 92, Press Summary, 24 February 1924, TNA, FO/424/262.

⁵⁹⁷ Lindsay to Chamberlain, 31 March 1925, TNA, FO/371/10863.

⁵⁹⁸ Lindsay to Chamberlain, 22 November 1925, TNA FO/371/10826.

⁵⁹⁹ Oliphant to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 24 July 1925, TNA, FO/371/10821; Lindsay to Chamberlain, 24 February 1925, TNA, FO/371/10867.

⁶⁰⁰ Edmonds, *Kurds, Turks and Arabs*, p.513.

⁶⁰¹ Memorandum by the Legal Advisors to the FO, 23 October 1925, TNA, FO/371/10826, p.1.

of the Covenant the votes of Britain and Turkey ‘could not be counted in reckoning unanimity’.⁶⁰²

Britain doubted that the Turkish government would accept the decision of the League, as Fethi Bey had previously stated that they would not do so if it went against them. The Turkish Ambassador in Berlin also stated that ‘if their inviolable rights were infringed by the decision of the Council they would use every means to preserve them, including, if necessary, a recourse to force’.⁶⁰³ The *Daily Telegraph* in its report pointed out that Kemal had decided not to accept the League’s decision about Mosul, and stated that the Turks had decided to send two battalions to the frontier. The newspaper stated that a Turkish army of about 78,000, led by Kemaladin Samy Pasha had assembled in north Kurdistan to suppress the Kurdish rebellion, and it believed that this was to display Turkish military power and a warning that they were still insisting on obtaining their share of the vilayet.⁶⁰⁴

The British Cabinet discussed making preparations against possible Turkish military action in the Mosul vilayet. They suggested that air action should be taken against any Turkish advance to Mosul, but this could only delay their progress. In this case, they would have to bring reinforcements from India to stop the Turkish attack, and they could gather the Kurdish tribes in Iraqi and Turkish territories to attack the Turkish lines of communications in the rear, as the Kurds hated them due to their oppression and the occupation of their areas by the Turks. Moreover, by taking military action, the Turks would declare war against Britain, which was stronger than them, and this would be against the League Council as they had accepted its role in settling the frontier question. Whilst Britain was the mandatory protecting power for Iraq under the League’s supervision, there was a fear amongst the Cabinet that the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty did not require Britain to protect Iraq from outside attack. A Defence Committee was established under Balfour to consider possible action to pressure Turkey if it refused to accept a contrary decision of the Council regarding the Turco-Iraqi frontier.⁶⁰⁵ It considered the seizure of Turkish Islands and an invasion of the Straits.⁶⁰⁶ However,

⁶⁰² The Mosul Question at the League of Nations, 24 December 1925, TNA, CO/730/105/3.

⁶⁰³ Memorandum by Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs for the Cabinet, 9 September 1925, TNA, FO/371/10825, p.1.

⁶⁰⁴ *Daily Telegraph*, 23 March 1925, TNA, FO/371/10824.

⁶⁰⁵ FO to London, 11 December 1925, TNA, FO/371/10826.

⁶⁰⁶ ‘Extract from the Minutes of the 203rd Meeting’, 15 October 1925, TNA, FO/371/10826.

because of the limitations on naval action within the Dardanelles imposed by Article 18 of the Straits Convention, Britain could only take such action against Turkey if the League gave its consent.⁶⁰⁷

On 16 December 1925, the League Council decided that the Brussels line would form the frontier between Iraq and Turkey.⁶⁰⁸ Tawfiq Bey pointed out that the Council's decision was an injustice to them, and stated that 'Turkey had never agreed to arbitration or to anything more than the mediation by the League'.⁶⁰⁹ It can be seen that although Britain had prepared to counter any Turkish attack on Iraq, it was not easy to contemplate a new war with Turkey which might not have the active support of the Allied Powers and the British dominions. Instead of this, Britain had to attempt to ensure that Iraq would be secure by establishing a friendly relationship between Iraq and Turkey. In the light of this consideration, after the decision of the Council, Britain offered Turkey to make peace and to settle the frontier question by friendly discussion.⁶¹⁰ Britain was even ready to offer 'the grant of a loan to Turkey'. This was refused by the Turkish Ambassador in London on the grounds that they did not take economic interests into account.⁶¹¹ However, as Kemal had many development schemes for Turkey, he needed foreign capital for this because Turkey's credit did not 'stand high abroad' and Turkish needs were 'probably becoming increasingly urgent' It was not possible for Turkey to take military action against Britain and Iraq because it 'would throw a further burden on the already overtaxed Turkish exchequer'.⁶¹²

Another point which obliged the Kemalists to abandon the idea of taking military action was the political isolation of Turkey in the world. Although it received military, financial and political support from Russia, this was not enough for Turkey as they did not know whether or not they would receive sufficient help from Russia.⁶¹³ However, Russia tried to improve its position in the Middle East, but as it had an agreement with Germany which guaranteed peace between them, this might reduce the

⁶⁰⁷ FO to Bridgeman, 4 December 1925, TNA, FO/371/10826.

⁶⁰⁸ 'Report by Colonel Jac and M. Marcus respecting the Frontier between Turkey and Iraq', 12 April 1926, TNA, FO/371/11471, p.1.

⁶⁰⁹ Lindsay to Chamberlain, 4 January 1926, TNA, FO/371/11458.

⁶¹⁰ 'Report by Mr. Lampson of a Conversation with M. Djouritch', 22 December 1925, TNA, FO/371/10826, p.1.

⁶¹¹ Chamberlain to Lindsay, 4 December 1925, TNA, FO/371/10826, p.2.

⁶¹² 'Memorandum respecting the Iraq Frontier Dispute', 23 October 1925, TNA, FO/371/10826, p.2.

⁶¹³ Ibid.

importance of the Turks. In addition, according to a British report, the Russian Ambassador had advised the Turkish Government to settle the Mosul question and reach an agreement with Britain. These factors changed the Turkish mind to drop their demand for the return of the Mosul vilayet and instead focus on their security, which could only be achieved by a territorial settlement with Britain and Iraq.⁶¹⁴

The main obstacle preventing the Turks from reaching an agreement with Britain and Iraq was the final conclusion of the Council in regard to Kurdish rights. This was because the Council guaranteed the Kurds to appoint their own officials in south Kurdistan rather than Arabs, and decided that for the dispensation of justice and teaching in schools the official language should be Kurdish.⁶¹⁵ The Turks feared the building of Kurdish schools in south Kurdistan and the translation of school text books into their language, and they were concerned that Britain would encourage Kurdish nationalism which might increase anti-Turkish propaganda.⁶¹⁶ They declared that they did not have a problem with the Persian Kurds, who were Sh'ias and under the control of the Persian Sh'ias and so did not pose a threat to Turkish security. However, they feared the inclusion of the Kurds in other states, and so they tried to control all Kurdish territories except those in Persia.⁶¹⁷ It can be seen that the main aim of the Turks was to dissolve the Kurdish nationalism and direct the Kurds to serve Turkey as Turks, because the Kurds were very important to them racially and militarily to increase the population and to defend the country.⁶¹⁸

Tawfiq Rushdi expressed a different idea than before about the impact of the integration of the Kurds with Iraq. He stated that the southern Kurds would not make unrest against Turkey, but they would become dissatisfied with Arab rule and might take hostile action against it. As they were a minority in Iraq, the Kurds would try to increase their strength 'by exciting the sympathy of their Turkish kinsmen', and so finally would establish their independent state.⁶¹⁹ Britain anticipated this anxiety of the Turks, and explained to them that their policy was not to give autonomy to the Kurds in

⁶¹⁴ Ibid.; British Correspondent at Constantinople to FO, 1 May 1926, TNA, FO/371/11462.

⁶¹⁵ 'Relations between Great Britain and Turkey', 16 October 1925, TNA, FO/371/10863, pp.1-2.

⁶¹⁶ Lindsay to Chamberlain, 19 October 1925, TNA, FO/371/10868, p.1.

⁶¹⁷ Lindsay to Chamberlain, 24 January 1926, TNA, FO/371/11459, p.1.

⁶¹⁸ 'Memorandum respecting the Iraq Frontier Dispute', p.1.

⁶¹⁹ Lindsay to Chamberlain, 24 January 1926, TNA, FO/371/11459, p.1.

south Kurdistan,⁶²⁰ but they were afraid that the decision of the Council might badly affect their negotiation with the Turks to settle frontier question. However, the decision of the Council to keep the disputed territory under an effective League mandate for 25 years forced the Turks to accept that there was no other way to settle the question than by reaching an agreement with Britain.⁶²¹

Britain emphasised to the Iraqi government the need to implement the decisions regarding the rights of the Kurds in the local administration and in education. This was because the Council had made it a condition that if these rights were neglected, the Council could decide that it would be more beneficial to place the Mosul vilayet under Turkish authority.⁶²² On 21 January 1921, the Iraqi Prime Minister pledged to give these rights to the Kurds, and the Iraqi Chamber of Deputies also declared that it was in the interests of Iraq to establish a Kurdish administration and to provide their natural rights.⁶²³ Moreover, the High Commissioner of Iraq decided to appoint a Kurdish translation bureau in Baghdad to translate laws and books into Kurdish, and he suggested the building of schools and roads in Kurdistan by direct special payment from the Ministries of Education and of Communications and Works.⁶²⁴

It can be seen that there had been no recognition of the political rights of the Kurds within Iraq, until Britain and Iraq pledged in June 1923 to choose a Kurdish ruler for their administration, as was mentioned before. Moreover, even after the League Council's decision in 1925, the Kurdish language was only recognised officially for use in schools. There was also no guarantee for the Kurds that after the end of the British mandate, the Iraqi government would not suppress them in the name of national security. However, in comparison with the northern Kurds, the southern Kurds were guaranteed the simple rights to use their language and appoint their officials, whilst Turkey prevented this. As MacDowell has pointed out, the Kemalists banned the Kurdish language and removed Kurdish names in all official materials and replaced them with

⁶²⁰ W. T. to Ronald, 30 December 1925, TNA, FO/371/11459, p.4.

⁶²¹ 'Extract from Cabinet Meeting 44(25) of August 7th 1925', TNA, FO/371/10825, p.1; Elizabeth P. MacCallum, *The Near East: A Survey of Political Trends in 1925* (New York: The Research Department of the Foreign Policy Association, 1925), p.10, TNA, FO/371/11478.

⁶²² Ibid.; 'Extract from Cabinet Meeting 44(25) of August 7th 1925', TNA, FO/371/10825, p.1.

⁶²³ 'Extract from Proceedings of the 13th Meeting of the Iraq Chamber of Deputies held on Thursday the 21st January 1926', TNA, FO/371/11460, p.1; 'Memorandum on administration of Kurdish Districts of Iraq', TNA, FO/371/11458, p.5.

⁶²⁴ Intelligence Report Number 4, 18 February 1926, TNA, FO/371/11468, p.3.

Turkish names.⁶²⁵ They also closed Kurdish clubs in north Kurdistan which tried to improve education. Instead of this, the Kemalists opened Turkish schools in north Kurdistan to educate Kurdish children in the Turkish language. The main aim of the Turks was the defeat of Kurdish nationalism by spreading their culture. They sent Kurdish soldiers to western Anatolia and declared that their campaign was to make them good citizens, but their real aim was to change Kurdish traditions. The Turks considered that by sending them to Turkish districts, the Kurdish soldiers would learn the Turkish language, and when they retired, by employing them as Mukhtar (a headman of a quarter) they would spread the Turkish language.⁶²⁶ Moreover, to change the demography of north Kurdistan and to finish Kurdish activity, G. Clerk, the British ambassador to Turkey (1926-1933), stated that the Turks started a campaign to transfer the powerful and political Kurdish families from their places to eastern vilayets under the justification of the rebellion.⁶²⁷ They even did not allow the return of the northern Kurdish refugees who had escaped to Iraq, apart from those who had shown their loyalty to them.⁶²⁸

To secure their border, the Turks signed a treaty with Britain and Iraq on 6 June 1926. The treaty settled the frontier between Iraq and Turkey,⁶²⁹ with slight modifications in favour of Turkey.⁶³⁰ Generally, it focused on the security of the border, whilst in reality it was to prevent Kurdish activity in both countries. According to the terms of the treaty, Turkey and Iraq pledged to forbid the establishment of Kurdish political and military groups, not to allow the Kurds on their side of the border to take action against the other power, and to arrest and return Kurdish refugees from

⁶²⁵ MacDowell, *Modern History of the Kurds*, pp.191-192,201.

⁶²⁶ Edmonds to Henderson, 21 May 1930, TNA, FO/371/14579; Higgins to the Secretary of Air Ministry, 30 March 1927, TNA, FO/371/12255, p.1.

⁶²⁷ Clerk to Chamberlain, 22 June 1927, TNA, FO/371/12255, p.1.

⁶²⁸ Edmonds to Henderson, 21 May 1930, TNA, FO/371/14579, p.9; Dobbs to Amery, 8 December 1926, TNA, FO/371/12255, p.2.

⁶²⁹ Before signing the Treaty, ten per cent of Iraqi oil royalties were to be given to Turkey for twenty-five years in return for the abandonment of their claim to Mosul vilayet, but as the value of the oil was not clear at that time, the Turks preferred to be paid half a million pounds instead. High Commissioner of Iraq to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 18 June 1926, TNA, FO/371/11467; Lindsay to Chamberlain, 31 May 1926, *Ibid.*

⁶³⁰ These changes caused the exclusion of Assyrian districts in Hakari from Mosul vilayet and could be considered as a terrible decision for the Assyrians, because this caused their dispersal. Although the Assyrians in Hakari were out of the British protection, those who escaped to south Kurdistan and settled there were not happy under the rule of Iraq, as the latter massacred Assyrians in 1933. Fisher points out that the Assyrian issue was manipulated by French to 'obtain a more favourable border for Syria'. See Fisher, 'Man on the spot', pp.223-224.

each other's. Although the treaty gave 12 months for the inhabitants of the frontier districts to opt for either Turkey or Iraq, it did not consider that many Kurdish families were split between Iraq and Turkey, and it did not facilitate them to visit each other.⁶³¹

4.6 Conclusion

The conflict between Britain and the Turks for the Mosul vilayet was not favourable to the Kurdish hopes to create their own independent state. In their negotiations at Lausanne and Constantinople, for the security of the Turco-Iraqi frontier, Britain emphasised the need to keep the southern Kurdish districts with Iraq, and the Turks did so similarly for Turkey. The reason for this policy was not only the strategic importance of Kurdistan as a mountainous area to protect their border, but also the integration of the Kurds in their countries would strengthened them by increasing their population, and especially for Iraq by keeping the balance between Sh'ia and Sunna. Moreover, this would help them to use the Kurds for military purposes especially for the Turks to enlist the Kurds and use them to protect their country against any possible outside attack. Another important point which both sides emphasised to keep south Kurdistan with their country was the importance of the Mosul vilayet for their economy. It would increase their resources and help them to construct a stable country economically, especially for Iraq, because many oil-fields were located in south Kurdistan. However, the Turks were not so sure that the oil would be a good resource to construct their modern country, as they did not expect that the oil would be a valuable resource for them at that time.

The Turks had an inconsistent discrepant attitude towards the Kurds, as they declared that there was no divergence between the Kurds and the Turks, and that the southern Kurds would be happy if they returned to Turkey. However, their policies towards the northern Kurds and other minorities (especially Assyrians) were repressive. The Turks did not even give them simple rights, and they tried to subjugate the northern Kurds to accept their rule. This was the main factor which strengthened the British case to keep south Kurdistan with Iraq, and was evidence that the southern Kurds and Assyrians would not be safe in Turkish hands. However, their expulsion

⁶³¹ The Treaty between United Kingdom, Iraq and Turkey regarding the Settlement of the Frontier between Turkey and Iraq, 5 June 1926, TNA, FO/371/16031.

from Rowandoz in April 1923 and the reduction of Mahmud's power by Britain affected the Turkish claim for the Mosul vilayet, because after this south Kurdistan was informally governed by the Iraqi government.

