

THE 1920 TREATY OF SÉVRES AND THE
STRUGGLE FOR A KURDISH HOMELAND IN IRAQ
AND TURKEY BETWEEN WORLD WARS

By

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Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
July, 2010

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank my advisor, Dr. Reuel Hanks, for his guidance and patience throughout this endeavor. He introduced me to some of the most fascinating literature and ideas in political geography during my studies and research. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Dale Lightfoot, Dr. Joel Jenswold, and Dr. Brad Bays, for their willingness to serve on my and to provide direction. I have an immense appreciation for the faculty and staff of Oklahoma State University's Department of Geography on the whole for supporting me across this undertaking.

Additionally, I would like to thank my parents, Melvin and Nelda Durham, for all of the encouragement they have provided through all the years of my life. My friend Dr. Brad Watkins provided great moral support over the years. Dr. Jefferson Rogers of the University of Tennessee at Martin remains a mentor, and I credit him with first setting me on this path. To all of you, I will be forever grateful.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is an examination of the rise and fracturing of Kurdish nationalism and territoriality in the context of the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres and the division of the defeated Ottoman Empire, and of the ensuing British and Turkish policies toward the Kurds. The regions of interest in this research are southeastern Turkey and northern Iraq, the former lands of the Ottoman Empire set aside by the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres for the creation of an independent Kurdistan. The main theoretical aspects of this study pertain to the rise of, and difficulties within, Kurdish nationalism, and to the territorial ambitions of the Kurds and regional governments upon Kurdish dominated lands. This work examines primary source documents and academic works to gain a better understanding of the policies of the governments involved, as well as attempts by the Kurds to acquire an independent state. In addition to archival and library research, concepts from political geography and comparative politics are employed to provide insight into issues such as territoriality and nationalism.

Statement of the Problem

The Kurds are the world's largest stateless nation, today numbering around thirty-five million, and mostly inhabiting the region known as Kurdistan,

which stretches across the states of Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Armenia. An officially recognized independent Kurdish state has never existed. This study involves an investigation of the history, politics, and physical geographical aspects of the Kurdish situation through the lenses of theories of nationalism, territoriality, and political geography. It provides an explanation of why factors that seemed to be supportive of Kurdish aspirations for independence worked against the Kurds. The developments of Kurdish nationalism and separatism in Turkey and Iraq were highly visible over the course of the twentieth century, and more so than in Iran, Syria, or Armenia. In both cases, the post-World War I division of the Ottoman Empire and the promotion of nation-states encouraged separatist efforts by the Kurds. The interwar period was a formative time for Kurdish political nationalism. In the Republic of Turkey, the leadership of Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) promoted a Turkish civic nationalism (a form of identity rooted in citizenship of a country and the ideals promoted by the state, in contrast to ethnic-based identity) for the advancement of secularism and modernity, otherwise referred to as Kemalism. However, the newly assembled Kingdom of Iraq, comprised of Mesopotamia and southern Kurdistan, was under the British mandate. The mandate expired prior to World War II, and the Kurds living there fell completely under the jurisdiction of the Kingdom of Iraq. The Kurds experienced similar circumstances in the two states. Their experiences diverged as a result of different policies pursued by the British and the Turks. In both cases, Kurdish efforts to gain territorial control were crushed by the respective governments. However, in Turkey Kurdish identity was denied outright, while in

Iraq Kurdish identity was recognized as part of the Iraqi mosaic of identities.

Kurdish separatism continues to affect the states and the region in which Kurds reside.

While this study does not address the situation of the Kurds and Kurdistan from World War II to the present, it seeks to lay a political geographical foundation for understanding the beginnings of events that are still playing out in the Middle East today. During the period immediately after World War I the Kurds were led to believe they would be granted statehood in territories now part of Turkey and Iraq. Political geographers such as Dahlman¹ and O'Shea² have examined Kurdistan, but these studies were broadly focused over time and included Iran and Syria. This research focuses specifically on the interwar period in Turkey and Iraq. Persia (Iran) and Syria are discussed, but only as staging grounds and refuges for nationalists and their causes. The justification for studying Iraq and Turkey is based on the fact that the 1920 Treaty of Sévres provided for a Kurdish entity to be drawn from the lands these two states now occupy. The reason for focusing exclusively on the interwar era is that this period witnessed the rise of Kurdish nationalism, which served as a foundation for later movements. When the promise of a homeland with self-governance was not fulfilled, the Kurds organized themselves, albeit in factions, and rebelled against the authorities in an attempt to fulfill their dreams. Had it not been for British and Turkish air force capabilities, the Kurds, in their mountain setting, might have succeeded in achieving independence.

Research Questions

Data collected from archival sources and secondary sources will provide answers to the following questions:

1. Why did Kurdistan as a nation-state fail to become a reality?
2. What impact did the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres provision for Kurdish statehood have on Kurdish identity and political cohesion?
3. Why did Turkey and British-controlled Iraq disallow Kurdish statehood?

Theoretical Overview

This study is a historical political geographical undertaking, and is mostly descriptive in nature. The main theoretical aspects of this study pertain to the rise of, and difficulties within, Kurdish nationalism, and to the territorial ambitions of the Kurds and regional governments upon Kurdish dominated lands. I propose to answer these questions with three areas of inquiry and elaboration: nationalism, territoriality, and geopolitics. Primary documents such as British diplomatic reporting and correspondences are examined through qualitative content analysis in which relevant data is encoded and extracted for interpretation.

The first area of inquiry involves the rise of Kurdish national consciousness and the political and military struggles that ensued. This emphasis addresses the question of the impact of the Treaty of Sèvres on Kurdish identity and cohesion, and, ultimately why Kurdistan as a state failed to become a reality. Library and archival research involving sources noted in the literature review section along with theories of nationalism shall be utilized to this end. Two main lines of thought regarding the origins of nationalism are

primordialism and modernism, also referred to as instrumentalism or constructivism. Primordialists claim that nations have ancient roots, and that nationalist movements of today are the extensions of these. Modernists, however, argue that nationalist movements are a modern phenomenon and a reaction to the homogenizing forces of industrialization. Anthony D. Smith has sought to understand and merge both ideas in his systemic theory of nationalism known as ethnosymbolism. He argues that the *ethnie*, or a pre-modern community with its own distinctive sense of self-identity and collectivity, is the root of modern nations.³ This idea of a pre-modern ethnic core seems to fit well with the Kurds, given the pre-modern nationalist works, such as Sharaf al-Din al-Bitlisi's sixteenth century epic, *Sharafname*, that are cited as evidence of national consciousness. Indeed, Natali notes that pre-modern Kurdish nationalist literature such as "Bitlisi's *Sharafname*, Khani's *Mem-u-Zin*, Chamo's *Dimdim*, and Kurdo's *Kurdish Civilization* emphasize the uniqueness of Kurdish identity."⁴ She asserts that Kurdish national identity, or *Kurdayeti*, arose prior to the creation of the modern states of the region, and has undergone many shifts as a result of political changes and communication around and among the Kurds.⁵

The second area of inquiry, related to nationalism, is into territoriality among the Kurds. Similar to nationalism, territoriality is focused upon Kurdish identity and its connection to Kurdistan. Since the Treaty of Sèvres involved definition of lands associated with a planned Kurdish state, this emphasis centers upon Kurdish ties to those territories and their incorporation into a new nationalist dream. Although territory often is associated with nationalist sentiments, the land

itself is merely land. It is the social sentiment of one's self and one's people being associated with a specific geographic area that gives meaning to the land.⁶ The sentiment that the "Kurds have no friends but the mountains" is an example of such a geographic tie of identity to land. The mountainous landscape of the Kurdish lands has provided refuge and sustenance for the Kurds against the ravages of nature and hostile neighbors on adjacent lands. Over time, the Kurds have come to associate themselves with those mountains, hence the saying.