The League Council after the examination of the frontier question between Iraq and Turkey decided about the necessity of the maintenance of south Kurdistan. However, it was not considered that the existence of various nations in one country might be a reason for the instability of Iraq. The majority of the Kurds did not pressure the Commission of the Council to create an independent state when the League Council's Commission interviewed them. The main reason for this was the restriction of Mahmud's activity to the Persian borders, and he was not even invited by the Commission, because he was dealt with by Britain as outlaw leader. The majority of the Kurds interviewed did not trust the Turks and declared for Iraq because after the repeal of the Caliphate, and the suppression of the northern Kurds, the popularity of the Turks had decreased among the Kurds of south Kurdistan. After the decision of the League Council, both Iraq and Turkey were concerned about the security of their border. Both countries emphasised that the Kurds could be the main reason for the instability of the border. In the treaty of 1926, they decided not to use the Kurds against each other by restricting their activity outside of each country.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE KURDS UNDER ARAB RULE FROM 1927 TO 1932

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the Kurdish reaction to the decision of the League Council, and their fears about living under Arab rule. It will consider the growth of Kurdish national feeling and their struggle to separate from Iraq, and investigate the concerns of Iraq, Turkish and Persian about this. The chapter will then examine the Kurdish response to the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930, and their sending of petitions to Geneva. It also assesses Iraqi policy towards the Kurds and its creation of obstacles to fulfilling the conditions of the League Council regarding the use of the Kurdish language and the appointment of Kurdish officials in south Kurdistan. It discusses the Iraqi operations against Kurdish nationalists who worked to create an independent state, and the views of Britain towards this. The chapter examines the causes of the Kurdish risings in 1930-1931, and will investigate whether they put pressure on the Iraqi government to implement Kurdish rights. Finally, it considers British assistance to Iraq in suppressing the Kurdish risings, and Britain's support for the admission of Iraq into the League of Nations.

5.2 The Kurdish reaction to the decision of the League Council

The decision of the League of Nations on 16 December 1925 was a blow for Kurdish nationalists as it obliged them to be ruled by the Iraqi government, which they would not accept easily. Their acceptance would depend on the intentions of the Iraqi government to fulfil the promised Kurdish rights, and its adoption of a friendly policy towards the Kurds was the only way to obtain their support. However, some of the

Kurds (especially merchants who benefited by their trade with Baghdad and those who held government posts) were satisfied with the Kurdish rights promised in the League Council decision,⁶³² and they appreciated the British policy towards the Kurds of safeguarding their cultural and racial rights.⁶³³ Some of the Kurdish members of the Iraqi Parliament also supported this, as they believed that Kurdish interests lay within the Iraqi state. However, on 2 February 1926, they argued that the participation of Kurds in the government should be proportionate to the number of the Kurds in Iraq, and they asked that one-third of the Iraqi Cabinet should be Kurds. They also stated that the Kurdish language should be used as well as Arabic in the Iraqi Parliament, and that laws should be published in Kurdish as well.⁶³⁴

Sir Henry Dobbs, who succeeded Cox and served as High Commissioner of Iraq from 1923 to 1929, declared that it was essential not to allow the Iraqi government to neglect Kurdish rights, and he declared that he was assured by the Iraqi Cabinet that they would keep the pledges which had been given.⁶³⁵ However, the Kurds feared that the policy of Iraq (like the Turkish policy towards the northern Kurds) would be one of suppression. This policy was adopted by the extreme Iraqi nationalists who held high posts in Iraqi cabinets. Their reason was to preserve the unity of Iraq, as they feared the separation of the Kurds from Iraq, which will be discussed in the next section. They restricted the activities of Kurdish societies such as the Hogiri (Sociability) in Rowandoz and the Znist-i-Kurdi (Literary Society) in the Kurdish Liwas. However, these societies did not have political importance, but tried to spread education in the south to improve Kurdish history, culture and literacy.⁶³⁶ In January 1928, Abdul Muhsin Beg, the Iraqi Prime Minister, tried to prevent the participation of the Kurds in his cabinet, as he stated that there was no suitable Kurd for his new cabinet.⁶³⁷ In fact, there were some Kurds who had the ability to participate in the cabinet. Dobbs did not

⁶³² Special Service Officer at Baghdad to Air Ministry, 16 March 1926, TNA, AIR/23/411.

⁶³³ Intelligence Report Number 3, 30 January 1929, TNA, FO/371/13760, p.3.

⁶³⁴ Intelligence Report Number 4, 18 February 1926, TNA, FO/371/11468, p.3.

⁶³⁵ Intelligence Report Number 3, p.3.

⁶³⁶ Higgins to the Secretary, Air Ministry, 'The Kurdish Movement in Iraq', pp.5-6; Appendix 3, Proposed Organisation of Kurdish Club, 30 March 1927, TNA, FO/371/12255.

⁶³⁷ Intelligence Report Number 2, 20 January 1928, TNA, FO/371/13027, p.3.

agree with this policy, and he warned the Iraqi government that this might cause Kurdish discontent against Iraq.⁶³⁸

It can be said that Dobbs was correct, as the Iraqi government's policy reduced Kurdish sympathy for Iraq and was the main cause for the increase of Kurdish national feeling. Even most of the pro-British elements did not agree with Iraqi policy and worked for Kurdish independence. The most important person was Sheikh Qadir, who had declared for the integration of south Kurdistan with Iraq. When he found that the Arab government was not serious about fulfilling its pledges, he changed direction and worked in favour of the Kurdish nationalists.⁶³⁹ Said Taha was another pro-British leading figure who had aided British interests by securing Rowandoz under the Iraqi government. He was in close contact with the pan-Kurds in south Kurdistan, with the aim of creating Kurdish autonomy within the borders of Iraq under British protection, and also with the discontented Kurds in Persia and the Kurdish nationalists in Turkey.⁶⁴⁰ In addition, most of the Kurdish Deputies in the Chamber also showed their intention to support the Kurdish nationalists. They submitted proposals to the Iraqi Prime Minister in March 1928 in favour of Kurdish autonomy. In these, they asked for the development of Kurdish education services in the Kurdish districts by creating a 'Director-General of Kurdish Education under the Ministry of Education'. They also asked for a new administration for the whole of the southern Kurdish area, with Duhok as its headquarters, and they supported an indirect connection between the Kurdish Liwas and Baghdad, as they preferred that a Kurdish Inspector-General should govern the administration and control the Mutasarifs of the Kurdish Liwas.⁶⁴¹ These demands showed the Kurdish desire for autonomy.

The situation in each part of Kurdistan always affected the other, and so the south was affected by the northern Kurds, who were making a similar request to the Turkish government to establish a special Kurdish administration.⁶⁴² Dobbs also warned the Iraqi government that the increase of northern Kurdish feeling against

⁶³⁸ 'Extract from Speech Made by the Prime Minister to Chamber of Deputies', 21 January 1926, TNA, AIR/23/411.

⁶³⁹ Special Service Office in Sulaimania, 'Events in Sulaimania Prior to H.E.'s Visit', 12 August 1930, TNA, FO/371/14522, p.1.

⁶⁴⁰ Higgins, 'The Kurdish Movement in Iraq', pp.6-7.

⁶⁴¹ Intelligence Report Number 8, 12 April 1929, TNA, FO/371/13760, p.2.

⁶⁴² British Embassy at Constantinople to F.O, Memorandum on the Situation in Kurdistan, 4 January 1928, TNA, FO/371/13032, p.3.

Turkey might affect the Kurdish nationalists in the south.⁶⁴³ This was because a Kurdish nationalist society had been established at Beirut under the name of Khoybun, and this led to the Kurdish rising in north Kurdistan in 1927. The main aim of the society was resistance to Turkish rule, and Doctor Shukri Muhamad, who had escaped from Diyarbakir in Turkey, represented the society in Baghdad and tried to establish branches in south Kurdistan to prepare the Kurds for establishing an independent state. In addition, the crossing of Sheikh Sa'id's relatives to south Kurdistan and the contact of some former Turkish officers with the society caused concern to Britain and the Iraqi government.⁶⁴⁴ To prevent any connection of the society with the southern Kurds, the Iraqi government did not allow Shukri Muhammad to go to Rowandoz. This was because they feared that the aim of his visit was to join with Said Taha and to organise a rising against the Iraqi and Turkish governments.⁶⁴⁵ However, to decrease his influence on the Kurdish tribes and to restrict the Kurdish sentiment in Arbil Liwa, Dobbs transferred Abdul Majid from Arbil to Kirkuk. The main purpose of this was that as he did not have a friendship with Said Taha, he could prevent the activity of the Kurdish nationalists in the Liwa, and as he was of the Turkish race he did not have Kurdish national sentiment and would be willing to work against their activities.⁶⁴⁶

The increase of Kurdish national feeling also obliged the Persian government to think about the prevention of pan-Kurdish activity in east Kurdistan, as they were 'imbued with Nationalist spirit'. Said Taha was accused by the Persians of encouraging the eastern Kurds to work for Kurdish independence and to take action against the Persian government, as he had good relations with them.⁶⁴⁷ To prevent the crossing of nationalist activity from Iraq into Persia, the Persian government closed the border with Iraq and attacked the Mariwan, Avruman, Mamash and Mangor tribes who lived in Persia near the border. The Persians demanded that the Iraqi government should not allow these tribes to enter Iraqi territory. To prevent the southern Kurds from helping them, especially the Avruman tribe in Iraq and Pishdar, the Persian Shah sent Amir Lashkir Abdullah Khan Tahmaspi, the ex-Minister for War, to negotiate with the tribes

⁶⁴³ 'Speech Made by the Prime Minister to Chamber of Deputies', p.2.

⁶⁴⁴ Intelligence Report Number 14, 4 July 1928, TNA, FO/371/13027, p.3.

⁶⁴⁵ Intelligence Report Number 15, 18 July 1928, TNA, FO/371/13027, pp.2,4.

⁶⁴⁶ Dobbs to Iraqi Prime Minister, 22 November 1928, TNA, FO/371/13032, pp.1-2.

⁶⁴⁷ 'Extract Report No. ARB/10/AIR1/8', 7 August 1926, TNA, AIR/23/411, P.2; Clive to Chamberlain, 20 May 1927, TNA, FO/371/12291.

of south Kurdistan. Although Tahmaspi was not successful in gaining the agreement of the southern Kurdish tribes, the eastern nationalists were suppressed.⁶⁴⁸

The activity of the Khoybun society in south Kurdistan also worried the Turks, and at the meeting of the permanent Frontier Commission (established between Iraq and Turkey according to the treaty of 5 June 1926 to discuss frontier issues), the Turkish representatives insisted on the restriction of the activities of the Kurdish nationalists.⁶⁴⁹ The Turks complained to Britain and Iraq that Taha was their enemy and had published propaganda against them, but nevertheless he was allowed to hold a Qimaqam post in the frontier zone.⁶⁵⁰ The Turks were afraid that his presence in Rowandoz threatened the security of their country because he supported Kohybon and he had armed men whom he could send into Turkey.⁶⁵¹ The Turks also blamed the British Consul at Beirut, because after the banning of the society there by the French, he had facilitated them to obtain visas to visit Iraq and work there for the creation of an independent Kurdish state. The Turks were especially worried about the visit of Jaladat Badir Khan, who was very active in Iraq and who since 1919 had worked against Turkish rule and for Kurdish independence.⁶⁵²

It can be argued that the aim of Britain in allowing the leaders of Khoybun to visit or live in Baghdad was to control them. It was known that one of them, Shukri Muhamad, had an agreement with the Soviet government to supply the Kurds with weapons in the case of an outbreak against Turkey.⁶⁵³ Ali Raza, the eldest son of Sheikh Sa'id, who escaped to south Kurdistan, after his disappointment in obtaining British support, discussed the independence of the whole of Kurdistan under a Russian mandate.⁶⁵⁴ Britain feared that an increase of Russian influence over the northern Kurds

⁶⁴⁸ Intelligence Report Number 2, p.5; Intelligence Report Number 13, 21 June 1929, TNA, FO/371/13760, p.2.

⁶⁴⁹ Edmonds to Chamberlain, 16 April 1929, TNA, FO/371/13792.

⁶⁵⁰ Administrative Inspector in Mosul Liwa to the Ministry of Interior at Baghdad, 9 July 1928, TNA, FO/371/13765, p.2.

⁶⁵¹ Air Head Quarters, Iraq Command at Baghdad to High Commissioner of Iraq and et al., 15 June 1928, TNA, FO/371/13032, p.2.

⁶⁵² Administrative Inspector in Mosul Liwa to the Ministry of Interior at Baghdad, p.3; British Liaison Officer to FO, 5 September 1928, TNA, FO/371/13037, p.1; Intelligence Report Number 14, p.3; Holt to Advisor to the Ministry of Interior at Baghdad, 4 July 1928, TNA, FO/371/13032.

⁶⁵³ Air Head Quarters, Iraq Command at Baghdad to High Commissioner of Iraq and et al., p.4.

⁶⁵⁴ Administrative Inspector at Mosul Liwa to Advisor to Ministry of Interior at Baghdad, 28 July 1926, TNA, AIR/23/411; 'Extract Report No. ARB/10/AIR1/8', p.1.

would threaten their interests in the Near East, as Britain believed that Russia was seeking to make trouble.⁶⁵⁵ However, it was not correct that Russia had threatened British interests in south Kurdistan, as Othman Ali has mentioned.⁶⁵⁶ This was because the leaders of Kurdistan who were living in exile in Baghdad, and were members of the Khoybun society, were strictly controlled by the police and were prevented from contacting the southern Kurdish nationalists.⁶⁵⁷

For the sake of maintaining good relations with Turkey, Britain was obliged not to permit Jaladat Badir Khan to come to Iraq again or to go to Persia.⁶⁵⁸ Said Taha was also informed that he should resign his post, and if he could reach an agreement with the Persian government, he could leave and reside there.⁶⁵⁹ After the complaint of the Turks about the settlement of the Assyrians in the vicinity of the frontier, accusing them of helping the Kurdish rising led by Ihsan Nuri Pasha, Britain agreed to transfer 60 Assyrian families from the Turco-Iraqi border to the Bradost area.⁶⁶⁰ However, Britain did not accept the further Turkish demand, which was supported by the Iraqi government, to permit their troops to cross into Iraqi territory to continue their operations against the Kurdish rising near the border, which continued until 1930 and was strongly suppressed by the Turks. Britain believed that the Turks should be responsible for protecting their own border with Iraq, but both Britain and Iraq agreed to undertake an operation against Sheikh Ahmed of Barzan who was accused by Turkey of helping the northern Kurds, which will be discussed later.⁶⁶¹ The policy of the Turks against the northern Kurds influenced the Iraqi government in their lack of fulfilment of Kurdish rights in the south, which was a major cause of the unhappiness of the Kurds.

⁶⁵⁵ 'The Kurdish Movement in Iraq', p.8.

⁶⁵⁶ Ali, *Chand Lekolinawaiak Darbaray Bzafi Hawcharkhi Kurd*, volume 2, p.180.

⁶⁵⁷ Fifth Session of the Permanent Frontier Commission, 19 November 1928, TNA, FO/371/13765, p.4.

⁶⁵⁸ Holt to Advisor to the Ministry of Interior at Baghdad, 4 July 1928, TNA, FO/371/13032; Intelligence Report Number 14, p.3.

⁶⁵⁹ Intelligence Report Number 22, 24 October 1928, TNA, FO/371/13027, p.1.

⁶⁶⁰ British Consul at Tabriz to Clive and et al., 14 September 1930, TNA, FO/371/14580, p.1; Chamberlain to Ferid Bey, 4 December 1928, TNA, FO/371/13032.

⁶⁶¹ High Commissioner of Iraq to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 27 September 1930, TNA, FO/371/14580.

5.3 Kurdish rights under Iraqi rule

After four years of the integration of south Kurdistan, the Kurds still waited to obtain their rights from the Iraq government. In July 1930, the Iraqi government declared that they were serious about implementing the rights to appoint Kurds and to educate the Kurdish children in primary school in their mother language, and not to force the Kurds to use the Arabic language in the Kurdish districts.⁶⁶² However, it can be said that this did not reduce the Kurdish desire for their separation from Iraq, because the Iraqi pledges were considered by the Kurds as empty promises which would have no practical effects. The Kurds believed that the new Anglo-Iraqi Treaty which was signed on 30 June 1930 at Baghdad denied the existence of the Kurdish question, as it did not mention the Kurds.⁶⁶³ In addition, as the treaty maintained the Royal Air Force in Iraq, they feared that it did not include a provision to prevent its use against them by the Iraq government.⁶⁶⁴ This was the main cause of Kurdish nervousness, because they believed that their future would not be safe under the rule of the Iraqi government, especially after Iraq joined the League of Nations.⁶⁶⁵ However, Britain and Iraq justified that it was unnecessary to mention the Kurdish name in the treaty, as the treaty only concerned Anglo-Iraqi relations.⁶⁶⁶

The anxiety of the Kurds was apparent before the signing of the treaty, because the Arabic press published the news that negotiations between Britain and Iraq had begun. The Kurdish Deputies in Baghdad also had information about the treaty, as Ma'ruf Jiawk, the chief leader of the Kurdish society in Baghdad, which was named Komalai Pshtiawani Kurdan (the League of Kurdish Supporters),⁶⁶⁷ and a Kurdish Deputy for Arbil, contacted the Kurdish leaders to obtain their support to force Britain

⁶⁶² Proceeding of the Council of Ministers meeting, 17 July 1930, TNA, CO/730/157/5.

⁶⁶³ In 1926, Iraq and Britain had signed a treaty, according to which Britain would support the admission of Iraq to the League of Nations in 1932, but would regulate their relations until 1932, and have a close alliance for 25 years, Brooke-Popham to Iraqi Prime Minister, 14 September 1929, TNA, FO/371/13759; Abdulmusin Al Sa'dun to Robert, 25 September 1929, Ibid.

⁶⁶⁴ Humphrys to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1 July 1930, TNA, CAB/24/214/7.

⁶⁶⁵ Tawfiq Wahbi to High Commissioner of Iraq, 19 April 1931, TNA, CO/730/161/2, p.3.

⁶⁶⁶ Young to Prime Minister, 1 August 1930, TNA, FO/371/14522, p.1.

⁶⁶⁷ The main aims of the society were the direction of Kurdish opinion against the Assyrians who had forced the Kurds to leave their lands, an admission by Iraq that it was composed of Kurds and Arabs and should treat them equally, and pressure on the Iraqi Government to fulfil the decision of the League about the use of the Kurdish language and the appointment of officials in the Kurdish areas. 'Extract from Police Abstract of Intelligence No.5', 17 February 1930, TNA, AIR/23/416.

and Iraq to make a provision for Kurdish rights in the treaty.⁶⁶⁸ Moreover, in April 1930, Jiawk and other Kurdish Deputies sent petitions to the High Commissioner of Iraq which were supported by other petitions from the Jaf, Hamawand, Dawda, Pishdar, Shuwan and other tribes. The petitions aimed to protect the national and traditional rights of the Kurds within Iraq, and they believed that these rights would only be protected by introducing a special law for defining the boundary of south Kurdistan and establishing friendly relations between it and the Arabs.⁶⁶⁹ On 26 July 1930, another petition from Sulaimania was sent to the League of Nations, which had been signed by many prominent people of the town, such as Sheikh Qadir, Ramzi Effendi and Tawfiq Qazaz. They stated that the rights which were promised by the League had not been fulfilled by the Iraqi government, as the majority of the officials in south Kurdistan were Arabs. They also showed their fear that after the British mandate ended, the behaviour of these Arab officials would be even more repressive than the Turks, and they asked for the establishment of an independent Kurdish state under the mandate of the League of Nations.⁶⁷⁰

The reason for the Kurdish requests for their separation from Iraq (as Sir Francis Humphrys, the High Commissioner of Iraq from 1929 to 1932, pointed out) was because of the unhappiness of the Kurds within Iraq. He stated that this was due to the abandonment of the Treaty of Sèvres, because the Kurds believed that instead of gaining their independent state, they had been forced to be under Arab rule.⁶⁷¹ The Special Service Officer in Kirkuk suggested a different reason, as he stated that the Kurds would never be pleased with the Iraqi government because it was an Arab administration. He indicated that the word Arab had been, and always would be, 'an anathema to the Kurd'.⁶⁷² The Kurds felt that as they were a different race and had a different language, they should have a separate administration, and they did not want to pay taxes to the Arab government. They believed that by collecting the taxes the Iraqi government would increase its revenue, but they would not spend it to improve the

⁶⁶⁸ Special Service Officer of RAF at Mosul to Air Ministry, 9 March 1930, TNA, AIR/23/416, pp.1-2.

⁶⁶⁹ Intelligence Report Number 8, 16 May 1930, TNA, CO/730/157/5.

⁶⁷⁰ Some of the Kurdish Petitioners in Sulaimania to the Secretary of the League of Nations at Geneva, 26 July 1930, TNA, FO/371/15311.

⁶⁷¹ Humphrys to Williams, 26 March 1831, TNA, CO/730/161/1, pp.1-2.

⁶⁷² Clayton to Iraqi Prime Minister, 20 April 1929, TNA, FO/371/13759, p.2.

southern Kurdish areas.⁶⁷³ Some of the Kurdish tribes even attacked other villages which paid to the Iraqi government; for example in April 1929, 50 Pishdar rifles attacked a village in Sharbazher Qdha and burnt the village.⁶⁷⁴ The Kurds feared their suppression by the Arab government, and they mentioned in their petitions the presence of Arab troops in south Kurdistan. The Kurds had told Britain that the best way to protect them would be to withdraw the Arab army from south Kurdistan,⁶⁷⁵ although with some British officers remaining in south Kurdistan, and then they would feel safe and agree to live under Arab rule. However, Britain did not accept this, as Humphrys stated that after terminating their mandate, they could not oblige the Iraqi government to protect the Kurds because this would be the duty of the League of Nations, and the best solution was the implementation of the promised Kurdish rights.⁶⁷⁶

The main frustrations of the Kurdish petitioners, as noted at the time by Hubert Young, the Accredited Representative of the Mandatory Power of Iraq, were not only because their name was omitted from the 1930 treaty, but also because their rights and claims were denied by the Iraqi government.⁶⁷⁷ To prevent the appointment of a Kurd as the Assistant to the Director-General of Administration, and the employment of Kurdish officials in the Kurdish districts, the Iraqi government endeavoured to rely on language rather than race.⁶⁷⁸ In this way, the Iraq government tried to show that there was no difference between the Kurds and Arabs, and that if they could employ Kurds outside Kurdistan, they could also employ Arabs in the Kurdish areas.⁶⁷⁹ It can be said that by this policy the Iraqi government aimed to employ Arab Kurdish speakers in the Kurdish areas and to fill the important government posts with them instead of with Kurds. Moreover, they intended to neglect the implementation of the Kurdish language in some government departments, as they did not establish an adequate Translation Bureau for translating laws into the Kurdish language. For instance, in Arbil the language of the Courts was Arabic, the proceedings and judgments were also

⁶⁷³ Special Service Officer at Kirkuk to Air Office, Notes on the Question of Kurdish Independence, 18 February 1926, TNA, AIR/23/411.

⁶⁷⁴ Intelligence Report Number 9, 26 April 1929, TNA, FO/371/13760, p.3.

⁶⁷⁵ Intelligence Report Number 8, p.2; 'The Kurdish Movement in Iraq', TNA, FO/371/12255, p.5.

⁶⁷⁶ Humphrys to Williams, TNA, CO/730/161/1, pp.1-2.

⁶⁷⁷ Tawfiq Wahbi to High Commissioner of Iraq, 19 April 1931, TNA, CO/730/161/2, p.3.

⁶⁷⁸ Advisor to the Ministry of Interior at Baghdad to High Commissioner, 18 August 1930, TNA, CO/730/157/5, p.1.

⁶⁷⁹ High Commissioner of Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 6 August 1930, TNA, CO/730/157/5.

documented in Arabic, and the circulars, laws and regulations sent to the Kurdish Liwas were in Arabic. This was because unqualified staffs were appointed by Iraq to the Kurdish Liwas as translators.⁶⁸⁰

Another reason for the neglect of the language pledge was the Iraqi policy of delaying the issue of the draft language law which was about administrative, judicial and educational matters.⁶⁸¹ This was the aim of the Iraqi nationalists, as they tried to create difficulties about enacting the law, whilst the Parliamentary Legal Committee finished their examination of the law, but did not send their report to the Chamber to pass the law.⁶⁸² This related to the textual amendments of some articles of the law, as the non-Kurdish Deputies wanted to insert the word 'local' before the description 'Kurds', in order to show that the southern Kurds were part of Iraq. They believed that the best way to keep the Kurds in Iraq was to prevent the creation of a standard language for their education and courts. Nuri claimed that the divergence of the Kurdish dialects would prevent this, and he stated that his cabinet did not want to use the Sorani dialect as standard for Kurdish language, which was used in most of the southern Kurdish areas, whereas in the Mosul Qadhas this dialect was not common. The Iraqi government feared that a standard Kurdish language would increase Kurdish national feeling, and this might worry the Turkish and Persian governments, as they might believe that the Iraqi government was encouraging the political unity of the Kurds by unifying their national language. However, this argument raised other difficulties, because it would oblige the Ministry of Education to translate text books into different dialects in the schools, and it would create difficulty in the proceedings of the courts which should be recorded in the various dialects.⁶⁸³

The Iraqi government tried to prevent Kurdish separatism by destroying their national culture, as they were against the improvement of education in the southern Kurdish region. Although a committee was established at the Ministry of Education to examine the system of study in Kurdish schools,⁶⁸⁴ the Kurdish Education Area was

⁶⁸⁰ Note by Cornwallis, 23 April, 1930, TNA, CO/730/157/5, p.10.

⁶⁸¹ Al-Askari to Young, 'Statement adopted by the Iraqi Cabinet to be read by Jafar Pasha in Kurdistan', 5 August 1930, TNA, FO/371/14522.

⁶⁸² Humphrys to Faisal, 29 January 1931, TNA, CO/730/161/1.

⁶⁸³ 'Discussion of Iraqi questions by Permanent Mandate Commission', 12 June 1931, TNA, FO/371/15318, pp.9-12.

⁶⁸⁴ Wilkins to Advisor to Ministry of Interior at Baghdad, Translations of Letters found on Airs Ohanness Moor, 30 May 1927, TNA, FO/371/12255, pp.1-2.

administered by an Arab Area Education Officer at Baghdad. The main target of the Arab nationalists was the use of the Kurdish language in elementary instruction, but the lack of full secondary schools also prevented the Kurds from being educated properly. Whilst the Iraqi government explained that the main cause of the unfulfillment of their promises about education in the Kurdish areas was a lack of funds, qualified Kurdish teachers and text books,⁶⁸⁵ it can be seen that this policy belonged to the Arab nationalist agenda against Kurdish development as they did not allocate a sufficient budget to the education sector. This was a political decision, and Dobbs showed in his memorandum that it was not related to the finances of Iraq as its economy developed.⁶⁸⁶ In addition, the Iraqi government tried to appoint Arab teachers in south Kurdistan, and they did not take steps to educate the Kurds in Baghdad and appoint them in the Kurdish Liwas to replace the Arab teachers. Only 21 of the 49 teachers in the Kurdish districts were Kurds, and nine of the Arabs did not know any Kurdish. The Iraqi government restricted the translation of text books into Kurdish, and so in the Arbil and Mosul schools, only Arabic text books were used. In addition, there were no primary schools in some Qadhas, such as Guli, Sindi and Barwari Bala.⁶⁸⁷

Britain believed that to gain the consent of the Kurds, the Iraqi government should make some concessions. Kinahan Cornwallis, the British Advisor to the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior, stated that the Kurdish areas were 'bound to the Iraq government by the slenderest ties of loyalties', and if the Iraqi government did not embrace a more generous policy there was 'a great danger of these ties being broken'. He informed the Iraqi government that unless the Kurds were reassured that their rights would be preserved, they would send more petitions which might threaten the admission of Iraq to the League.⁶⁸⁸ He was against the intention of the Arab nationalists to deal with the Kurdish rights as they declared that there was no Kurdish question, and Cornwallis believed that the Iraqi government should not follow the Turkish policy of suppressing the Kurds. He stated that it would be a great mistake if the Iraqi government adopted this policy, because the desire of the Kurds for their separation would be

⁶⁸⁵ High Commissioner of Iraq to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 27 February 1931, section titled 'The Kurds, The Treaty of Sevres', TNA, CO/730/161/2, p.21.

⁶⁸⁶ Dobbs to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 7 February 1929, TNA, CAB/24/201/29, p.1.

⁶⁸⁷ Cornwallis to Minister of Interior, 4 February 1931, TNA, CO/730/161/2, pp.3-5.

⁶⁸⁸ Cornwallis to Lyon and et al., 6 July 1930, TNA, CO/730/157/5, pp.3-4.

increased.⁶⁸⁹ However, his advice was rejected by Iraqi Prime Minister, as he believed that any concession to the Kurds would affect good relations with Turkey and Persia, and would break the peace between them. Moreover, the Iraqi Prime Minister accused Cornwallis of encouraging the establishment of a Kurdish independent state, and he claimed that although the Treaty of Sèvres had been cancelled, his policy was based on the treaty.⁶⁹⁰

It can be said that Britain had a different attitude towards the Kurds, as its officials considered how to obtain Kurdish loyalty to Iraq. Their agenda was to provide a good life for the Kurds within Iraq and to prevent their separation, by preserving their language, customs and traditions. These were essential to observe the decision of the League about Kurdish rights and to convince the Kurds. The British officials believed that as the Iraqi government had not fulfilled their rights, the Kurds did not trust them, which was a great cause of the animosity of the Kurds towards the Iraqi government.⁶⁹¹ On 24 July 1930, Humphrys tried to calm the Kurds, and he discussed with Faisal and Nuri Pasha the acceptance of two further conditions. The Kurds had suggested that a new Kurdish Educational Area should be responsible for south Kurdistan, instead of the present Education Officer, who had only a limited power, and also that full secondary schools should be established in Arbil and Sulaimania. However, Faisal and Nuri Pasha did not accept this proposal, justifying their decision by saying that they could not impose this upon the Cabinet. They stated that if they did so, the cabinet would resent it and might resign, as they had already refused these conditions.⁶⁹² Moreover, Nuri tried to make a difficulty about the establishment of the Area Education Officer and Inspector, that financial stringency would prevent this, although the difference in cost of the change was not more than 120 rupees monthly. He also argued that the number of schools in the Kurdish areas did not justify the appointment of an Education Officer, and instructed the Mutasarif of Sulaimania to introduce Arabic 'as medium of instruction in higher classes of full primary schools'.⁶⁹³

⁶⁸⁹ Note by Cornwallis, p.14.

⁶⁹⁰ Al-Sa'id to Francis, 16 February 1931, TNA, FO/371/15311, p.3.

⁶⁹¹ High Commissioner of Iraq to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 27 February 1931, TNA, CO/730/161/2, p.21.

⁶⁹² Hall to Grindle, 24 July 1930, TNA, CO/730/157/5; High Commissioner of Iraq to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 18 July 1930, TNA, FO/371/14521; Secretary of State for the Colonies to High Commissioner, 22 July 1930, Ibid.

⁶⁹³ High Commissioner of Iraq to Secretary State for the Colonies, 23 July 1930, TNA, CO/730/157/5.

The main aim of the Iraqi nationalists in not establishing full secondary schools in south Kurdistan was to prevent the Kurds from obtaining the qualifications which were required to fill government posts. For example, the Assistant Commandants of Police and Police Inspectors were appointed from the graduates of the law and military schools, and the secondary and teacher's training schools, and therefore most of the Kurds were not eligible.⁶⁹⁴ By this policy, the Iraqi government employed many Arab officers in the Kurdish Liwas who did not know the Kurdish language and who always needed interpreters, and they did not even try to address the shortage of Kurdish police officers in Kurdish Liwas by training and preparing them.⁶⁹⁵ This policy was much worse in Arbil Liwa, due to the anti-Kurdish feeling of its Turkish Mutasarif, who had been transferred by Dobbs temporarily, but was then retained by the Iraqi government to work against Kurdish national feeling.⁶⁹⁶

Although the British and Iraqi governments had differences about the implementation of Kurdish rights, they agreed to take steps against the Kurdish demand for independence. Britain stated that the Kurds had misunderstood the decision of the League, and that they would be disillusioned that there was no agenda to create a separate state. They accused the Kurdish nationalists in Sulaimania who worked for Kurdish independence of publishing such propaganda,⁶⁹⁷ and of contacting the Kurdish nationalists in the Kirkuk Liwas to organise them against the Iraqi government.⁶⁹⁸ Britain emphasised that the separation of south Kurdistan was impracticable and was not in the interests of the Kurds economically or geographically, as they did not have the 'characteristic cohesion' which was very important for 'successful self-government'. In addition, it was stated that as their organisations were tribal and they were illiterate, they did not have any sense of responsibility and discipline. Britain insisted that due to these points, their separation was impossible as it would increase chaos and unrest in south Kurdistan.⁶⁹⁹ It can be seen that whilst the organisations of

⁶⁹⁴ 'A Meeting was held in the Ministry of Interior ... to discuss the question of the application of the Local Language Law', 7 October 1931, TNA, CO/730/161/1, p.5.