While Kurdistan does not have any exact boundaries, the mountains of southeastern Anatolia, to the north of Mesopotamia, and the northwest of the Iranian Plateau have been generally regarded as Kurdish by Kurds and outsiders alike. The 1920 Treaty of Sèvres legitimized a portion of this perceived territory when it demarcated lands for two Kurdish autonomous regions to possibly be joined for an independent Kurdish state. The treaty's provisions changed many Kurds' perceptions of themselves and their lands. Murphy states that "(t)o create an area with legal or administrative significance is to bring into being a functional spatial unit that can profoundly alter ideas about social groupings,"⁷ thus reinforcing an existing identity by adding the symbol of place to ideas of a group's shared history and culture.⁸ The mere suggestion of such a spatial unit for the Kurds had the effect of generally strengthening the Kurds' territoriality and fostering the idea of an independent Kurdistan.⁹ Murphy further states that identity "is inherently territorial" and that special considerations for groups "can help sustain and promote ethnic social cleavages."¹⁰

The third area of interest is into the geopolitical ambitions of the non-Kurdish entities upon Kurdish dominated lands, namely the interests of the British and Turks. The British policy toward the Kurds, as well as Turkey, and their consciousness of the Soviet Union, will be analyzed through the lens of Mackinder's Heartland Theory and Spykman's Rimland Theory. This analysis is in terms of what Meinig defines as "positional supremacy."¹¹ Utilizing these theories, I seek to demonstrate that Kurdistan is a gateway between the two, and was almost certain to be divided between powers.

It is useful to turn to the context of the Great Game to understand some of the competition for Kurdish lands, especially in the case of the United Kingdom and its perception of the rebirth of its old adversary, Russia, as the Soviet Union. The Great Game was a competition waged between the British Empire and the Russian Empire for territory and influence in central and southern Asia during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This competition held political, military, and economic objectives, with the British seeking to secure their colonial interests in India, and the Russians to expand their empire. It led the Russians into the khanates of Central Asia, and led the alarmed British to seek support from rulers of the lands surrounding India.¹² Both parties courted the favor of Afghanistan's rulers since that country was a gateway between Central and South Asia. British interest in this gateway was intense enough that when Afghanistan's leadership wavered in its support the British invaded.¹³ The British feared the consequences of raids by the Afghans pouring into India in either a call to jihad¹⁴ or at the behest of the Russians to help bring down the British

Empire.¹⁵ This is relevant to this dissertation because the British chain of interests stretching from the eastern Mediterranean to Burma was subject to many gateways that the British believed posed a threat from a reemerging Russian power. Kurdistan was part of one of these linking the Middle East with the areas of the Eastern European Plain, the Caucasus, and Central Asia, later conceptualized and referred to as the “Heartland.”

The two states having the greatest influence over the Kurdish lands slated for autonomy or outright independence by the Treaty of Sévres were Turkey and the United Kingdom. The British Foreign Office has declassified many of its reports and correspondences from the period around World War I to World War II. These documents provide a unique perspective on the British activities toward the Kurds and rival governments in Iraq and the region.

Content analysis is a useful method for studying the documents from the various individuals and agencies of the period. The types of data this study proposes to use fall under what Dibble refers to as the “four types of inference from documents to events,” which are testimony, social bookkeeping, correlates, and direct indicators.¹⁶ Testimony is a document based on an individual interview or an account of an event,¹⁷ while social bookkeeping is a document or a series of documents recording information produced by an institution or a group.¹⁸ For instance, an account of a British colonial administrator’s experiences in Iraq is considered testimony, but British diplomatic reports are considered a type of social bookkeeping. Correlates are pieces of information not directly dealing with an event, but that may either work as ancillary evidence to substantiate or refute

historical claims.¹⁹ Direct indicators are those sources that may provide a direct answer to a historical inquiry.²⁰

While information extracted from these types of documents may not necessarily be factual, it does provide a basis for interpreting views held at the time. Prior states that textual “representation should be understood not as a true and accurate reflection of some aspect of an external world, but as something to be explained and accounted for through the discursive rules and themes that predominate in a particular socio-historical context.”²¹ Content analysis will provide groundwork for interpretation of the materials in the context of the policies that were constructed and implemented regarding the British, Iraqi, and Turkish governments’ stances toward the Kurds. According to Prior, “classificatory systems provide a fruitful terrain for the qualitative researcher,”²² because they enable researchers to extract information from sources in an organized and meaningful manner. A coding system for the documents will be constructed for classification of the data. For example, data from British Foreign Office documents may be coded according to several categories: direct relations with the Kurds, relationship to Kurdish lands, relationship to other governments regarding the Kurds, relationship to other governments regarding Kurdish lands. This type of classificatory system will reveal the attitudes of the various parties involved in Kurdish politics and those related to Kurdish lands. The importance of what is being discussed in these documents is linked to the importance of the individuals or institutions involved and their abilities to shape the future of the Kurds and their lands.

This study faces some limitations. Turkish records remain off limits to most scholars. This is especially the case for scholars with an interest in controversial topics such as those concerning the Kurds or the Armenians. However, the scholars Bernard Lewis²³ and Andrew Mango²⁴ have been granted access and have used information from Turkish archives in their own works. These works provide pieces for the Turkish puzzle regarding the rise of the republic and its policy toward the Kurds.

Historical Background

The name “Kurd” was historically applied to people living in the Zagros and Taurus mountains, regardless of their ethnic background. Much debate surrounds both the name and the origin of the Kurdish people.²⁵ Even when foreign entities claimed Kurdistan as part of their territories, the Kurds were never actually under the direct rule of any non-Kurdish authority. Because much of Kurdistan is so mountainous and remote, the Kurds were also isolated from one another. This likely led to the linguistic divisions among the Kurds.²⁶ With the rise of the Ottoman and Persian-Safavid empires, particularly during conflict between the two powers, the Kurds once again became important as subjects of foreign powers.²⁷ The Kurds were fairly autonomous since Kurdistan served as a marchland between the empires.²⁸ In competition for loyalty from the Kurds, the two empires set up feudal systems, which allowed for the establishment of several Kurdish principalities in the mountainous frontier area.²⁹