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid, pp.6-7; Note by Cornwallis, p.8.

⁶⁹⁶ Ibid; Dobbs to Iraqi Prime Minister, pp.3-5.

⁶⁹⁷ Hall to Flood, 13 October 1930, TNA,CO/730/157/6, p.8; 'Comments of His Majesty's Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland upon the Petition dated 26 July presented by Azmi Beg Baban and fellow signatories', 5 September 1930, TNA, FO/371/14523, p.2.

⁶⁹⁸ 'Events in Sulaimania Prior to H.E.'s Visit', p.1.

⁶⁹⁹ 'Comments of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland upon the Petition dated 26 July', pp.3-4.

the Kurds were not much different from the Arabs, the main problem of the Kurds was that they would easily follow foreign agendas if these fitted with their immediate interests, even if these agendas might in future be opposed to Kurdish interests. For example, when the Commission of the League came to south Kurdistan in 1925, instead of putting pressure on it to add another option of Kurdish independence, they declared either for Turkey or for Iraq. Moreover, after the agreement between Britain, Iraq and Turkey in 1926 to integrate south Kurdistan with Iraq, the Kurds were neglected because these countries no longer needed them to favour their policy. Although most of these Kurds began to help the Kurdish nationalists when they found that their interests were not be protected under the Iraqi government, this did not help the Kurdish question because the decision of the Council League obliged them to live with the Arabs.

To clarify their policy towards the Kurdish demand for their separation, in August 1930, the High Commissioner of Iraq and the Iraqi Prime Minister visited Kirkuk, Arbil and Sulaimania. The main aim of their visit was to convince the Kurds that there was no possibility of establishing a separate Kurdish government, and to reconcile them to living with the Arabs by promising that their rights would be protected under the Iraqi government even after the end of the British mandate.⁷⁰⁰ This step encouraged the Kurds in Kirkuk and Arbil to disclaim their idea to separate from Iraq (except Ma'ruf Jiawk),⁷⁰¹ as instead they demanded the implementation of their rights and equal treatment for the Kurdish liwas. They viewed the Iraqi government as an Arab government,⁷⁰² because it restricted the participation of the Kurds in its cabinet and the high posts which were crucial for changing the Kurdish view that the Iraqi government discriminated between them and the Arabs. However, the result of the visit to Sulaimania was not successful, and most of the Kurds did not welcome them, as the Kurds in the town still demanded the establishment of an independent Kurdish state under the mandate of Britain or the League of Nations.⁷⁰³ The main reason for the failure of the tour was the statement of the Iraqi Prime Minister that the League of

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid., p.1; *Whitehall Gazette*, July to August 1931, TNA, CO/730/161/1, pp.38-39.

⁷⁰¹ High Commissioner of Iraq to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 13 August 1930, TNA, CO/730/157/5.

⁷⁰² Kitching to Kinahan, 11 August 1930, TNA, CO/730/157/5.

⁷⁰³ Ibid.

Nations did not oblige them to rely on race when appointing the officials in south Kurdistan.⁷⁰⁴

The Kurds signed a new petition for obtaining their rights which included most of the previous petition's names, but their demand was neglected by the Iraqi government, as they were invited to elect an Inspection Committee under the Electoral Law which would begin on 6 September 1930.⁷⁰⁵ The government summoned the Kurdish leaders who opposed participation in the election and warned them that the election would be proceeded with and that they would be held responsible for any deterioration of the peace.⁷⁰⁶ However, apart from a few notables and merchants, most of the Kurds boycotted the election and rose against Iraqi government, which will be discussed later.⁷⁰⁷ The British and Iraqi governments believed that the situation in the town was getting worse because of Tawfiq Wahbi Beg, the Mutasarif of Sulaimania. He was accused of advising the people to boycott the election and of publishing petitions in the local newspaper which encouraged them to take action against the Iraqi government.⁷⁰⁸

The Iraqi government wanted to suppress those who worked to establish a Kurdish state by taking punitive action against them. On 17 August 1930, the Iraqi Cabinet decided to dismiss Tawfiq Wahbi and to appoint in his place Ahmed Beg of Tawfiq Beg, a former Mutasarif of the Liwa.⁷⁰⁹ They also arrested 10 people who had signed petitions and accused them of organising and participating in a Kurdish rising, and sent them to Kirkuk for trial. However, seven of them were soon released, as the court had no evidence of their participation in political activity against the Iraqi government, but Tawfiq Qazaz and Ramzi Effendi (who were the most influential persons) were not released until 22 November 1930, and Sheikh Qadir was obliged to pay 5000 rupees and was also exiled to Nasiriya for 12 months.⁷¹⁰ His punishment was not because his guilt of taking part in a rising was proved, but because the British and

⁷⁰⁴ *Whitehall Gazette*, July to August 1931, p.39.

⁷⁰⁵ High Commissioner of Iraq to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 27 February 1931, section titled 'The Sulaimania Election Disturbances', TNA, CO/730/161/2, pp.28-29.

⁷⁰⁶ 'Extract from Summary of Intelligence by Wing Commander K.C. Buss', 8 September 1930, TNA, CO/730/157/6.

⁷⁰⁷ Alban to the Advisor to Ministry of Interior, 11 September 1930, TNA, CO/730/157/6, pp.1-2.

⁷⁰⁸ Al-Sa'id to Political Secretary, the Residency, 18 October 1930, TNA, CO/730/157/8, pp.4-5.

⁷⁰⁹ Intelligence Report Number 18, 1 September 1930, TNA, CO/730/157/6.

⁷¹⁰ Intelligence Report Number 18; Aviation to Air Ministry, 24 November 1930, TNA, AIR/23/231.

Iraqi governments believed that his return would be dangerous for the peace of Sulaimania, and especially they feared that he might be encouraging his brother, Mahmud, to take action against Iraq.⁷¹¹

The arrest of the Kurdish leaders was considered by the Kurds as an act of revenge by the Iraqi government against those who had signed the petitions.⁷¹² Sheikh Qadir complained that after their arrest the police had asked them about the reason for their signing of the petition and had stated that their arrest was due to this.⁷¹³ In addition, Tawfiq Qazaz accused those who worked against the Kurdish nationalists, such as the new Mutasarif of Sulaimania, of signing a petition against him, and that Murad Beg, the Commandant of police in Sulaimania, had threatened people to obtain false evidence and witnesses against him.⁷¹⁴ However, Young refuted this and stated that they had been arrested because of their activities against the Iraqi government.⁷¹⁵ Another anxiety of the Kurds was the expulsion of Wahbi, as the Kurdish nationalists feared that the new Mutasarif would discourage their national spirit, and so signed a petition to complain about this decision and ask for his reinstatement to the post of Mutasarif.⁷¹⁶ However, the Iraqi government defended itself by stating that there was no intention to prosecute the Kurdish leaders who showed their wish to establish their separate state, and that it was a normal procedure to replace Wahbi by another Kurdish Mutasarif.⁷¹⁷ It is possible to argue that the intention of the Iraqi Minister of the Interior to eject all Qaimaqams and Mudir of Nahias who were in opposition to Baghdad was evidence that the claim of the Iraqi government that it did not oppress the Kurdish leaders was not correct. The Iraqi strategy was to ‘institute proceedings under the Penal Code against certain Kurdish agitators’, as they believed that if they allowed these

⁷¹¹ Humphrys to Passfield and et al., 13 February 1931, TNA, CO/730/161/1.

⁷¹² Hormuzd Rassam to Passfield, 24 October 1930, TNA, FO/371/14523.

⁷¹³ ‘Petition of the Kurdish people of southern Kurdistan now resident in Iraq’, 23 March 1931, TNA, FO/371/15311.

⁷¹⁴ Ibid.

⁷¹⁵ Wahbi to High Commissioner of Iraq, ‘Statement made to refute the statement made by Major Young’, 19 April 1930, TNA, FO/371/15311.

⁷¹⁶ ‘Extract from Intelligence Report No. 18, 19 September 1930, TNA, CO/730/157/6.

⁷¹⁷ Secretary of State for the Colonies to High Commissioner of Iraq, 21 August 1930, TNA, FO/371/14522.

Kurdish activities to continue the Iraqi government would be discredited and they might not be able to control the Kurdish areas.⁷¹⁸

It seemed clear that the Iraqi government was not afraid of taking punitive measures, as they believed that Britain would use its influence at Geneva against any threat to the unity of Iraq. However, J.H. Hall of the Colonial Office emphasised that the Iraqi government could not solve the Kurdish problem permanently by force, and that such a policy would not end the unrest and disturbances in south Kurdistan.⁷¹⁹ In addition, Britain believed that the prosecution of the Kurdish leaders at the same time that Britain was submitting the Kurdish petition to the League 'might create an unfavourable impression at Geneva'.⁷²⁰ Britain encouraged Iraq to make a friendly move towards the Kurds to conciliate them, by informing them that the program of the Iraqi government was in the interests of the Kurds and would protect their rights. Cornwallis stated that the Kurds should be informed that their petition was forwarded to the League and they should wait for the decision of the League. However, to prevent separatist propaganda from Sulaimania, as the Iraqi government was concerned about this, he advised the Iraqi Prime Minister that the Mutasarifs of Kirkuk and Arbil should have a close relationship with the Iraqi government.⁷²¹

It can be seen that Britain tried to prevent a deterioration of the Kurdish situation due to the policy of the Iraqi government, and Britain was also certain that due to its submission to the Permanent Mandate Commission, the latter would decide to preserve the unity of Iraq. Although Britain knew that the Iraqi government had not completely fulfilled the pledges which had been given to the Kurds, Britain had to present the view that the League Council resolution of 16 December 1925 had been implemented. This was because in its annual report to the Commission in 1926, Britain had testified that the recommendations of the League 'were superfluous as the Iraq government had been actually giving effect to that policy'.⁷²² In its comment to the League, Britain indicated that the policy of the Iraqi government was not the cause of

⁷¹⁸ Ibid.; Advisor to the Ministry of Interior at Baghdad to Ministry of Interior, 18 August 1930, TNA, CO/730/157/5, p.1.

⁷¹⁹ Hall to Flood, TNA, CO/730/157/6, pp.4-5.

⁷²⁰ Secretary of State for the Colonies to High Commissioner of Iraq, 21 August 1930, TNA, FO/371/14522.

⁷²¹ Advisor to the Ministry of Interior at Baghdad to Minister of Interior, TNA, CO/730/157/5, p.5.

⁷²² Al-Sa'id to the Political Secretary, the Residency, 18 October 1930, TNA, CO/730/157/8, p.7.

the dissatisfaction of the Kurds.⁷²³ Britain tried to brush the issue of the Kurdish rights under the carpet so as not to complicate its relations with an independent Iraq. In addition, Britain requested the rejection of the petitions of the Kurds, as they asked for the establishment of a Kurdish state under the mandate of the League of Nations. After this, in its nineteenth session on 22 January 1931, the Commission decided to reject the Kurdish petitions because it believed that the League's pledge had been wrongly interpreted by them. The Commission stated that the decision of the League was for 'special treatment for the Kurds', but they were not sure that this had been completely carried out. The Commission also asked the mandatory power to find out if the administrative and legislative measures intended to protect the position of the Kurds had been fulfilled and accomplished appropriately. The last decision also took into account possible measures to ensure that the position of the Kurds would be protected when the guarantees provided by Britain were withdrawn.⁷²⁴

It can be seen that the Commission did not approve the implementation of the announced Kurdish policy of the Iraqi government, but since 1926 the Iraqi government had not reduced the number of Kurdish-speaking non-Kurdish officials, which caused instability in south Kurdistan because the Kurds realised that their attitude would be hostile to their aspirations.⁷²⁵ These two tables showed that the number of non-Kurdish officials in south Kurdistan had increased:

⁷²³ Humphrys to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 19 December 1930, TNA, FO/371/15310, p.1.

⁷²⁴ 'Extract from the Report to the Council on the work of the nineteenth session of the Permanent Mandate Commission', 29 October 1930, TNA, FO/371/14523.

⁷²⁵ 'Note by Oriental Secretary', 8 September 1931, TNA, CO/730/161/3, p.3.

Ministries and Services	Total number of employees	Kurds	Non-Kurds
Finance and Interior	57	34	23
Justice	30	10	20
Public Services	55	38	17
Total	142	82	60

Figure 4: Kurdish and non-Kurdish officials in south Kurdistan in 1926.⁷²⁶

Districts	No. of employees	Kurds	Non-Kurds
Mosul	152	52	100
Kirkuk	232	42	190
Arbil	199	115	84
Sulaimania	173	125	48
Total	756	334	422

Figure 5: Kurdish and non-Kurdish Officials in the Kurdish Qadhas of Mosul and Kurdish Liwas from 1926 to 30 December 1930.⁷²⁷

The first table demonstrates that in 1926 more than half of the 142 employees in south Kurdistan were Kurds, and the number of Kurds exceeded that of the non-Kurds by 22. However, although the number of non-Kurds was less overall, they accounted for 67% of the officials of the Ministry of Justice. The second table shows that until beginning of 1931, the appointment of non-Kurdish officials had increased, as their number in the Kurdish Qadhas of Mosul was 66%. In Kirkuk Liwa, although more than half of its population were Kurds, nearly 82% of Turks and Arabs were employed, In addition, in Arbil, 42% were not Kurds, but in Sulaimania the figure was not high, as

⁷²⁶ Letter from Britain to the Secretary to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations and Proceedings of the Council of the League Regarding the Determination of the Turco-Iraq Frontier and the Application to Iraq of the Provisions of Article 22 of the Covenant of the League, 2 and 11 March 1926, TNA, CO/730/157/6, p.4.

⁷²⁷ Humphrys to Iraqi Prime Minister, 29 May 1931, TNA, FO/371/15312, p.2.

they were only about 28%. By comparing both tables, it can be seen that the number of non-Kurdish officials had increased from 42% to 56%, and the number of non-Kurds surpassed that of the Kurds by 84. The figure of Kurdish employees in the Kurdish districts had decreased to 44% which was the opposite of the intention of the League Council, and demonstrates that the Iraqi government had not fulfilled its pledges.

Britain was afraid that the Permanent Mandate Commission would not approve of the Iraqi policy towards the Kurds.⁷²⁸ For this reason, Iraq was advised not to employ the non-Kurdish officials in south Kurdistan. Iraq justified this on the grounds that they had problems finding suitable and qualified Kurds for the technical services, and they stated that the Kurds did not have enough experience to govern themselves as most of them were engaged in agriculture.⁷²⁹ However, Britain endeavoured to increase the balance of Kurdish officials, and believed that special safeguards should be considered for their appointment. Britain believed that by giving educational facilities, the Kurds would become able to fill the posts in south Kurdistan, otherwise the impediment of the education question would enable the dismissal of the Kurds 'by the Arabs in competition for posts in the civil service'.⁷³⁰ However, the Iraqi Prime Minister stated that whilst there were officials in the Kurdish districts who did not know Kurdish, instead of appointing Kurds, he recommended that the officials should learn the language, and if they did not, they would be replaced by those who were acquainted with Kurdish.⁷³¹ It can be argued that this policy could be considered as the Arabisation of the southern Kurdish areas. This was because the Iraqi government did not adhere to the British recommendation to educate the Kurds, which was the only way to solve the lack of technical Kurdish officials. For instance, the Iraqi government had difficulties in finding suitable qualified officials in several sectors, such as health, who spoke Kurdish.⁷³²

The fear of Britain about the possibility of the Commission criticising the Iraqi policy was increased after a petition was sent to Geneva by Tawfiq Wahbi in April 1931 which was supported by most of the Kurds in Sulaimania and by the Khoybun

⁷²⁸ Ibid., p.1.

⁷²⁹ Comments of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland upon the Petition dated 26 July, p.5.

⁷³⁰ 'Note by Oriental Secretary', p.3.

⁷³¹ Meeting of the Ministry of Interior, p.2.

⁷³² Ibid., p.3.

society. Wahbi declared his fear about the Arabisation of south Kurdistan, and he argued that the Kurds were a different race from the Arabs, pointing out that their languages were totally different and that Arabs had never lived in south Kurdistan, apart from a few tribes in the vicinity of Kirkuk and Arbil. He complained that whilst there was a great number of Kurds who had the ability to fill government posts, the Iraqi government had excluded them and replaced them by the Arabs. In addition, the Iraqi statement that they did not discriminate between the different nationalities was not true, as not one of the 20 Director Generals employed outside Kurdistan was Kurdish, and there was no Kurdish diplomat abroad. His petition also showed that whilst the Kurds had a different history and geography, the Kurdish school program was the same as the Arab, which would badly affect the character and psychology of the Kurdish learner. Another point which Wahbi mentioned in his petition was the bad situation in the health sector, as there were not enough doctors. He also pointed to the neglect of irrigation and agriculture by the Iraqi government, as he stated that whilst south Kurdistan was a rich area for growing tobacco, the volume of production had decreased since 1926.⁷³³ This petition led to Faisal's visit to Sulaimania and Halabja on 10 June 1931, when he promised not to distinguish between the Arabs and the Kurds, and tried to improve and extend the schools and the health sector, and to revive the agricultural, economic and commercial resources of south Kurdistan.⁷³⁴ This can be considered as a diplomatic step to satisfy the Kurds so that they would not create further trouble for the Iraqi government before Iraq's acceptance into the League of Nations.

Britain agreed that the Iraqi government had not yet implemented the declared Kurdish policy, and the High Commissioner of Iraq advised that further communications to the League should not be made by Britain until they could say that the policy was being fulfilled.⁷³⁵ The Secretary of State for the Colonies also warned Iraq that the possibility of Iraq entering the League would be risked, and that strict conditions about the future handling of minorities might be imposed on it.⁷³⁶ This obliged the Iraqi Prime Minister to think that Iraq and Britain should work closely

⁷³³ 'Petition of the Kurdish people of southern Kurdistan now resident in Iraq'.

⁷³⁴ Administrative Inspector of Sulaimania Liwa to the British Advisor to Ministry of Interior, 16 June 1931, TNA, FO/371/15312.

⁷³⁵ High Commissioner of Iraq to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 11 February 1931, TNA, CO/730/161/2.

⁷³⁶ Secretary of State for the Colonies to High Commissioner of Iraq, 19 February 1931, TNA, FO/371/15310.

together about the Kurdish question. However, he stated that the Iraqi government was not ready to give further rights to the minority 'other than those already announced by them'. This was because the Turkish government had put pressure on Iraq not to recognise the Kurds as a minority within Iraq.⁷³⁷ They stated that Iraq and Persia should not be bound any recommendations about their minorities made by the League of Nations because the Kurds were Muslims, and so they could not 'be considered as a minority in Islamic countries'. The Turks pointed out that any such decision would disturb the peace of the Middle East, and the League Council would be responsible for this.⁷³⁸

It seemed clear that the Permanent Mandate Commission agreed with the Turkish view not to consider the Kurds as a minority in Iraq. Although the Mandate Commission had decided in June 1931 to examine eight Kurdish petitions and assured them that their rights would be respected if they contributed to the prosperity and security of Iraq,⁷³⁹ on 28 January 1932 the Commission believed that the insertion in the draft of declaration of the use of the Kurdish language and the appointment of Kurdish officials would be sufficient. The Commission argued that Iraq had pursued a liberal policy towards the Kurds, and referred to a letter from the Iraqi Prime Minister to the High Commissioner of Iraq on 19 October 1931. In this, the Prime Minister mentioned that the majority of Kurdish officials were Kurds and this would 'continue to be so', and that they did not make any barrier against employing Kurds who knew the Arabic language in other parts of Iraq.⁷⁴⁰ However, until September 1931, 57% of the officials in south Kurdistan were of other races, and they had not facilitated the appointment of more than a very few Kurdish officials in the Arab parts of Iraq.⁷⁴¹

In the ratified draft of the declaration of the Kingdom of Iraq to the Council of the League of Nations on the occasion of the termination of the British mandate of Iraq,⁷⁴² much attention was focused on the protection of the rights of minorities in Iraq

⁷³⁷ Al-Sa'id to Francis, 4 under 5 March 1931, TNA, CO/730/161/1.

⁷³⁸ High Commissioner of Iraq to Secretary State for the Colonies, 18 February 1931, TNA, FO/371/15310.

⁷³⁹ 'Permanent Mandate Commission, XXth Session, Skeleton Report to the Council', 27 June 1931, TNA, FO/371/15318, pp.8-9.

⁷⁴⁰ Parliamentary Draft of the Permanent Mandate Commission to the Council, 28 January 1932, TNA, FO/371/16030.

⁷⁴¹ Young to Flood, 10 September 1931, TNA, CO/730/161/3, p.3.

⁷⁴² High Commissioner of Iraq to Secretary State for the Colonies, 1 June 1932, TNA, FO/371/16031.

before the law and the equality of their racial, religious, linguistic, political and citizenship rights. Article 9 of the declaration depended on the language law which was published on 1 June 1931, after being passed by the Iraqi Parliament. Although the declaration referred to the use of the Kurdish language in the Kurdish districts, it also approved the policy of Iraq for the appointment of officials in south Kurdistan by language rather than race.⁷⁴³ It can be said that the article did not limit the possibility of the Arabisation of Kurdistan, which the Kurds feared, and it did not mention the political participation of the Kurds as the British and Iraqi governments wanted. Moreover, on 3 October 1932, without considering the grievances of the Kurds, Iraq was accepted as a member of the League of Nations.⁷⁴⁴ However, before that event, the Kurds had noticed that following the termination of the British mandate their situation was getting worse, and in consequence they had risen against the Iraqi government.

5.4 The Kurdish risings of 1930-1932

(a) *The Kurdish Rising in Sulaimania on 9 September 1930*

The rising of the Kurds in Sulaimania could be considered as their reaction to the delay in the implementation of their rights by the Iraqi government. The origins of the rising began in April 1930, when the High Commissioner of Iraq and the Iraqi Prime Minister visited the town to convince the Kurds that the Iraqi government would implement the announced policy, as previously mentioned. The result of their visit was an increase of Kurdish confusion rather than their persuasion, as the Kurds in Sulaimania did not accept the rule of Iraq and they were especially angry that the new Anglo-Iraqi Treaty did not make provision for the safeguarding of their future after Britain left Iraqi territory. The Kurds were not ready to participate in the election, as the Iraqi government had not gained the confidence of the Kurds by taking 'such administrative and legislative measure as were possible to establish the existing special regime for the Kurds on a permanent basis'.⁷⁴⁵

⁷⁴³ 'Request of the Kingdom of Iraq for Admission to the League of Nations', 16 August 1932, TNA, FO/371/16031, pp.3-5.

⁷⁴⁴ George to Faisal, 3 October 1932, TNA, FO/371/16032.

⁷⁴⁵ High Commissioner of Iraq to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 27 February 1931, section titled 'Effect of Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930', TNA, CO/730/161/2, p.24.

Whilst 30 notables in Sulaimania were invited to the election on 9 September 1930, most of the people not only boycotted the election but also gathered in front of the local government headquarters (Sarai) to protest against it.⁷⁴⁶ The attempt of the Iraqi police to prevent the people from gathering there made them angrier, as the police tried to prevent people in the Bazar from closing their shops, but the size of the crowd had grown, as 2000 of the Kurds in Sulaimania, including 50 schoolboys participated in the demonstration.⁷⁴⁷ The growth of the mob could not be controlled because only 100 police were available to protect the Sarai building.⁷⁴⁸ The Iraqi government therefore brought in an armed company of the Iraqi army with two Lewis guns to control the crowd, but this made the situation worse, as in reaction the people attacked the Sarai building. The armed forces were ordered to fire upon the demonstrators, killing 14 of them and wounding 23, whilst one of the Iraqi police was killed and nine were wounded.⁷⁴⁹ In addition, 98 people were arrested and charged with being part of the crowd, but the Iraqi government exploited this event to take revenge on those who had asked for independence, because it only sent to trial those who had signed the petition.⁷⁵⁰

Britain accused the crowd of attacking a prison to release some 40 prisoners, and stated that they had been obliged to bring in the Iraqi army, because only 12 armed police were available in the government building, and also that the mob had firearms and used them against the police.⁷⁵¹ Moreover, the Ministry of Interior described those who attacked the government building in Sulaimania as ignorant people, and that the government was obliged 'to take punitive action against those responsible for such regrettable acts'.⁷⁵² However, the Kurds stated that the Iraqi government had caused the trouble, as it had not persuaded the majority of the people in Sulaimania to participate in the election, and on the day before the elections the police had threatened them not to

⁷⁴⁶ 'The Sulaimania Election Disturbances', pp.28-29.

⁷⁴⁷ Alban to the Advisor to Ministry of Interior, p.6; High Commissioner of Iraq to Secretary State for the Colonies, 6 September 1930, TNA, CO/730/157/5; *The Times*, 12 September 1930, Ibid.

⁷⁴⁸ Alban to the Advisor to Ministry of Interior, p.5.

⁷⁴⁹ 'Extract from Summary of Intelligence by Wing Commander K.C. Buss'; 'Extract from *Whitehall Gazette*', 17 November 1931, TNA, CO/730/161/1.

⁷⁵⁰ High Commissioner of Iraq to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 27 February 1931, TNA, CO/730/161/2, pp.28-29.

⁷⁵¹ Acting High Commissioner of Iraq to Passfield, TNA, CO/730/157/7; Moody to Air Headquarter, Iraq Command, 13 September 1930, TNA, AIR/23/229, p.1.

⁷⁵² Iraqi Minister of Interior to Sheikh Mahmud, 10 September 1930, TNA, AIR/23/229.

demonstrate. The Kurds accused the Iraqi army and police of opening fire on people who were unarmed, and who were only using sticks and stones.⁷⁵³ However, the Iraqi Minister of the Interior rejected this and stated that those people exaggerated the information related to the incident, as they tried to encourage Mahmud to take action against the government.⁷⁵⁴

To stop the repressive action of the Iraqi government, the Kurds in Sulaimania had contacted Mahmud and encouraged him to lead a revolt against Iraq.⁷⁵⁵ It can be seen that this was an opportunity for Mahmud to increase his influence, because after his withdrawal to the Persian border he had lost most of his followers and their sympathy. He sent a letter to the High Commissioner of Iraq on 17 September 1930 which protested against the killing of Kurdish civilians by the Iraqi army and requested the release of the Kurdish leaders, and he stated that the best thing for the Kurds was the establishment of a separate state from the Arabs.⁷⁵⁶ Moreover, his demand was supported by some petitions from the Pishdar, Mariwan and Avruman tribes, as they asked for the Kurdish rights and stated that if Britain remained silent about the suppression of the Kurds, this would compel them to rise, led by Mahmud.⁷⁵⁷ The incident in Sulaimania showed that the Kurds had not accepted living with the Arabs in Iraq. However, the rising was not planned by the Kurdish leaders, as the Iraqi government claimed, and it related to the popular anger about the presence of the Arab army. The Iraqi government was successful in suppressing the Sulaimania rising, but the punitive action taken by the Iraqi government increased Kurdish hostility.

⁷⁵³ Maruf to Special Service Officer at Sulaimania, 7 September 1930, TNA, AIR/23/229.

⁷⁵⁴ Iraqi Minister of Interior to Sheikh Mahmud, 10 September 1930, TNA, AIR/23/229.

⁷⁵⁵ *Whitehall Gazette*, July to August 1931, p.39.

⁷⁵⁶ Mahmud to High Commissioner of Iraq, 17 September 1930, TNA, FO/371/14523.

⁷⁵⁷ Abdul Rahman agha of Pishdar and et al. to the Secretary General of the League of Nations, 28 March 1931, TNA, CO/730/161/3; 'Precis of Kurdish Situation', 14 June to 15 December 1930, TNA, AIR/23/232, pp.5-6; Ali Ibn Hassan and et al. to, 9 October 1930, TNA, FO/371/14523.

(b) *The Third Uprising of Sheikh Mahmud (1930-1931)*

The suppression of the Kurdish rising in Sulaimania had caused Mahmud to consider taking action against the Iraqi government and leading the Kurdish nationalists, whose support had increased since June 1930, but they were unorganised. On 17 September 1930, Mahmud crossed southern Kurdistan to raise a force on the Persian border, and he did not consider the warning of Britain and the Iraqi government about his interference.⁷⁵⁸ However, Mahmud was accused by Britain and Iraq that he had breached his agreement with them of January 1927, because according to this Mahmud would peacefully reside in the region near to the Persian border,⁷⁵⁹ and not interfere in political affairs.⁷⁶⁰ It could be said that the main aim of Mahmud was to take revenge on the Iraqi government and to exploit the event in Sulaimania to organise a Kurdish rising. He declared that Iraqi officials should withdraw from south Kurdistan, and demanded the establishment of a Kurdish state from Khaniqin to Zakho, under British supervision.⁷⁶¹

After his return in September 1930, most of Mahmud's activities were in the mountain areas of the Iraqi-Persian border, such as Khurmali, Pinjwen, Chowarta and Sharbazher. This was because the Iraqi government could not quickly send forces to these areas from Sulaimania, and therefore Mahmud could move to other areas without engaging directly with them, as he relied on guerrilla warfare.⁷⁶² It can be said that another reason for this was his lack of support from Sulaimania, because after the punishment of the Kurdish leaders by the Iraqi government in September 1930, most of the Kurdish chieftains feared to assist Mahmud. He needed to show some military success against the Iraqi forces in order to obtain the assistance of the Kurdish tribes.

⁷⁵⁸ Report on the Operations in southern Kurdistan against Sheikh Mahmud from October 1930 to May 1931, April 1931, TNA, AIR/10/1845, p.3.

⁷⁵⁹ The Persian Government was not happy about the residence of Mahmud near to their territory, as they complained that he would cause unrest on their border with Iraq, but Britain assured Persia that if Mahmud made trouble in Persia he would be considered 'as a disturber of the peace of the frontier', and they would cancel the agreement with him. Clive to FO, 'Translation of a private note from Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs to His Majesty's Minister', 17 January 1927, TNA, FO/371/12288; High Commissioner of Iraq to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 27 February 1931, TNA, CO/730/161/2, pp.28-29.

⁷⁶⁰ High Commissioner of Iraq to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 27 February 1931, section titled 'Renewal of Sheikh Mahmud's Activities', TNA, CO/730/161/2, p.30.

⁷⁶¹ 'Precis of Kurdish Situation', 14 June to 15 December 1930, TNA, AIR/23/232, p.5.

⁷⁶² 'Operations against Sheikh Mahmud', 17 September 1930 to 14 May 1931, TNA, CO/730/163/6.