Ironically, Turkish and Persian efforts to organize Kurdish allies represent the beginnings of organized Kurdish nationalism. These empires granted local powers to Kurdish chieftains, thereby allowing cohesion of Kurds within these areas to take place, albeit to a limited extent.³⁰ An important example of this cohesion is the Ottoman Empire's creation of the Kurdish *Hamidiye* cavalry for eastern Anatolia, which allowed its members and their families to experience organization, education, and power previously unknown.³¹ It was during the nineteenth century that Kurdish leaders began to both recognize their people as separate from the groups surrounding them and act upon this notion to seek organization of the Kurds on a broader scale.³² Until the nineteenth century, organized Kurdish nationalism was absent, as most Kurds saw themselves as Muslims foremost and thereby kin to Arab, Turk, and Persian alike.³³ Kurdish identity was recognized, but lower in order of importance relative to religious affiliation.³⁴ At the same time, these Kurdish principalities were at odds with one another, and on occasion a leader appealed to the Turks or Persians for assistance against their own brothers and cousins.³⁵

During the last phase of Ottoman control in Kurdistan, from *Tanzimat* (modernizing reforms, 1839-1879) until World War I, Kurdistan enjoyed autonomy as a buffer zone between the Ottoman Turkish heartland of Anatolia and the Persian Empire in the east.³⁶ Kurdistan also served as a buffer to Ottoman-ruled Mesopotamia lying to the south of Anatolia. The mountainous area in which Kurdistan exists had never been subject to direct rule, because such a pursuit had proved fruitless time and again as a result of Kurdish

superiority in mountain warfare.³⁷ Indirect rule, through autonomous and semi-autonomous principalities, allowed the Ottoman and Persian empires to maintain relative calm in their Kurdish borderlands over the centuries.³⁸ This autonomy and the relatively low level of outside interference their geographical position provided, contributed to a sense of territoriality among the Kurds for their mountainous refuge.

The European powers thought they had the entirety of the Ottoman Empire within their grasp before the close of World War I. This is evidenced by the Sykes-Picot Agreement, which partitioned Ottoman lands among the European powers. The original parties to the agreement in 1916 were the United Kingdom and France, but the agreement also brought in the Russian Empire. Later, the Soviet Union renounced all agreements made by its predecessor. This change affected the Sykes-Picot maps in that there was no longer a need for the French to hold the Mosul *vilayet* as a buffer zone,³⁹ thus the area's future was left in question.

After the surrender of the Ottoman Empire and the close of World War I, plans for the lands, resources, and people under former Ottoman jurisdiction were negotiated. While the U.K. and France were drawing their lines on the map of the Middle East, the Americans, whom they invited to take up mandates in Armenia and Kurdistan, refused to become involved on the ground. U.S. foreign policy was, in a word, fickle. According to Tejirian, "the internationalism of the 1910s, which followed the first acquisitions of the 'American empire' after the Spanish-American War and led to U.S. entry into World War I, was followed by

the isolationism of the 1920s, emphasized most dramatically by U.S. refusal to join the League of Nations.”⁴⁰ This was a starting point for Kurdish troubles, as far as their international legitimacy was concerned. Had the U.S. become a member in the League and taken up a mandate in Armenia, and possibly Kurdistan, Washington likely would have ensured the eventual statehood of a Kurdistan as specified in the postwar settlement terms the Ottoman government accepted. The British and French supported other mandates in the area backed with political and military force. A similar arrangement by the U.S. or other allies regarding Kurdistan likely would have prevailed.

The most comprehensive plan to emerge was the Treaty of Sèvres (Appendix A) in 1920.⁴¹ The treaty had been heavily influenced by the ideas of U.S. President Woodrow Wilson. Point 12 of Wilson’s Fourteen Points declared “that non-Turkish minorities of the Ottoman Empire should be granted the right of ‘autonomous development.’”⁴² Indeed, the Treaty of Sèvres included Article 62 providing the Kurds with autonomy and Article 64 allowing for possible independence.⁴³ However, what the Europeans had not foreseen was the rise of the Republic of Turkey under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk). Kemal’s surprising gains in the west against the Greeks as well as his movements in the east caused the U.K. and France to take notice. Like the Soviet Union in relation to the Russian Empire, the Republic of Turkey sought to undo the dealings of the Ottoman Empire. The Treaty of Sèvres was never ratified, and Kemal sought new terms of agreement. Kemal’s military victories allowed for the Treaty of Lausanne (Appendix B) in 1923, which did away with “the hated regime of

capitulations”⁴⁴ that the Treaty of Sèvres represented to the Turks. This new treaty made no direct mention of the Kurds or Kurdistan;⁴⁵ rather Ottoman Kurdistan was divided among Turkey and the two Arab states to the south, Iraq and Syria, which were under British and French mandates respectively. The following sections are a brief glimpse of the Kurds’ activities in Turkey and Iraq after the division of territories between the two states.

Turkey

The first Kurdish political party originated in the Kurdish diaspora rather than from within Kurdistan. The organization known as Khoybun (also known as the Kurdish League), or “Independence,” was founded by a group of Kurdish intellectuals in Paris in 1918.⁴⁶ These intellectuals saw the period following World War I as ripe for organizing a movement aimed at securing a Kurdish nation-state out of the ruins of the recently defeated Ottoman Empire.

Animosity toward the new secular Turkish state had been building since the modernization programs the Ottoman Empire initiated during the latter phase of *Tanzimat* in the late 1880s.⁴⁷ This was especially true in the Kurdish southeast, where a series of rebellions had occurred leading up to the fall of the empire. While many of these rebellions had been Islamic in nature, they had Kurdish underpinnings.⁴⁸ In 1925, a new rebellion, more nationalistic than any to date, erupted under the leadership of Sheikh Said in the districts west of Lake Van.⁴⁹ The Khoybun’s members waited eagerly for the outcome of Sheikh Said’s

efforts only to be disappointed when the rebellion was put down and its fighters fled across the frontier into Persia.⁵⁰

The Khoybun found allies in the Armenian population in Aleppo, Syria, especially with those belonging to the Dashnak party.⁵¹ Gathering troops across the Persian border, the new rebellion was launched in 1927 with the entirely secular goal of creating the Kurdish Republic of Ararat in the rugged far east of Turkey from the area surrounding Lake Van to the frontiers with the Soviet Union and Persia.⁵² The Turks soundly defeated the Khoybun Rebellion in 1930, largely through the Turkish Air Force (TAF), just as the British had against the Kurds in Iraq years before. The Kurds maintained ground advantage throughout the rebellion, but were ultimately edged out by the airpower.⁵³

A smaller rebellion by Kurds flared up around the city of Dersim in 1937-1938. These Kurds were responding to so-called preventative measures taken up by the Turkish armed forces against Kurdish villages deemed dangerous. This rebellion was short-lived, and resulted in utter destruction of the villages. Kurdish casualties were enormous.⁵⁴ The Kurds of Turkey did not pose a serious threat to the republic again until the 1980s.

Iraq

In the Mosul *vilayet*, two Kurdish leaders emerged, Sheikh Ahmed Barzani and Sheikh Mahmud Barzinji.⁵⁵ Mahmud was far more charismatic than Ahmed, and was able to recruit followers outside of his tribe. This gained Mahmud an audience with the British early on.⁵⁶ Mahmud's relationships with the British and

with rival Kurds were tumultuous, though he commanded much respect and held a lot of promise to lead an independent Kurdistan.⁵⁷ Both Ahmed and Mahmud clashed with the British, but the U.K. gave Mahmud several opportunities to lead the Kurds and hold a cooperative relationship with the Arabs and British. Usually, Mahmud generated conflict by demanding territorial expansion of his authority and the right to command a Kurdish army. Mahmud was frequently exiled to Persia, where he was usually in conflict with the Persians.