The Iraqi government sent a cavalry regiment, an artillery battery and 3 infantry battalions to Sulaimania on 16 October 1930 to attack Mahmud's forces in the mountains, but this did not eliminate his threat. For example, on 3 December 1930, a column of the Iraqi army was sent to recover Surdash, but they were attacked by Mahmud's force, who killed four Iraqi soldiers and wounded five, without any Kurdish dead or wounded. In addition, Mahmud's force exploited the weak positions of the Iraqi police posts, and they attacked most of the posts near the Iraqi-Persian frontier. This was due to the improvement in the military skill of Mahmud's force after he was joined by four Kurdish officers formerly in the Iraqi army. Mahmud's followers were bombed by the Royal Air Force, but, due to a lack of coordination with the Iraqi infantry force and the limitations of air raids, they survived and hid in some areas which were covered by woods. In addition, due to the bad weather in winter, the Iraqi forces could not stay in the mountainous areas after they had captured them and had to return to Sulaimania, and because of this Mahmud controlled these areas again.⁷⁶³ Another reason for the success of Mahmud was that the Iraqi army did not have as much skill in guerrilla fighting as him. The Iraqi officers and staff work were insufficient when campaigning against Mahmud, and the troops were badly equipped.⁷⁶⁴

Mahmud tried to start a general rising in the spring of 1931 from Penjwin and Sharbazher to other Kurdish areas, to evict the Iraqi forces from south Kurdistan. He asked the Administrative Inspector of Sulaimania to evacuate these areas, and stated that he would only be 'subject to direct orders from the British government'.⁷⁶⁵ He also warned the Assistant Inspector of Police that all taxes should be paid to him, and if people paid the Koda tax to the Iraqi government they would be considered as traitors.⁷⁶⁶ Mahmud also endeavoured to stop British air attacks on his followers, and for this sake and to obtain the assistance of Britain, he requested to meet a British officer, but this was ignored by Britain. This was because Britain believed that this could 'increase his self-importance', and it would demonstrate that Britain agreed about

⁷⁶³ Special Service Officer at Sulaimania to Air Ministry, 9 November 1930, TNA, AIR/23/232; Cornwallis to Administrative Inspector, 9 December 1930, TNA, AIR/23/232; 'Operations against Mahmud', 17 September 1930 to 14 May 1931, TNA, CO/730/163/6, pp.5-8.

⁷⁶⁴ Special Service at Sulaimania to Aviation, Hinaidi, 7 December 1930, TNA, AIR/23/232.

⁷⁶⁵ 'Extract from Intelligence Report No 3', 4 February 1931, TNA, CO/730/163/5; 'Extract from Intelligence Report No. 26', n.d., Ibid.

⁷⁶⁶ 'Extract from Summary of Intelligence', 11 March 1931, TNA, CO/730/163/5, p.1.

his rising, as he had already published that Britain secretly supported it.⁷⁶⁷ To organise the Kurdish tribes, Mahmud had made contact with the Talabani, Dauda, Zangana and other tribes who agreed to join him.⁷⁶⁸ He sent representatives to obtain the help of the Shirwan, Surchi and Zibar tribes, and also asked Sheikh Ahmed of Barzan to invite the tribes in Duhok, Aqra, Amadia and Zakho to take part in a general rising against the Iraqi government. Ahmed indicated his willingness to assist Mahmud, but later he stated that his relationship with the other tribes in Zibar Qadhas was not good, and further reasons for his non-participation in the rising will be discussed in the next section.⁷⁶⁹

The communication between Mahmud and Ahmed encouraged the Iraqi government to take action against Barzan, because its prestige there was so weak. Moreover, it believed that by defeating Pishdar, the power of Mahmud would be limited because most of his support came from there. The Iraqi government encouraged the High Commissioner of Iraq to suppress both areas by taking strong action against them in the spring of 1931. However, because of the possible critical reaction at Geneva, undertaking such an operation would not be easy as 'the Council only grudgingly accepted' the need for it.⁷⁷⁰ It could be said that Britain preferred to delay this attack until a later time, because fighting against Mahmud, Barzan and Pishdar at the same time would need more preparations and money. Britain's main aim was to stop Mahmud's activity before he obtained the assistance of more Kurdish tribes, and thereby spread his rising to other Kurdish Liwas. In a conference which was held in January 1931 at the Residency, the Iraqi Prime Minister suggested creating an irregular force from Kurdish tribes in a similar way to the Turks, and he believed that by its co-operation with Iraqi troops, Mahmud would be crushed. However, the High Commissioner of Iraq rejected this because of the disloyalty of the Kurdish Levies in the past, whilst the Air Officer Commanding believed that the suggestion of the Prime Minister would be ineffective, as he stated that the Kurdish tribesmen 'never fight against their own fellow tribesmen'.⁷⁷¹ The main reason for the differences between the

⁷⁶⁷ Extract from Intelligence Report No. 2', 21 January 1931, TNA, CO/730/163/5.

⁷⁶⁸ Special Service Officer at Sulaimania to Air Ministry, 8 February 1930, TNA, AIR/23/416.

⁷⁶⁹ Special Service at Mosul to Aviation, Hinaidi, 11 November 1930, TNA, AIR/23/231.

⁷⁷⁰ Hall to Cadogan, 20 March 1931, TNA, CO/730/163/5; Cadogan to Hall, 18 March 1931, Ibid.

⁷⁷¹ Sturges to the Iraqi Prime Minister, 'a summary of the Conference held at the Residency on 12th January, 1931', 14 January 1931, TNA, FO/371/15311, p.3.

British officials and the Iraqi Prime Minister was due to the intention of the latter to eliminate Mahmud's threat as quickly as possible. He preferred to avoid any delay in attacking Mahmud, and wished simultaneously to declare martial law in south Kurdistan to suppress those who helped Mahmud. Cornwallis pointed out that without the creation of 'a striking police force', Mahmud could not be defeated, and he believed that martial law would have dire consequences rather than good results. He blamed the Iraqi government for never having tried 'to satisfy the political aspirations of the Kurds'.⁷⁷² As a result, the conference preferred to take political steps to prevent a Kurdish rising by the implementation of the given pledges, and to stop operations against Mahmud if he would cease his aggressive actions against Iraqi forces. If he would not, then in order to prevent the spread of his activity to wider areas, military action should be taken in the spring by the Iraqi army and a police mobile force, with air assistance.⁷⁷³

Mahmud did not believe that the Iraqi government would give the Kurdish rights that the League Council had recommended, and so he continued his activity against Iraq. From January 1931, his influence increased, especially after the joining of the Hamawand, Dilo, Jabari, Shilana and other tribes. He threatened the prestige of the Iraqi government in Halabja and the areas north and south-west of Sulaimania.⁷⁷⁴ In March, his revolt crossed to the left bank of the Diala (Sirwan) River and occupied the areas north-east of Khaniqin. The feeling of the Kurds against the Iraqi government assisted Mahmud to increase his revenue by giving him taxes, and he had the co-operation of tribal forces, because they believed that Britain supported Mahmud against the Iraqi government by giving him rifles and ammunition. This point also influenced the Iraqi army not to fight strongly against Mahmud, as even some in Iraqi circles believed that Britain supported him.⁷⁷⁵ This urged Britain to take steps to change the opinion of the Kurdish people and the Iraqi troops that this was only propaganda, but this could only happen by capturing Mahmud. The first step of the British operation was giving warning to the villages by dropping proclamations that any help to shelter

⁷⁷² Ibid., pp.3-4.

⁷⁷³ Humphrys to Passfield, 'Conclusions of a Conference held at the Residency on 13th January, 1931', 6 February 1931, TNA, FO/371/15310.

⁷⁷⁴ Special Service of Sulaimania, 'Southern Kurdistan, Sheikh Mahmud' January 1931, TNA, CO/730/163/5; 'Extract from Intelligence Report No 6', 18 March 1931, Ibid.

⁷⁷⁵ 'Report by the Air Officer Commanding Iraq Command, on the Operation in Southern Kurdistan against Sheikh Mahmud from October 1930-May 1931', TNA, CO/730/163/6, pp.16-17.

Mahmud would cause the bombing of their villages. From 28 to 30 March, four villages in the south of Qaradagh were bombed by the Royal Air Force whilst Mahmud was concealed there.⁷⁷⁶ The next step of the operation against Mahmud was to capture him, and for this on 5 April 1931 a column of the Iraqi army and mounted police, with air support, attacked Mahmud's followers in AwaBarika village (about 20 miles north-east of Tuz) and occupied it. However, Mahmud escaped to Piran village near the Persian border (about 8 miles south-east of Penjwin), although his casualties were 40 killed and wounded.⁷⁷⁷

The AwaBarika fight was the last activity of Mahmud against the Iraqi government, and the main reason for his defeat was because of directly fighting with the Iraqi forces in a small area. The formation of 350 mounted police, the progress in the ability of the Iraqi troops and the training of the cavalry force for mountain fighting contributed to the fall of Mahmud. Another reason was the improvement in the control of the operation by British officers, such as F.C. Robert, the Advisor to the Military Commander at Sulaimania, who organised the cooperation between the British air force and the Iraqi army, police and civil authorities.⁷⁷⁸

Although Mahmud crossed into Persia, both Iraq and Britain agreed that without his arrest the position in south Kurdistan would not be secured. Moreover, the Persian government was also concerned about his presence in their border, as they feared his assistance to the eastern Kurds who were against their government, such as the chief of Dizli. The Iraqi government had no difficulty in making a deal with Persia to arrange an operation to arrest both Mahmud in Persian territory and Mahmud Khan of Dizli, who had escaped to Iraq and resided near Halabja.⁷⁷⁹ After this, Mahmud had no option but to surrender, especially after he was abandoned by the majority of the Kurdish tribes, who were disappointed that he had not continued his rebellion against Iraq.⁷⁸⁰ On 11 May 1931, Mahmud decided to go to Penjwin to meet Captain Holt, the

⁷⁷⁶ Thomas to Young, 'Operations against Sheikh Mahmud 17 September 1930-14 May 1931, 29 October 1931, TNA, CO/730/163/6, p.9; High Commissioner of Iraq to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 2 April 1931, TNA, FO/371/15311.

⁷⁷⁷ 'Extract from Intelligence Report No. 8', 15 April 1931, TNA, CO/730/163/5; Headquarters, RAF in Iraq to Air Ministry, 4 May 1931, Ibid.

⁷⁷⁸ 'Report by the Air Officer Commanding Iraq Command', pp.13-17; 'Report on the Operations in southern Kurdistan against Sheikh Mahmud', pp.5,18.

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid.; High Commissioner of Iraq to British Minister at Tehran, TNA, FO/371/15311.

⁷⁸⁰ Headquarters, RAF in Iraq to Air Ministry, 4 May 1931, TNA, CO/730/163/5.

Oriental Secretary to the High Commissioner, to discuss the surrender terms and the place proposed by the Iraqi government for he and his family to live. After this, when Mahmud had obtained assurances that his life and his family would be safe, he surrendered to the Iraqi government on 13 May. The agreement between Iraq and Persia also finished the movement of Mahmud Khan of Dizli, after his surrender to the Iraqi government on 31 May 1931.⁷⁸¹

(c) *The Rising of Sheikh Ahmed of Barzan (1931-1932)*

The rising of Barzan led by Sheikh Ahmed was the last reaction of the Kurds against the integration of south Kurdistan with Iraq before the admission of Iraq as a member of the League of Nations. The rising is considered by most previous researchers have been only a local rising against the Iraqi Government, as it did not spread to other Kurdish areas, but they do not discuss the main reasons for this. However, they are correct that the reaction of Ahmed was due to the attempt of the Iraqi government to control the area and eliminate his authority. Previous studies have mentioned that the existence of the Assyrians in the Kurdish areas of Mosul had affected the unrest in Barzan, as Ahmed was strongly against their residence, but they do not believe that this was a cause of his rising.⁷⁸²

The intention of the Iraqi government for the establishment of a police post at Barzan in June 1927 could be considered as the first step to controlling the area. However, this was not easy, because Ahmed as a religious man had a great influence over the area, and his preparation to supply and arm his followers had increased his power.⁷⁸³ Jwaideh has pointed out that Ahmed did not accept the construction of a police building in the area because he attempted to continue his independent authority, similar to the Kurdish semi-feudal chiefs during the rule of Ottoman Empire in the first part of the 19th century.⁷⁸⁴ This is true, but his hostility towards the Arab government as a Kurdish nationalist was another cause for refusing the presence of the Iraqi

⁷⁸¹ Report by the Air Officer Commanding Iraq Command', pp.27-29; Humphrys to Passfield, 29 May 1931, TNA, CO/730/163/6.

⁷⁸² Jwaideh, *Kurdish National Movement*, p.222; Ali, *Chand Lekolinawaiak Darbaray Bzafi Hawcharkhi Kurd*, volume 2, p.235.

⁷⁸³ Special Service Officer at Mosul to Air Staff Intelligence, Air Headquarters at Baghdad, 'Report on the Present Situation in Barzan', 14 February 1928, TNA, AIR/23/184, p.3.

⁷⁸⁴ Jwaideh, *Kurdish National Movement*, p.222.

government not only in his area, but in south Kurdistan as well.⁷⁸⁵ He wished to establish an independent Kurdish state, and for this he contacted other Kurdish leaders, such as Simko and Mahmud, to obtain their support to expel the Iraqi troops from south Kurdistan.⁷⁸⁶ Ahmed believed that Britain was seeking to locate the Assyrians in the Kurdish homelands, by placing an Assyrian police force in the Barzan area.⁷⁸⁷ Jiawk mentions that Britain had secretly pledged to the Assyrians to create their state in south Kurdistan, similar to the Jewish state in Palestine, by their residence along the Brussels line from Diana to Zakho. He believed that to fulfil this scheme Britain tried to crush Barzan by arming the Assyrians and disarming the Kurds, which was unacceptable to Ahmed.⁷⁸⁸ For this reason, he attempted to remove them from south Kurdistan, and ordered the people not to deal with them, and he declared that he would punish those who tried selling food to them.⁷⁸⁹

Anti-Assyrian propaganda was not only published in the Kurdish areas of Mosul, but also spread to Arbil Liwa. This was an attempt by the Arab nationalists to create hostility between the Assyrians and the Kurds, and also conflict between the Kurds and Britain, who defended the rights of the Assyrians. They approached the Kurdish officers and civil officials, some of whom were members of the Pshtiwani Kurdan society,⁷⁹⁰ and told them that British policy was not in the interests of the Kurds, because they tried to settle the Assyrians, who were British spies. The Arab nationalists encouraged the Kurds to work with them by arguing that as the Kurds had not obtained their rights under the British mandate, they should unite their efforts for Britain to leave by 1932, and after this they would reach an agreement 'to divide their country between them'.⁷⁹¹ The main aim of the Arab nationalists by publishing such propaganda (which was ordered from Baghdad) was to obtain an alliance between the

⁷⁸⁵ Research Department, Foreign Office to Edmonds, 1 March 1946, Edmonds Mss, Box 12, File 6, p.1.

⁷⁸⁶ 'Report on the Present Situation in Barzan', p.3.

⁷⁸⁷ Ma'ruf Jiawk, *Masalat Barzan al-Mazlumata*, [Arabic: *The Issue of Barzan's Oppressed*] (Arbil: Dar Aras, 2001), p.107.

⁷⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.43-45.

⁷⁸⁹ Special Service Officer at Mosul to Air Staff Intelligence, Air Headquarters at Hinaidi, 4 April 1929, TNA, AIR/23/184.

⁷⁹⁰ There is no evidence of direct connection between Ahmed and the Arab nationalists, but Jiawk and other Kurdish officers who were anti-Assyrians had a relationship with Ahmed. Air Headquarters, Iraqi Command at Hinaidi to the Secretary of Air Ministry, 'Summary of Recent Kurdish Activities', 12 March 1930, TNA, AIR/23/416, pp.2-3.

⁷⁹¹ Special Service Officer at Mosul to Air Staff Intelligence, Air Headquarters, Iraqi Command at Hinaidi and et al., 'Kurdish Nationalism', 6 February 1930, TNA, AIR/23/416, p.2.

Kurds and Arabs, because they believed that this would decrease the Kurdish feeling of separation from Iraq and would prevent their participation in a general rising.⁷⁹²

The growth of anti-Assyrian propaganda caused the Assyrians to fear that in the case of a rising against the Iraqi government, they would be attacked by Ahmed as well. To prevent this, Dobbs advised the Iraqi Prime Minister to take diplomatic steps to calm the situation in Barzan and decrease Ahmed's grievances by listening to him instead of taking the military action which the Iraqi government preferred.⁷⁹³ It can be seen that the Iraqi government wanted to decrease the influence of Ahmed and prevent the Kurdish tribes from assisting him. However, Dobbs was concerned about the safety of the Assyrians, especially as Iraqi forces did not exist in the area except a small Levy force, and he also believed that the Iraqi force was not prepared to attack Barzan at that time. In the light of this consideration, Dobbs instructed Major W.C.F.A. Wilson, the Administrative Inspector at Mosul, to visit Bileh (a few miles from Barzan) and convince Ahmed to cease his activity against the Assyrians and the Iraqi government, and to assure him that there was no intention to make Barzan a place for the Assyrians.⁷⁹⁴ The result of Wilson's visit on 31 March 1928 was an agreement between them that Ahmed would be responsible for keeping law and order in the Barzan areas. Under the Qaimaqam of Zibar, Ahmed would be the agent of the Iraqi government for the administration of Barzan, which included Sherwan and Mzuri Balah (except the Bradost area), and the taxes would be collected by the Qaimaqam of Zibar through Ahmed.⁷⁹⁵ In their agreement, Wilson promised that the Iraqi government would not establish any Nahias in Shirwan and Muziri Bala, or build any further police posts in those areas.⁷⁹⁶

The agreement between Britain and Ahmed did not work for long, because it limited his influence. For example, in the Dolamari villages of Rowandoz Qadha, Ahmed had many religious followers, but he was not allowed to interfere with these villages, and without informing the authorities in Arbil the immigration of his followers from these villages to his region was not permitted. Another cause for the failure of the

⁷⁹² 'Summary of Recent Kurdish Activities', pp.5-6.

⁷⁹³ Intelligence Report Number 3, 1 February 1928, TNA, FO/371/13027, p.4.

⁷⁹⁴ Intelligence Report Number 5, 29 February 1928, TNA, FO/371/13027, p.2.

⁷⁹⁵ Intelligence Report Number 8, 11 April 1928, TNA, FO/371/13027, p.3.

⁷⁹⁶ Special Service Officer at Mosul to Air Staff Intelligence, Air Headquarters at Baghdad, 'Barzan Intelligence', 4 April 1928, TNA, AIR/23/184, p.5.

agreement was Ahmed's opposition to the enforcement of the census and arms laws.⁷⁹⁷ Ahmed believed that this was intended by the Iraqi government to decrease his power, and he emphasised that his followers should 'carry arms without objection from Government'.⁷⁹⁸ He also declared for the withdrawal of all troops at Bileh and the abandonment of the completion of the Sarai building there, which the Iraqi government insisted establishing to recover its prestige in Barzan.⁷⁹⁹ In addition, Ahmed was accused by the British and Iraqi governments of breaching their agreement that although he had promised to pay tax to the Iraqi government, he continued to collect it from his neighbourhood without paying it to the Iraqi government. However, in his defence Ahmed explained that this was because the crops had not been harvested because of the locusts and drought.⁸⁰⁰ It can be said that the agreement was not in the interests of Ahmed, as it obliged him to accept the authority of the Iraqi government over the Barzan area, and there was no promise for the removal of the Assyrians from Zibar Qadha.

Ahmed acted as an independent Kurdish leader and his power increased after he was joined by some Kurdish chiefs, especially those who had anti-Assyrian feelings. For example, although Faris Agha of Zibar and Sheikh Ubaidullah of Surchi did not have a good relationship with Ahmed, they offered their assistance to him because they were also against the presence of the Assyrians in Zibar Qadha.⁸⁰¹ Ahmed refused the instruction of the Iraqi government to hand over the northern Kurdish refugees who had escaped to south Kurdistan from Turkey, who numbered about 500 armed men.⁸⁰² From 1930 onwards, three other Kurdish tribes (Shirwan, Mzuri and a part of Bradost tribe) joined Ahmed's forces and his strength was estimated as between 2,500 and 3,500 armed men.⁸⁰³ After this, in February 1930, Ahmed and the other Kurdish chiefs

⁷⁹⁷ Administrative Inspector of Mosul Liwa to Secretary to High Commissioner of Iraq, 2 April 1928, TNA, AIR/23/184, PP.5-6.

⁷⁹⁸ 'Extract from S.S.O. Arbil's Report No.1A/10', 18 April 1928, TNA, AIR/23/184.

⁷⁹⁹ Special Service Officer at Mosul to Air Staff Intelligence, Air Headquarters at Baghdad, 'Barzan Intelligence', 10 May 1928, TNA, AIR/23/184, p.2.

⁸⁰⁰ Intelligence Report Number 16, 1 August 1928, TNA, FO/371/13027, p.2.

⁸⁰¹ Special Service Officer at Mosul to Air Staff Intelligence, Air Headquarters at Baghdad, 'Barzan Intelligence', 14 April 1928, TNA, AIR/23/184.

⁸⁰² 'Extracts from Summary of Intelligence dated 25 February 1931', 21 March 1931, TNA, CO/730/161/1, p.1.

⁸⁰³ Special Service Officer at Mosul to Air Staff Intelligence, Air Headquarters at Baghdad, 'Kurdish Situation', 14 March 1930, TNA, AIR/23/416, p.2; Special Service Officer at Arbil to Air Staff

discussed the establishment of an independent Kurdish state after the withdrawal of Britain from Iraq, with Mosul as its capital, or at least to separate Mosul from Iraq.⁸⁰⁴ For that purpose, in November 1930 Sheikh Ahmed and some other Kurdish leaders aimed to separate the northern Kurdish districts of Mosul vilayet under a Kurdish chief, until the establishment of a Kurdish state.⁸⁰⁵

The Iraqi government feared the growth of Ahmed's power and believed that as the Turks were not comfortable about the existence of the Assyrians near their frontier, they were assisting him by supplying him with arms and encouraging him to rise against the Iraqi government. In September 1930, Nuri Pasha visited Angora and discussed this with the Turkish authorities, but he did not have any evidence to prove it.⁸⁰⁶ It can be seen that the main aim of the Iraqi government was to put pressure on the Turks not to support Ahmed in the case of their campaign against him. This was because the Turks in the same way as the Iraqi government were not happy with the encouragement of Kurdish aspirations, and they accused Ahmed that whilst they were trying to suppress the northern Kurds, he had made incursions into Turkish territory.⁸⁰⁷ The Turks emphasised that no opportunity should be given to Ahmed to continue his activity, and they asked the Iraqi government to take punitive action against him. They showed their readiness to arrest Ahmed if he escaped into their territories and to hand him over to the Iraqi authorities. The stance of the Turks encouraged Nuri to take action against Ahmed's authority, but he declared that they could not operate against him until the spring because of the weather conditions and the problems of the roads, which were not 'accustomed to civilised [sic] government'.⁸⁰⁸

Britain also agreed with the Iraqi government to end the threat from Ahmed, and they tried to use the rumours about the variations of his religion from Islam against him to stop the alliance between him and other tribes. Longrigg believed that he

Intelligence, Air Headquarters, Iraqi Command, 26 September 1928, TNA, AIR/23/184; Special Service Officer at Mosul to Air Staff Intelligence, Air Headquarters at Baghdad, 18 February 1928, Ibid.

⁸⁰⁴ Special Service Officer at Mosul to Air Staff Intelligence, Air Headquarters, Iraqi Command at Hinaidi and et al., 26 February 1930, TNA, AIR/23/416, pp.5-6.

⁸⁰⁵ According to their agreement, Sheikh Abulrahman Atrushi was responsible for Duhok and Amadia, Ahmed for Aqra and Zakho, Sheikh Kak Amin for Rowandoz, and Sheikh Bahaaldin for Bamarni, 'Precis of Kurdish Situation', 14 June to 25 December 1930, TNA, AIR/23/232, pp.5-6.

⁸⁰⁶ Clerk to Henderson, 15 September 1930, TNA, FO/371/14521, p.1.

⁸⁰⁷ Helm to Henderson, 14 August 1930, TNA, FO/371/14580.

⁸⁰⁸ Al-Sa'id to the Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary of the Government of Iraq in Turkey, 20 September 1930, TNA, CO/730/157/7, pp.1-2.

became Christian, because he allowed the eating of pork, which was opposed to the faith of Muslims.⁸⁰⁹ According to British documents, the people believed that Ahmed was their God and master, and they should only accept his orders. They stated that his followers were obliged to wear a red turban as a sign of their allegiance to him; if they did not, they would be punished.⁸¹⁰ It can be said that much of this belonged to their culture instead of to religion, and there was no further evidence to prove that this was a sign of a new religion. This was because the turban was not only specific in the Barzan area, but also many Arabs who were Muslims tease this. Wilson pointed out that the main cause of the belief of people about his being God was because they were illiterate and savage, and they even ‘turned their faces towards him in prayer rather than towards Mecca’. However, he stated that a man called Mula Juj was killed by Ahmed’s brother because he had declared that he was a prophet of Ahmed.⁸¹¹

Although Kurdish researchers have not proved that he did not change his religion, the killing of Mula Juj could be considered as evidence that Ahmed or his brother did not agree about publishing such propaganda. Moreover, except Wilson and MacDowell, nobody else mentioned that Ahmed’s followers prayed for him, and MacDowell has not indicated any reference for this which might have come from Wilson. In addition, it is true that some British documents described Ahmed as God, but a source of information for Britain was Sheikh Rashid of Bradost, who was an enemy of Ahmed as they both practised the Naqshbandi path and had conflicts over attracting followers. Jiawk pointed out that Rashid was jealous about the increase of Ahmed’s followers, and he tried to encourage the Iraqi government to suppress Ahmed by informing them that he had changed his religion.⁸¹² However, Ismail Agha of Rowandoz, who was the Qaimaqam of Rowandoz, rejected the rumours about the conversion of Ahmed, although he was opposed to him, because he preferred Kurds to unite with the Assyrians.⁸¹³ However, MacDowell does not agree with them and emphasised that his conversion was true, but ‘it is not together clear whether he had

⁸⁰⁹ Longrigg, *Iraq*, p.195.

⁸¹⁰ ‘Extract from S.S.O., Arbil’s Report No.1A/10’, 31 July 1928, TNA, AIR/23/184; Special Service Officer at Arbil to Air Staff Intelligence, Air Headquarters, Iraqi Command at Baghdad and et al., 28 July 1928, *Ibid*.

⁸¹¹ Wilson, ‘Northern Iraq and Its People’, *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, 24, part 2 (1937), pp.287-299.

⁸¹² Jiawk, *Masalat Barzan al-Mazlum*, p.108.

⁸¹³ Hamilton, *Road through Kurdistan*, p.204.

religious delusions or deliberately used novel ideas to reinforce his authority'.⁸¹⁴ This encouraged Rashid to attack Ahmed in the summer of 1931 and he looted Barzan; in reaction, Ahmed made a counter attack on the Bradost areas and defeated him.⁸¹⁵

The Iraqi government used the fight between Ahmed and Rashid in its own interests to occupy Barzan. In September 1931, it declared that unrest had spread from Barzan to the Bradost areas, and order could only be restored by taking punitive action against Ahmed. On 9 December, a column of two rifle companies and an Iraqi police force surrounded Barzan, but they did not successfully occupy it and were obliged to withdraw to Bilah.⁸¹⁶ After this, the Iraqi government delayed its military operation until 15 March 1932 because of the weather conditions in the winter, and also to obtain the co-operation of the Royal Air Force.⁸¹⁷ The second phase of their operation was the implementation of a new plan to control Barzan by the establishment of administrative control and police posts in Shirwan, and by the construction of roads with which they hoped to control the mountain areas. However, as Ahmed was familiar with guerrilla warfare, this plan failed as he attacked the police posts and cut off the supplies of the Iraqi army, and by attacking the Shirwan tribe which had submitted to the Iraqi government, he crushed the Iraqi scheme.⁸¹⁸

The British and Iraqi governments also used the hostility between the Barzan and Zibar tribes, and other tribes who were against Ahmed. They were organised in a column and they had a great role in assisting the operation to occupy Barzan on 15 April 1932. However, Ahmed escaped from the Iraqi troops and survived the bombing, and he continued his resistance against the operation after withdrawing to the hill areas.⁸¹⁹ The period from the occupation of Barzan until 25 May could be considered as a ceasefire between them,⁸²⁰ because of the deal with Ahmed over an injured airman who was captured after Ahmed's followers forced down his aeroplane on 3 April. Holt

⁸¹⁴ MacDowell, *Modern History of the Kurds*, p.178.

⁸¹⁵ Precis of a Report rendered by Air Vice-Marshal and et al., on Operations against Sheikh Ahmed of Barzan in Northern Kurdistan from December 1931 to June 1932, TNA, WO/32/3409, p.2.

⁸¹⁶ Dixon to Thomas, 18 April 1932, TNA, FO/371/16045.

⁸¹⁷ *The Times*, 7 Apr 1932.

⁸¹⁸ High Commissioner of Iraq to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 5 April 1932, TNA, FO/371/16045; Rendel to War Office, 'Operation Against Sheikh Ahmed of Barzan-1932', 5 November 1932, *Ibid*, pp.1-5; . *The Times*, 12 Apr 1932.

⁸¹⁹ Precis of a Report rendered by Air Vice-Marshal and et al., p.3; 'Operation Against Sheikh Ahmed of Baran-1932', p.2.

⁸²⁰ *The Times*, 25 May 1932.

visited Ahmed in May to make peace with him, as he had shown his readiness to negotiate and release the British airman.⁸²¹ However, Ahmed was not permitted to make any conditions, and only to abandon his activity by surrendering, which was unacceptable to him.⁸²² After that, Britain provided extra air operations to terminate his rising, and asked the Turkish government to prevent the Kurds from using their territory.⁸²³ This crushed Ahmed, as he lost most of the Barzan area and he was obliged to surrender to the Turks instead of the Iraqi government. On 22 June, he and two brothers with 100 of his followers crossed to Turkey, and after their disarming, they were transferred to Adana to prevent any trouble in the frontier zone.⁸²⁴

The results of the attacks on Barzan's territory were the burning of some villages by the Iraqi army and destruction of some Barzani houses because of the bombing. Britain declared that the impoverishment of the people was because of the improvident rule of Ahmed, as he tried to convert the religion of the villages, but due to their opposition to him, they did not have enough time for cultivation. They also stated that another cause of this was the seizure of grain and other foods by him during the Iraqi campaign against him.⁸²⁵ However, Ismail Agha refused this and stated that the people of the Barzan area were starving because their crops had been burnt by the bombing of the villages.⁸²⁶ According to the War Office, the casualties of the operation in Barzan were two British airmen killed and one missing, and two officers and airmen wounded; 52 Iraqi officers and soldiers were killed, and 93 officers and other ranks wounded, and 13 Iraqi police and constables were killed and 12 wounded, but the Barzani casualties were 65 killed and 125 wounded.⁸²⁷

It can be said that Ahmed of Barzan's rising, like most of the other Kurdish risings, did not have support from other Kurdish leaders. The abandonment of anti-Assyrian feeling by Ahmed (which his enemies suggested was because of his

⁸²¹ The Times mentioned that two airmen were captured who were released by Ahmed on 5 May, but the British documents and Kurdish sources indicated one airman. *The Times*, 6 May 1932; *The Times*, 5 April 1932.

⁸²² *The Times*, 10 May 1932.

⁸²³ *Precis of a Report rendered by Air Vice-Marshal and et al.*, p.4.

⁸²⁴ 'Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Prime Minister's Room, House of Commons, on Friday, June 24th, 1932', TNA, CAB/23/71/19; Jiawk, *Masalat Barzan al-Mazlum*, p.114.

⁸²⁵ Maxse to the Duchess of Atholl, 14 November 1932, TNA, FO/371/16038.

⁸²⁶ Hamilton, *Road through Kurdistan*, p.281.