The first experiment at Kurdish statehood came in 1918-1919, when the British allowed a Kurdish government in Sulaymaniyah to form, in which Mahmud was the key Kurdish player.⁵⁸ The British saw Kurdish self-rule as a way to bring the Mosul *vilayet* under control, yet Mahmud's government was dissolved in 1919 when the British decided the Kurds were too anti-British. Mahmud led a revolt against the British, which was met with a swift response by the British Royal Air Force (RAF).⁵⁹ Mahmud was forced into exile, only to be welcomed back by the British for another opportunity at a Kurdish state in 1922.⁶⁰ Sulaymaniyah had been left as an undecided entity for this purpose. However, Mahmud ran into troubles with the British once again.⁶¹ Many, both within Kurdistan and the allied countries, viewed Mahmud as the wrong leader for the Kurds. This was also the view held by U.S. President Wilson.⁶² However, Mahmud had gained the allegiance of the Talabani tribe, and it was during this time that the enduring political rivalry between the Talabanis and Barzanis emerged.⁶³ Winston Churchill sought the creation of an independent Kurdistan to serve as a friendly buffer state between Turkey and Mesopotamia, but he was dissuaded from

pursuing this.⁶⁴ The U.K. opted to impose direct rule upon Kurdistan because of its instability and the threat the emerging Republic of Turkey was making to incite the Kurds there into rebellion. A sustained rebellion would have allowed Turkey to reclaim the Mosul *vilayet*.⁶⁵ Mahmud's final defeat came in 1931, but two of his previous demands, Kurdish schools and elected positions for Kurdish representation, were implemented.⁶⁶

Ahmed took a different approach from Mahmud toward uniting the Kurds under his leadership. While Mahmud was dashing back and forth between Persia and Iraq, Ahmed was building his reputation by taking on any rivals in skirmishes, be they Turks, Arabs, British, or other Kurds. Ahmed and his Barzani tribe gained a fearsome and respected reputation during this time. The British had never seriously considered Ahmed for leadership among the Kurds, but by 1927 he had appeared on the horizons of all parties.⁶⁷ The Barzani tribe became the most influential in Iraq and the region.⁶⁸ As a result of his activities against the British, Ahmed was chased into Turkey by the RAF and later arrested and sent into exile in southern Iraq. The Barzani leadership passed to Ahmed's brother, Mustafa, who became a major figure in Iraqi Kurdish nationalism in the middle of the century.⁶⁹

One of the problems in leadership for the Kurds in Iraq was that the leaders, who tended to be urban and middle-class, did not speak for the majority.⁷⁰ This compromised the unity of the Kurds in Mosul and Iraq; they were simply unable to unite as a force to pressure the British into granting them statehood.

Significance of the Study

This dissertation re-examines two geopolitical theories of the early twentieth century in the context of Kurdish nationalist struggle following the Ottoman Empire's demise. Sir Halford Mackinder's Geographical Pivot/Heartland Theory and Nicholas Spykman's Rimland Theory lend penetrating insight into British policy regarding the control of Eurasia during the early twentieth century and to the position of the Kurds within this geopolitical worldview. Mackinder's Heartland Theory helped shape British geopolitics, and maintained an important place in the minds of policy makers. While the British were not going to control the Heartland directly, their strategic positioning in the Inner Crescent, the coastal fringes surrounding Eurasia, granted them a kind of control. The importance of controlling the Inner Crescent over the Heartland was later articulated by Spykman in his Rimland Theory during World War II, but the idea was already held by the British as they aligned themselves, through direct control or strong influence, from Cyprus to Burma. The British had reached détente with the Russian Empire over the Great Game just years before in 1907, but they had no such agreement with the Soviet Union. The Kurds and Kurdistan were of interest to the British as a potential safeguard against Bolshevik (communists who in October 1917 overthrew the Russian monarchy and replaced the Russian Empire with the Soviet Union) influence and territorial gains streaming southward through the Caucasus. The rapidly changing political situations in the region placed the Kurds in an awkward relationship with the British, and their position and candidacy for independence partially became a victim of the British need for

strategic positioning and security in Asia. Though these ideas are no longer guiding policy in the region, their effects are still evident on the political landscape.

Though Kurdistan for centuries had been divided between the Ottoman Empire and Persian Empire, the demise of the Ottoman Empire, the division of its lands, and the emergence of organized nationalisms among the peoples there led to pronounced hostility among the Kurds toward their overlords: the Turks, the Arabs, and the Persians. The Kurds experienced further divisions and revolutionary social, economic, and political changes following World War I. The provision for an independent Kurdistan as presented in the Treaty of Sèvres remains an issue of contention between the Kurds and the states within whose borders they dwell. Changes brought about by new policies from British and Turkish administrations still reverberate today. The period between the two world wars was the formative period for Kurdish national consciousness and mobilization, and is the time when the idea of an independent Kurdistan was floated about in powerful international circles. The events of this period in Iraq and Turkey later influenced Kurdish nationalist movements in those states as well as movements in neighboring Iran and Syria and in the Kurdish diaspora. Many lessons regarding self-determination and the politics of the peoples of Iraq and Turkey can be taken from the British and Turkish experiences in the 1920s and 1930s.

The U.S. never declared war on the Ottoman Empire, and, apart from President Wilson, the U.S. had no ambition of reshaping the Middle East at the

end of World War I. However, the U.S. became a shaper of Middle Eastern politics and conflict over the course of the last century into the present. U.S. policy did not include the Kurds until the latter half of the twentieth century. Insight can be gained into the current U.S. involvement in Iraq from the British experience there following World War I. The current situation the Kurds face in both Iraq and Turkey reflects the events of the interwar period to some degree.

Since the Persian Gulf War in 1991, the United States has developed further interest in Iraq and its Kurdish population. The U.S. and the U.K. established a no-fly zone in northern Iraq, which led to virtual independence from Baghdad among a large segment of the Kurdish population there. This safe haven prospered under protection from the American and British air forces. After the U.S. invaded the country in 2003 to oust Saddam Hussein and attempted to establish a new order in Iraq, that interest has been magnified. The Kurdish people and the Kurdistan region in northern Iraq are a U.S. focal point for the goal of establishing security, trade, and democratic institutions within the entirety of Iraq.

This is a timely study because events in Iraq may lead to Kurdish independence in the near future. Today, talk of splitting Iraq into three states based on the Kurdish, Shi'a Arab, and Sunni Arab regions has been touted as a solution to Iraq's sectarian strife. Whether this is an appropriate "solution" or not, the idea of a Kurdish state has risen once again. A portion of the Kurdish region of northern Iraq has been functioning as its own state over the past decade, but its neighbors would not readily welcome its declaration of independence. The

states in which Kurdish separatists reside would not look favorably at the loss or threat of loss of their territory. This is an unsettling idea to the government and military of Turkey, because they have faced a renewed Kurdish insurgency since the 1980s in the guise of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Iranian leaders still recall the Kurdish republic of Mahabad in 1946. Syria has clamped down on Kurdish activities, even establishing an Arab belt around the Kurds in the northeast. Previous experiments with Kurdish statehood were short-lived. The British attempts with Sheikh Mahmud in Iraq were stopped because of Kurdish agitation outside of the designated territories. Turkey, Iran, and Syria all fear that a Kurdish state carved from Iraq would be a repetition of history, and that their own Kurdish populations would see an independent Kurdistan as inspiration for insurrection. These states have cause to fear this because of the active Kurdish movements in their territories. They believe Kurdish independence would create yet another conflict in the region.

However, lessons from the past could be applied to provide a gradual transition for what seems like an inevitable Kurdish state without conflict. Iraqi Kurdistan is heavily connected economically to Turkey, Iran, and other regional states. Indeed, much foreign investment in Iraq since 2003 has gone into the Kurdish north. The changes that would occur, apart from Kurdish independence for the first time in history, would not be revolutionary as they were in the 1920s. The political, social, and economic systems are already in place and functioning. A departure from past policies would be for neighboring states and others concerned to assist the Kurds there with the transition, not as guides in the

colonial sense, but as partners in a globalizing world. This would also mean transitions would need to occur within the countries with Kurdish minorities. Repressive policies used in the past to contain or crush Kurdish nationalism and dreams of an independent Kurdistan would be unwise if peace is to be ensured.

The Kurds have gained considerable media exposure for the hardships the various Kurdish populations have endured under governments in Turkey and Iraq, as well as in Iran and Syria. These hardships have their beginnings in the break-up of the Ottoman Empire and the years immediately following. Today, attitudes toward the Kurds there have changed. No longer are there official attitudes reflecting the previous orientalist disdain for the Kurds who a British High Commission official in Constantinople in 1919 characterized as being “on too mediaeval a plane of thought and custom to make it possible to apply modern democratic criteria.”⁷¹ The Kurds of Iraq are again in a global media spotlight waiting to demonstrate their ability to succeed.

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CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

The intent of this literature review is to discuss the various works consulted to answer the research questions. Sources range from primary and academic documents to theoretical and methodological works relating to the dissertation. The chapter is organized into two main sections. The first section is a review of the primary and academic sources the study draws upon for information on the Kurds, various treaties and conferences, and on British and Turkish policies toward the Kurds and Kurdistan. The second section is devoted to theoretical fields used in this study and is divided into three topics: nationalism, territoriality, and political geography.

Primary Sources

A great asset to this study is the wealth of information housed in declassified British documents from the Foreign Office, the Colonial Office, and the Air Ministry from the period of World War I up to World War II. These documents provide a unique perspective of the British activities in Iraq and the region directed toward the Kurds and rival governments, as well as activities of those governments and peoples of their lands. While these documents are housed at the Public Records Office in Kew, United Kingdom, companies have

published them for worldwide distribution, and it is from these published works that information has been collected for study. In addition to these documents, memoirs of British officials involved in the Paris Peace Conference and the administration of Iraq during the British Mandate offer useful information.

The starting point for the justification of a Kurdish state is the Paris Peace Conference and the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres.¹ British Foreign Office documents from the peace conference reveal British perspectives on the proceedings and the future of the Middle East, culminating in the Treaty of Sèvres. Though the treaty was never ratified, it was a construction of international powerbrokers. The recognition of the Kurds and Kurdistan in articles 62-64 lends itself to recognition of Kurdish aspirations. U.S. President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points heavily influenced the Paris Peace Conference and its resulting treaties.² Point Twelve was directed specifically at providing self-determination to the non-Turkish peoples of the Ottoman Empire.

The Kurdish representative to the Paris Peace Conference, General Sharif Pasha, laid out the geographical claims of the Kurds in both description and a map. This has been republished recently, and it presents a view of Kurdish elites that sought to redraw the Ottoman Empire's borders in favor of an independent Kurdistan.³ David Lloyd George, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom at the time, and the country's primary representative at the conference, published his memoirs from Paris years later.⁴ These memoirs offer some views into what the U.K.'s position and expectations were regarding the Ottoman Empire and its division. The Treaty of Sèvres was never ratified, and its terms were rejected by

Mustafa Kemal, who forced negotiations for a new treaty. The 1923 Treaty of Lausanne supplanted the agreement of the Allies with the Ottoman Empire and did not honor any Kurdish aspirations.⁵ It also represents the beginnings of a violent struggle for Kurdish recognition and rights throughout the twentieth century. Many other works provide a rich background for the research in terms of the overall setting of the emergence of Kurdish nationalism and its territorial aspects.

British Foreign Office documents pertaining to the Middle East during the interwar period⁶ provide a much-welcomed source for this study. These documents cover the dispute over Mosul between Britain and Turkey, and they contain detailed information on nationalist activities and rebellions of the Kurds. Another set of volumes covers the Paris Peace Conference, with one volume devoted to the negotiations with the Ottoman Empire.⁷ Other documents from the British Colonial Office and the Air Ministry relating to the Kurds⁸ provide useful information that compliments the Foreign Office information. Memoirs and letters of various colonial administration figures such as Gertrude Bell⁹ and Wallace Lyon¹⁰ also provide useful content. These sources contain correspondences detailing activities related to the Kurds and Kurdish leaders, as well as general goings on of life in Iraq. Most primary sources used in this study are from British governmental institutions and individuals. The British Foreign Office documents provide insight into the events of the time: decisions made over how to deal with Kurdish nationalist activities, border disputes, and the strategic positioning of the British in relation to Turkey and the Kurds. The documents in this series deal with

the entire region, not just the British administered areas. Some documents include information on Kurdish activities in Turkey and the Turkish responses. These documents used in association with secondary sources dealing with Turkish archives yield important information in the absence of access to those archival materials.

Academic Sources

Since the emergence of Kurdish nationalism following World War I, many works have been written on the Kurds and their political activities. This study, involving the analysis of the Kurdish policies of the Republic of Turkey and the Iraqi government under British administration, and the Kurdish reaction to those policies, draws upon these sources and later academic works. A core of literature on Kurdish history is presented in the following paragraphs. Following this, literature pertaining to the Paris Peace Conference and the subsequent course of events are discussed.

Many exceptional works on Kurdish history exist and provide a wealth of information of benefit to this study. Jwaideh's *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement*¹¹ offers useful information regarding all of the major activities of Kurdish movements from the Ottoman and Safavid empires until after the Second World War. Jwaideh, an Iraqi, provides extensive native knowledge of the history and geography of the Kurds in the Middle East. His research spans Kurdish nationalism from the 1880s up to the formation and destruction of the Mahabad Republic in 1946. This is the published version of Jwaideh's

dissertation, which has been consulted by most scholars attempting to gain any knowledge of the Kurds. His extensive research into the various figures and events associated with Kurdish political nationalism are a major contribution to this study. Jwaideh's local knowledge of his subject adds to the importance of his work.

McDowall's *A Modern History of the Kurds*¹² is an authoritative source regarding the history of the Kurdish nation from the nineteenth century forward. McDowall's work focuses on the development and activities of the Kurds in the different countries in which they reside. McDowall's bibliography is a wealth of information, as he has consulted a variety of Kurdish, Turkish, Persian, Arabic, and other sources. McDowall presents a detailed narrative of the events and lives of the figures involved in the making of Kurdish history.