⁸²⁷ *Precis of a Report rendered by Air Vice-Marshal and et al.*, p.6.

conversion) caused the breakdown of the alliance between him and the others who were against the Assyrians. In addition, although Ahmed and Mahmud had contacted each other to unite their forces and start a general rising in the spring of 1930, this did not happen. By dealing with them separately, Britain had a great role in preventing a general rising, as the operation against Ahmed was only started after the surrender of Mahmud to the government in May 1931. Another cause of their separation was the lack of trust between them, because when Mahmud asked Ahmed to join an uprising against the Iraqi government, the latter did not believe him that Britain would secretly help the Kurdish movement by giving them ammunition and money. Ahmed asked the High Commissioner of Iraq about this, and he was told that it was not true and that Britain had decided to stop Mahmud's activities against the Iraqi Government.⁸²⁸ The anti-Assyrian feeling of Ahmed was another cause for their disunion. The Kurds in Sulaimania and Mahmud did not see the Assyrians as their enemy because the Assyrians were not resident in Sulaimania.⁸²⁹ Moreover, the Kurds in Sulaimania were closely in contact with the Assyrian officers in the Levies force, and discussed creating an independent Kurdish state and with an autonomous entity for the Assyrians within it.⁸³⁰ When Mahmud fought against the Iraqi government, he tried to obtain support not only from Kurdish officers in the Iraqi army but also from Assyrian officers, and he was successful as three of them joined him in October 1930.⁸³¹

5.5 Conclusion

The situation in south Kurdistan between 1927 and 1932 was divided into diplomatic and revolutionary periods. The first one (which continued until September 1930) included the attempt of the Kurds to obtain their rights by sending petitions to Geneva, as they were disappointed about achieving them from the British and Iraqi governments. However, both governments considered that this was opposed to the decision of the League Council, as the Kurds were asking for the creation of an independent state. These requests increased after the signature of the Anglo-Iraqi treaty

⁸²⁸ 'Extract from Intelligence Report No.5', 4 March 1931, TNA, CO/730/163/5.

⁸²⁹ Wing Commander, Air Staff Intelligence to Air Ministry, 25 February 1930, TNA, AIR/23/416.

⁸³⁰ Jiawk, *Masalat Barzan al-Mazlumat*, pp.76-77.

⁸³¹ Special Service Officer at Sulaimania to Air Ministry, 29 December 1930, TNA, AIR/23/232.

of 1930, as the Kurds feared for their future under Iraqi rule. However, Britain believed that after the fulfilment of Kurdish rights, the Kurds would have more sympathy with Iraq, but the Iraqi nationalists preferred to suppress them. They neglected the Kurdish rights, as they prevented the Kurds from filling the high government posts and getting the necessary qualifying certificates, and they also employed many other nations in south Kurdistan, whilst they hoped that the Kurds would become good Iraqis.

The negative policy of the Iraqi government towards the Kurds, and especially controlling south Kurdistan by force and suppressing the Kurds who attempted to obtain the Kurdish rights, was the main cause of the Kurdish rising which continued until June 1932. Mahmud and Ahmed led the Kurdish risings against the Iraqi administration of south Kurdistan, but they did not have any effect in forcing the Iraqi government to implement the Kurdish rights. For the sake of the admission of Iraq to the League of Nations, Britain provided extra help from the Royal Air Force to finish the risings as quickly as possible. Moreover, this support led to the admittance of Iraq as a new member of the League of Nations, although Britain knew that Iraq had not implemented the recommendation of the League Council.

CONCLUSION

After the First World War, the position of the non-Turkish people of the Ottoman Empire, including the Kurds, was considered by the Allied Powers. The settlement of the issue of south Kurdistan was one of the most controversial questions between Britain, Iraq and Turkey. In spite of this, there have been only some works on Iraq which have briefly referred to the events of south Kurdistan, and there has been no specific examination of British policy in south Kurdistan. Therefore this thesis has explored three important questions which have been neglected by previous studies or analysed only in a limited way. First, why did Britain initially support the establishment of a Kurdish government, and what factors made Britain change its decision against Kurdish wishes? The second question is what were the policies of the British administration in south Kurdistan, and why was the decision taken for the integration of south Kurdistan with Iraq? The third question is what were the responses of the Kurds towards the policy of Britain before and after their annexation to Iraq? Through examining these questions, the thesis has simultaneously considered the diplomatic, political, administrative and social situation of south Kurdistan. It has demonstrated the Kurdish wish for their liberation and how the local and international conferences discussed the Kurdish question, and how they did not guarantee the Kurdish rights. It has also shown how the Turkish and Iraqi governments influenced the future of the Kurds, and how this related to British policy and interests in Iraq. Finally, the attitude of the Kurds towards Britain and Iraq has also been discussed in this research.

Regarding the first question, this thesis argues that the first aim of Britain towards southern Kurdistan after the occupation of the area was to keep it until they could take a definite decision about its fate. Due to the fact that the British agenda was not clear, it could be concluded that the purpose of Britain in establishing a Kurdish government was not in order to create an independent Kurdish state. Although British officials debated the advantages and disadvantages of the independence of Kurdistan, such a state did not seem to serve British interests in the Middle East, and because of

this it was impossible for Britain to support it. The first priority of Britain after the occupation was to keep order in south Kurdistan by the appointment of Mahmud to head a Kurdish administration, but Mahmud and most of the Kurds wrongly interpreted this as a step towards the establishment of an independent state. It can be seen that Britain did not want to appoint a leader for the whole of the southern Kurdish area, as this could be a signal for the detachment of some of the Kurdish areas from the Arab state which had been promised during the First World War. The method of using several Kurdish chieftains to govern different areas derived from Wilson's previous experience in India. His strategy increased Kurdish differences instead of unifying the Kurdish chieftains under a single ruler.

Another key finding of the thesis is that the cause of the disunity of the Kurds (which badly reduced the chances of creating a Kurdish independent state) was the tribal system. The various Kurdish chieftains each believed that they deserved more than the others to rule the possible Kurdish state, but in reality they did not have enough political strength to govern the Kurdish administration, due to the restriction of their influence to their own tribes. This was due to the mountain areas of Kurdistan, which divided the tribes and hampered their communications with each other. The thesis also shows that Mahmud, who governed the Kurdish administration twice in 1918 and 1922, was not successful because he did not deal with the Kurdish tribes equally. He relied too much on those in his own tribe or those who had loyalty to him, instead of making an appeal to those who were opposed to his rule. It can be argued that Mahmud had a nationalist agenda to create an independent Kurdish state, but he was not aware that obtaining the support of the Turks would have dire consequences for the Kurdish question, because the Turks were considered by Britain as the real threat to the security of Mesopotamia. This also answers the first question, as this focused British policy on the necessity of joining south Kurdistan with Iraq, because Britain did not trust the Kurds not to follow the Turkish agenda against Britain. The Turkish aim of intervening in south Kurdistan and supporting Mahmud was not in favour of Kurdish national feeling as Mahmud had contemplated, but was to exploit the southern Kurds in their conflict with Britain about the Mosul vilayet. Mahmud's support for the Turks considerably reduced his influence, due to the withdrawal of those who believed that the Turkish aim was only to spread disorder in Kurdistan. This act of Mahmud can be interpreted in two ways: Either he did not have any strategy for persuading Britain that

an independent Kurdish state would protect their interests in Mesopotamia and Persia, or he had concluded that Britain would not create a Kurdish state.

The thesis argues that the aims of the various Kurdish risings were quite different from each other. In the Qadhas of Mosul and some areas of Arbil, an anti-Assyrian feeling grew, and due to their proximity to the border with Turkey, they were much more influenced by the anti-Christian propaganda created by the Turkish government. In Sulaimania and Kirkuk, hostility to Arab rule was a much greater factor, and apart from the event in Kirkuk in 1924 for which the Assyrians were responsible, there was not any anti-Christian feeling. Except for Mahmud, and Ahmed in his later rising, the Kurdish leaders cared most about their private interests and they tried to keep their influence over their tribes. However, Mahmud directed his effort against the Arabs, and his rising against Britain was to prevent the merger of south Kurdistan with Iraq. It was true that his prestige did not extend beyond the Sulaimania area, but he aimed at integrating the whole of south Kurdistan under his rule. These differences were another factor in the disunion of the Kurds. The thesis answers the third question, that the Kurdish response was their risings against the British and Iraqi governments. It demonstrates that the Kurds rose nearly ten times against the British administration and Iraqi government between 1919 and 1931, but that all of these risings were local and unco-ordinated, and did not spread to other Kurdish areas, which made them easy to defeat.

The unclear policy of Britain and France to settle the Kurdish question is another conclusion. After lengthy discussions from 1919 to 1920, they signed the Treaty of Sèvres, but they did not have any plan to keep the specific clauses of the treaty about Kurdish rights. They were not ready to send their forces to north Kurdistan, which caused the increase of Turkish propaganda in support of not separating the Kurds from Turkey, and they could not settle the Kurdish Armenian question by declaring an amnesty for the Kurds. Moreover, Britain and France did not give assurances to the Kurds that after separating them from Turkish rule, they would be protected against any Turkish attack. The great powers preferred not to sacrifice their troops in favour of the Kurds. France seemed to be satisfied with their gains in Syria under the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916. Britain also aimed to keep the Mosul vilayet, after obtaining it from France at the San Remo Conference of 1920. After this, Britain wanted to prevent any threat the Bolsheviks and the Turks in Persia and

Mesopotamia, in order to protect the oil interests there. It could be said that another reason for not fulfilling the clauses about Kurdish rights was that Britain and France were concerned that the establishment of a Kurdish state might create the possibility of influence and expansion for Russia in the area of the northern Kurds in the future. The Kurds also did not have any plan to protect their rights in the treaty. At that time, the situation in Kurdistan was one of unrest, and the lack of a Kurdish leader to represent all Kurds had a major role in the neglect of their rights in the treaty.

Regarding the second question, the thesis found that the policy of Britain was contrary to the wishes of the Kurds, especially as the creation of the Iraqi state greatly reduced the chance of establishing an independent Kurdish state. At the Cairo Conference of 1921, no decision regarding the future of the Kurds was taken, and the need to establish a strong Iraqi state had priority. After the selection of Faisal as king of Iraq, the High Commissioner of Iraq (despite the contrary opinions of other British officials) devoted his efforts to persuading the Kurds to accept Arab rule. Faisal had great influence, and Cox was willing to overlook the neglect of the promises of local autonomy for the Kurds. The inclusion of the southern Kurds in Iraq was in the interests of Britain, as it would reduce its military costs. This was because a possible separate Kurdish state might need British forces to remain in south Kurdistan for a longer period to protect it against outside attack. Although the majority of the Kurds rejected fusion with Iraq, their wishes were not considered by Britain or the Iraqi government. Faisal emphasised that the Kurds should take part in the Constituent Assembly, as he knew that by their involvement he would achieve two aims. The first was that south Kurdistan would be legally administered by the Iraqi government, and the second was that this would reduce the power of the Kurdish nationalists by including in the Iraqi Parliament some Kurdish chieftains who had a great influence not just in their tribal areas, but also in south Kurdistan more generally. It could be said that the southern Kurds were victims of the wishes of Britain and Iraq because of their strategic location and their rich oil areas, which meant that Britain and Iraq preferred to extend the Iraqi state at the expense of the southern Kurdish districts. In addition, Britain aimed to secure the oilfields of south Kurdistan under an Iraqi state which would be loyal to Britain and would remain under its influence in the future, instead of being under Turkish influence.

The conflict between Britain and Turkey regarding the Turco-Iraqi frontier question had severe consequences for Kurdish aspirations. For the sake of retaining the vilayet of Mosul with Iraq, Britain abandoned the issue of Kurdish rights at the Lausanne Conference. The involvement of the Turks in the treaty was another cause of this, as in any case they would not agree to the definition of any Kurdish rights. The Kemalist government declared that as the former Ottoman regime had signed the Treaty of Sèvres and not them, they were not bound by the terms of clauses 62-64. The thesis has also demonstrated that British silence about the Turkish re-occupation of north Kurdistan and the persecution of the northern Kurds was a significant factor in the Turkish belief that Britain would eventually agree to restore the vilayet to Turkey. Moreover, the Kemalists hoped that as they practised a new westwards policy, this might change the opinion of the Allied powers into supporting their claim to the vilayet. The weakening of British forces in the vilayet and Mesopotamia also strengthened the Turkish view that Britain might agree to restore the vilayet to them. However, after their interference in south Kurdistan, they were defeated by Britain in 1923. As Britain preferred to settle the issue of the Mosul vilayet by diplomacy, the Turks exploited this and they did not agree to abandon any rights in the vilayet during their negotiation with Britain. It could also be concluded that to appease the Turks, Kurdish rights were restricted to the full appointment of Kurdish officials and the use of the Kurdish language in the predominantly Kurdish areas, instead of full local autonomy. Britain preferred to keep these rights, especially the Kurdish language which was improved during the administration of Soane, and thus Britain prevented the extinction of the Kurdish language in Iraq. However, Britain did not put pressure on the Iraqi government when they did not properly fulfil their pledges on Kurdish rights. Britain also could not press the Turks to give any rights to the northern Kurds, because the British aim was only to settle the Turco-Iraqi frontier, and Britain did not want to get involved in other issues outside its interests.

The Kurds were not included during the discussion of the question of south Kurdistan between Britain, Turkey and Iraq, and they were not invited to any of the meetings between these countries. The Kurds at that time were in conflict with each other, and they were not aware that this was against their own interests. Some of them sought to obtain government posts, and they were ready to work nominally under the Iraqi government. They encouraged Britain and the Iraqi government against the Kurdish nationalists, and believed that their interests were protected by supporting the

British agenda, and they did not care that the British agenda was to integrate south Kurdistan with Iraq. They also did not care that this would weaken the Kurdish nationalist movement which struggled to establish an independent Kurdish state. The result of this was the failure of the chance to obtain any further rights from the Iraqi government, in addition to the education and cultural rights promised in the decision of the Council of the League Nations in 1925. However, the Kurds sent petitions to Geneva to ask for their separation from Iraq, as they explained that they would not accept living under the rule of the Arabs, because they believed that they were a different nation and should have the same rights as the Arabs. The thesis shows that the majority of the Kurds agreed that their rights would not be protected in Iraq. By their request the Kurds demonstrated that they were not aware that the decision of the League Council League was a binding decision and which had legitimated the integration of the Mosul vilayet with Iraq. In addition, they could either have boycotted the investigation of the Commission of the League or instead of choosing between only Iraq and Turkey, they might have asked for a separate state.

The settlement of the frontier question could be analysed as a misfortune for Kurdish nationalism. Afterwards, both the Iraqi and Turkish governments, and later the Persian government, combined their efforts to defeat any Kurdish movements which they believed would threaten the security of their countries. They were agreed not to concede any national rights to the Kurds, and those requesting this would be regarded as trouble-makers, whilst any measures against the Kurds were viewed by other governments as internal matters. The Kurds had many difficulties under the rule of the Iraqi government, as they were not treated equally with the Arabs but instead as second-class citizens, and their areas were not rebuilt by the Iraqi government after the damage caused by the suppression of their revolts. It could be concluded that due to the negative role of the Turks, the Iraqi government was able to defeat the Kurdish nationalists who sought independence and to restrict the political participation of the Kurds in the Iraqi state, and even their education was limited to primary school level. Britain was certain that the Iraqi government would not readily implement the requirements of the League, but nevertheless still supported its admission to the League. The thesis argues that the main aim of Britain in doing so was the termination of its mandate in Iraq, and in doing so simultaneously to reduce its costs whilst maintaining its influence and interests by signing new arrangements with Iraq. In the Anglo-Iraqi Treaties, Britain pledged to keep the vilayet of Mosul with Iraq and

supported Iraq as a member of the League, and they did not consider the position of the Kurds under the Iraqi government. In later periods, Iraqi policy became more suppressive, and the Kurds subsequently suffered from Arabisation and genocide. The Kurdish question is still continuing with the Iraqi government, and they are as strongly as ever opposed to any separation of the southern Kurds from Iraq. For example, Iraq is opposed to the attempt of the Kurdish Regional Government to have an independent economy by selling its own oil, and insists that this should be done through the Iraqi government, as they fear that it would be a step towards Kurdish independence in the future.

Regarding the third question, the thesis also contends that it was the aggressive policy of the Iraqi nationalists towards the Kurds which made them rebellious and created instability in Iraq. This was the cause of the risings of the southern Kurds in 1930-31, in reaction against Iraqi policy towards them and their fears about their suppression after the admission of Iraq to the League of Nations. This was a result of the neglect of the British suggestions to the Iraqi government to adopt a tolerant policy towards the Kurds, but the Iraqi government preferred to practise the same policy towards the Kurds as did its neighbours in the other parts of Kurdistan. Although the Kurdish revolts in south Kurdistan were defeated and the Kurdish leaders either arrested or exiled, the Kurds continued to ask for their rights. They abandoned their request for independence and sought to obtain local autonomy. This was because the Kurds knew that the chance of establishing an independent state had been lost, but they did not learn the lesson from the disunity that had caused this loss.

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