Another instructive volume is Izady's *The Kurds: A Concise Handbook*,¹³ which is an exceptionally thorough and well-organized work dealing with many facets of Kurdish society and culture. Izady provides highly detailed information on themes such as the physical geography of Kurdistan, language, religion, political issues and the creation of the Kurdish diaspora. His information on the formative period of Kurdish nationalism following World War I is invaluable.

Entessar's *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*¹⁴ is an analysis of Kurdish national and political consciousness and the difficulties of the Kurds' quest for recognition and independence. Entessar breaks the question down to a country-by-country study of the nationalist movements across the twentieth century. By doing this,

Entessar follows the development of nationalism and the different routes it takes among the Kurds in their different political settings.

Edmonds's article, "Kurdish Nationalism,"¹⁵ provides a narrative of the rise of Kurdish nationalism and its many difficulties, especially those among the Kurds themselves. In a similar fashion, Entessar's aptly titled "The Kurdish Mosaic of Discord"¹⁶ examines the reasons behind the barriers for Kurdish unity. Dahlman's article "The Political Geography of Kurdistan"¹⁷ discusses the situation of the Kurds and Kurdistan in a geopolitical context, though focused heavily on the latter part of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first. Rubin's article, "Are Kurds a Pariah Minority?,"¹⁸ poses many interesting questions regarding Kurdish identity. He identifies the fact the Kurds do not have a common history, but a mosaic of histories based on geographical divisions and different interactions with other Kurds and surrounding populations. This does not discount Kurdish identity or nationalism; rather, it means that because there are so many identities based on the different past experiences, the situation is more difficult for cohesion to occur.

In the *Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism*,¹⁹ Olson investigates the rise of Kurdish nationalism under Sheikh Ubaydullah in the Ottoman Empire during the 1880s and follows its development in both Iraq and Turkey to the Sheikh Said rebellion of 1925. Olson examines the Kurdish reaction throughout the developments of war, peace settlement, and the realignment of Middle Eastern borders. Olson²⁰ continues his work on early Kurdish nationalism in Turkey with an article following the development of the major rebellions of Sheikh Said in

1925, the Khoybun around Ararat from 1927 to 1930, and the Dersim Kurds in 1938. He also explains the Turkish military advantage of using warplanes against the Kurds as the Royal Air Force (RAF) had in Iraq. This is an important point, because it enabled both the British and the Turks to put down the rebellions that may have become outright revolutions had the conflict been limited to the ground where the Kurds had the advantage.

A number of scholars have researched the British Mandate period in Iraq and have produced invaluable works detailing the British and Kurdish activities there. Eskander's works surround the period from 1918-1923, when Britain was unsure of what to do with the Kurds and their territory.²¹ A focus of Eskander's is on the Kurdish governments that were formed and then scrapped under British supervision. Olson's²² analysis of the Colonial Office correspondences between Winston Churchill and Percy Cox provides clarity on the thoughts of the British administrators involved in the Cairo Conference and the establishment of the Kingdom of Iraq and the attachment of southern Kurdistan to Mesopotamia. This article is important because it examines the reasons behind Churchill's decision to include southern Kurdistan with Mesopotamia to form Iraq. Churchill had been one of Britain's most vocal proponents for a Kurdish state. Strangely, Percy Cox convinced Churchill not to pursue Kurdish independence.

Several dissertations provide further information for this research. These studies come from history and political science, and they tie in well with the political geographical interest of this dissertation. Özoğlu's²³ focus is on the Kurdish elites, or notables, in the Ottoman Empire's late period. Özoğlu's work

traces the strains of nationalism surrounding these figures. Similarly, Klein's²⁴ research on the all Kurdish Hamidiye Light Cavalry examines their establishment during the late Ottoman period. Her study is insightful because it examines the Ottoman Empire's attempt to organize and modernize Kurds in the face of growing religious and Kurdish, as well as Armenian, nationalist unrest in southeastern Anatolia. The cavalry was formed in response to the uprising of Sheikh Ubaydullah during the 1880s. Ubaydullah's uprising and other smaller ones were responses to the void in power left by the Ottoman dismantlement of the Kurdish principalities along the Ottoman-Persian frontier. Following the demise of the elites' powers and what was perceived by the Kurds to be a turning away from Islam by the Ottoman government, some Kurds sought their own Kurdish path. The organization of the cavalry in response to the rebellions, ironically, helped lay a foundation for future organization by former cavalry members in revolts against the Republic of Turkey's authority. These two dissertations are related to Yavuz's²⁵ article on the paths of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey, with the elites on one hand and the cavalry on another. Eventually, these two paths joined, but the marriage was not harmonious.

Watt's²⁶ dissertation explores Kurdish nationalism and its politics in Turkey across the twentieth century. She focuses on the development of the Kurdish diaspora in western Turkey, which was created by deportations in the first part of the twentieth century and by migrations away from violence and economic hardship in the southeast. She provides an excellent foundation for the rise of organization and nationalism among the Kurds during the 1920s and 1930s. In a

similar fashion, Otucu's²⁷ research examines violence between the Republic of Turkey and its Kurds. While Otucu's study places emphasis on the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), it covers the earlier stages of Kurdish nationalism and rebellion.

Pasley's²⁸ work centers on British ambitions on Turkey following the Ottoman Empire's defeat and its abrupt end with the rise of Mustafa Kemal and the Republic of Turkey. Her study covers developments from the war's end to the Treaty of Lausanne. Ali's²⁹ dissertation is one of the most thorough works on the Kurds in British Iraq, covering the period from World War I to the end of the mandate in 1932. It provides useful information and sources regarding British policy toward the Kurds. Ali's subject matter is wide ranging, canvassing topics from economics and agriculture to the various Kurdish nationalist efforts and British actions toward them.

Other academic works provide accounts of events and decisions surrounding the Paris Peace Conference and the Treaty of Sèvres. Ahmad's work, *Kurdistan During the First World War*,³⁰ chronicles the destruction and change that took place during the war. It also details the set up for the postwar claims to territory by the Kurds, Armenians, Assyrians, and the Allies. Helmreich's *From Paris to Sèvres*³¹ chronicles the Ottoman Empire's entry into negotiations at the Paris Peace Conference and the emergence of the Treaty of Sèvres. Fromkin's *A Peace to End All Peace*³² is one of the most comprehensive accounts of the Ottoman Empire's entry into World War I and the aftermath of its defeat. MacMillan's *Paris 1919*³³ is an in-depth work on the Paris Peace

Conferences, which sought the creation of a lasting peace among the warring parties. It has extensive information on the Treaty of Sèvres, why it failed, and the renegotiation of the terms with the new Republic of Turkey in the Treaty of Lausanne. Another similar work is by Goldstein,³⁴ who offers an analysis of the individual treaties and the course of events following them. The impact of the Treaty of Sèvres begins with the treaty itself, which is largely a product of U.S. President Woodrow Wilson's internationalism and idealism encapsulated in his Fourteen Points. This document, and the ideas behind it, provided the basis for self-determination among the non-Turkish populations of the Ottoman Empire. While the treaty was never ratified, it remains an important artifact among Kurdish nationalists because it provides not only international acknowledgement of the Kurds as a people, but also for their statehood. This dissertation does not focus on Woodrow Wilson or American policy at the time, but the ideas promoted by Wilson and the establishment of international institutions, namely the League of Nations, aimed at solving the world's problems are relevant.

A work from the period is Isaiah Bowman's *The New World*.³⁵ He describes the post-World War world and its many challenges. This text went through four different versions across the 1920s as situations changed. The first edition in 1921 had a chapter dedicated to the Kurdish question,³⁶ but by the fourth edition, in 1928, Bowman removed the chapter in favor of a more robust section on the Republic of Turkey.³⁷ Bowman's work provides insight into the situation of the Kurds following the First World War. Bowman's 1926 edition includes a supplementary contents section on the Treaty of Sèvres and the

postwar developments in the former Ottoman Empire. In these notes he opens with, “the Treaty of Sèvres, signed but never ratified, has finally become a dead letter and the revised political maps of the past three years must undergo still another revision.”³⁸ Referring to non-Turkish minorities Bowman writes, “The long-sustained policy of the Ottoman Empire with reference to deportations, massacres, and conscription had brought about ethnic distributions calculated to make the setting up of government by minorities an almost impossible task in 1919, even if territorial adjustments and boundary definitions had not presented problems of the first magnitude.”³⁹ However, Bowman’s statement with regard to an independent Kurdistan is flawed, for the Kurds were concentrated mainly within their traditional territory and had expanded into former Armenian lands to become the dominant population north of Lake Van. Another error of Bowman’s is his assertion that, “There is to be full and complete protection of life and liberty to all inhabitants of Turkey without distinction of birth, nationality, language, race, or religion.”⁴⁰ Further, Bowman states, “Instruction in their own language is to be provided for non-Moslem nationals in Turkey in those districts in which they form a considerable portion of the total population.”⁴¹ The interesting aspect of Bowman’s observation is that he shifts from the rights of all citizens of Turkey to those of non-Muslim citizens. This second statement meant that because most Kurds were Muslims they would not receive education or services in Kurdish. Turkey did extend full rights to all its inhabitants as long as they renounced any previous affinities and their heritage in favor of a new “Turkish” identity and loyalty to the state.

When Kemal rose to power and the Republic of Turkey was born, the British had to contend with a new force in Turkey. The actions and posturing of the Turks influenced British activities in the region, Iraq, and especially in Kurdistan. The works of Lewis,⁴² Hale,⁴³ and Mango⁴⁴ are important to this study, because the three scholars have been granted access to information from Turkish archives in their studies. These works provide pieces for the Turkish puzzle regarding the rise of the republic and its policy toward the Kurds. Lewis⁴⁵ chronicles the rise of modern Turkey and offers the Turkish perspective on the Kurdish question. Hale's⁴⁶ analysis of Turkish foreign policy is useful for its perspective on disputes with Iraq, cooperation with the Soviet Union, and British concerns over both. Mango's⁴⁷ biography of Kemal Atatürk delves into the life and career of Turkey's founder and chief decision maker during the republic's formative years. Atatürk's legacy toward the Kurds is a mixture of abandonment and hostility to Kurdishness, yet he sought to incorporate the Kurds into the republic as "Turks." Atatürk was an ambitious man with grand dreams and many successes, but his efforts to change a people's identity met with fierce resistance that persists. Mango captures the good and the bad features of Atatürk's leadership.

Several works on the establishment of Iraq have been published in recent years with the increase of interest in that country since the U.S.-led invasion in 2003. Catherwood⁴⁸ examines Winston Churchill, then Secretary of the Colonies, and his role regarding the future of Iraq. This book meshes nicely with Olson's⁴⁹ article on the Churchill-Cox correspondences over the status of southern

Kurdistan. Two similar works are Dodge's *Inventing Iraq*⁵⁰ and Polk's *Understanding Iraq*.⁵¹ Both of these works link the current U.S. policy in Iraq with that of the British in the 1920s. They also offer useful social and political backgrounds to the creation of Iraq and the revolutionary changes brought upon the people by the British policies. Both works highlight Kurdish aspirations and British actions in response. Even with the rebellions and anti-British activities of the Kurds, cultural and educational rights were given to Kurds in Iraq. This provoked animosity from the Turkish government. The Turks believed the British were encouraging Kurdish nationalism in Iraq as a way to undermine Turkey's grip on its own Kurdish population and territories. These works follow Iraq's precarious relations with its neighbor to the north. Another related study of interest is Atarodi's *Great Powers, Oil and Kurds in Mosul*.⁵² The work is concerned with the control of the Mosul *vilayet* and the competition on many fronts for the territory and its resources. Beck⁵³ focuses on the same question from the British perspective, using correspondences to reconstruct the dispute.

*The Creation of Iraq*⁵⁴ is a volume of collected articles on Iraq's beginning. This volume covers different aspects of Iraq's creation from the perspectives of the people to the importance of resources to the settlement of border disputes. Chief among the articles of importance to this study is Izady's⁵⁵ piece on the Kurdish position during Iraq's birth. Izady examines the uncertainty of a Kurdish state following two abortive attempts to create one by the British. With statehood out of the question, Izady then turns his attention to the rebellions of Sheikh Mahmoud Barzinji and Sheikh Ahmed Barzani. He follows these up to the final

rebellion of Mahmoud in 1931. Fromkin⁵⁶ discusses the Sykes-Picot Agreement between the British and the French. This was an important question in the early postwar Middle East because the French held a claim to Mosul in the agreement. However, the British felt it should be part of their domain since their army seized it. They wanted it to be included with either an independent Kurdistan or to be attached to Mesopotamia. Fromkin highlights the concessions granted to the French and the transfer of the dispute to the British and the Turks. The Turks maintained their claim to Mosul, arguing that the British stole a march to illegally seize it after the Ottoman Empire's surrender. This dispute was solved years later after referral to the League of Nations. Shields⁵⁷ and Cuthell⁵⁸ present articles on the Mosul dispute and the question of the Iraqi-Turkish border. Sinnott's⁵⁹ piece on the Russian Revolution perhaps seems out of place for a collection of articles on the creation of Iraq, but it examines the consequences of that change and the revolution's openness to nationalities. His focus is on those nationalities south of the Caucasus, including those in Ottoman territories. It was a few years after the revolution that the Soviet Union was able to assert its control over Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. The British and governments in lands adjacent to the former Russian Empire feared that a Soviet military incursion or the appeal of Soviet ideology would undermine or end their rule.

The Great Game is an important backdrop for this study, especially the geopolitical aspect of it. A background on the competition is useful. For this, the works of Hopkirk⁶⁰ and of Meyer and Blair-Bryson⁶¹ serve the purpose. These texts offer the big picture of British policy and political maneuvers in the region

and toward geopolitical strategy. The Great Game had been taking place before the period focused on in this study, yet it is important to understand how it relates to the aftermath of World War I in the former Ottoman territories, specifically with regard to Kurdistan.

Nationalism

The two main schools of thought regarding the origins of nationalism are the primordialists and modernists. Primordialists hold that nations have ancient roots, and that the nations of today are expressions of these roots. Modernists, on the other hand, argue that nations are modern creations. The primordialist position is best explained by Geertz, who articulates the concept of “assumed givens.”⁶² These assumed givens are characteristics that individuals are born into and brought up within: language, religion, social customs, and assumed blood ties. According to primordialism, these givens have continuity and provide a basis for community through time. This is the view taken by many Kurds who believe their community dates back to the Medes of the sixth century, B.C.⁶³ Indeed, Geertz categorizes the Kurds as an assumed blood ties group.⁶⁴ Geertz makes a comment pertinent to the situation of the Kurds in Turkey:

To subordinate these specific and familiar identifications in favor of a generalized commitment to an overarching and somewhat alien civil order is to risk a loss of definition as an autonomous person, either through absorption into a culturally undifferentiated mass or, what is even worse, through domination by some other rival ethnic, racial, or linguistic community that is able to imbue that order with the temper of its own personality.⁶⁵

This statement characterizes their experience of having transitioned from the multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey and the Turkish government's drive to Turkify all of its citizens.

Gellner, a modernist, states that nationalist movements are a result of the homogenizing forces of industrial society, and that organization of nations is essential for a cohesive workforce and a unified country.⁶⁶ Gellner's argument is useful because it offers insight into the ability of a nation to unify and forge a new state, or at least the forces needed for such an end.

Similarly, Anderson's idea of imagined communities identifies characteristics for self-definition, comradeship, and the emergence of nations.⁶⁷ These nations, or imagined communities, are communities that are perceived to exist, but members of this community will not meet all other members during their lifetime.⁶⁸ Also, these communities are perceived to be limited and have a certain number of members, yet the exact number is never known.⁶⁹ He offers that language and religion are the two most common cultural characteristics by which a community identifies itself.⁷⁰ He argues that nations are a modern creation,⁷¹ and that religious and linguistic forces are often used to draw people together in nations. It is Anderson's argument that the advent of print capitalism allowed for the creation of imagined communities.⁷² Print capitalism, even in largely illiterate communities, allows for a record to be kept and mythology to be created for the posterity of the nation.⁷³ It also allows for a wider transmission of nationalistic ideas and the greater sense of community spread over great distances. Like

Gellner,⁷⁴ Anderson notes that imagery and symbols can be used in appeal for strengthened feelings of unity.⁷⁵

Smith looks to both primordialism and instrumentalism in his theory of nationalism. He acknowledges the roots of many groups as pre-modern, and asserts that instrumentalism of industrial societies reinforces identity.⁷⁶ Smith's fusing of primordialism and instrumentalism for a systemic theory of nationalism meshes well with the progression of Kurdish national and political consciousness and provides a useful theory for analyzing the development of Kurdish nationalism. Smith's fusion involves the idea of a homeland, unique language, self-definition separate from surrounding groups, and hostile surrounding groups.⁷⁷

It is useful to consult Hartshorne's⁷⁸ concepts of centripetal and centrifugal forces. Centripetal forces are those that unite a population, while centrifugal forces divide. These concepts are an asset for identifying factors affecting Kurdish nationalism. Of related importance are Gottmann's⁷⁹ thoughts on iconography and circulation. These ideas are helpful for identifying the manipulation of symbols intended to unite people, and for identifying movement and communication of people and ideas.

Cruz's⁸⁰ work on collective identity in Nicaragua and Costa Rica argues that the historical experiences of the people of the two states differ greatly and affected the political stability of both countries after they became independent. Cruz's study is insightful because it offers theory for why states develop differently even though their situations may be similar. This approach to

comparative politics is useful to this study involving the rise of Kurdish nationalism in the neighboring countries of Turkey and Iraq. In both countries, the Kurds are a sizable minority and are in majority coreligionists with the dominant groups. However, because of differences in histories of governance and cultural attitudes, the situations and Kurdish nationalism evolved quite differently.

Marx's⁸¹ concepts of inclusion and exclusion provide the study with a framework to gauge Turkish and Iraqi inclusionism or exclusionism toward the Kurds, as well as the Kurds' actions toward other Kurds. Marx puts forth the idea that inclusion and exclusion change over time and circumstance, depending largely on the objectives of the core group involved. An example of such an occurrence relates to the Kurds of Iraq. The Yezidi population of Iraq has generally been kept to the fringes of Kurdish society, and many Yezidis have been content with that arrangement. However, Sheikh Ahmed's attempt to create a new Kurdish religion, based on all the faiths practiced by Kurds throughout the region, sought to bring the Yezidis into the fold of the pan-Kurdish movement. While the attempt backfired, it demonstrates the change that can occur. Because of their subject matter and their application across varied cultures and places, these works provide an ideal framework for this study.

Territoriality

Sack's definition of territoriality as "an attempt to affect, influence, or control actions and interactions (of people, things, and relationships) by asserting and attempting to enforce control over a geographic area"⁸² is an instructive

basis for understanding Kurdish rebellions between world wars and beyond. Two important facets of territoriality are that “the attempt to control space is a basic feature of human existence deeply embedded in social and political relations,” and “territory is a social construct that is fundamentally embedded in social processes.”⁸³ Territoriality by nature includes and excludes,⁸⁴ which marries the concept to the idea of inclusion and exclusion in nationalism.⁸⁵ From this meaning of association with the land, people “define themselves to a significant degree in terms of space, deriving their sense of identity from specified tracts of land.”⁸⁶

Knight states, “The concept of territory is involved in every type of system of political organization.”⁸⁷ This can even be informal organization in terms of a nationalist movement. Knight suggests that territory is a psychological and cultural construct, and that “‘Geographies of the mind’ can and do find expression in the way space is structured; landscapes as perceived by the occupants can have powerful symbolic links to a group’s territorial identity.”⁸⁸ This characterization meshes well with the perceptions of the Kurds toward Kurdistan. Knight raises an intriguing question when he asks, “Should all groups with distinct territorially based identities have the right to separate territorial and political independence?”⁸⁹ This question was doubtless on the minds of those attendees of the Paris Peace Conference when deciding how to parcel out the Ottoman Empire.

While Kurdistan does not have any exact boundaries, the mountains of southeastern Anatolia, to the north of Mesopotamia, and the northwest of the

Iranian Plateau have been generally regarded as Kurdish by Kurds and outsiders alike.⁹⁰ The 1920 Treaty of Sèvres legitimized a portion of this perceived territory when it demarcated lands for two Kurdish autonomous regions to possibly be joined for an independent Kurdish state. The treaty's provisions changed many Kurds' perceptions of themselves and their lands. Murphy states that "To create an area with legal or administrative significance is to bring into being a functional spatial unit that can profoundly alter ideas about social groupings."⁹¹ The mere suggestion of such a spatial unit for the Kurds had the effect of generally strengthening the Kurds' territoriality and fostering the idea of an independent Kurdistan.⁹² Murphy further states that identity "is inherently territorial" and that special considerations for groups "can help sustain and promote ethnic social cleavages."⁹³ Blacksell⁹⁴ offers that symbols are also an important component of both nationalism and territoriality, and that signage, especially in frontier areas, is an example of such. The power of symbolism is one of the reasons the Turkish government eventually banned the public display of the Kurdish language. The Turks did not want to allow the Kurds any symbols to rally around.

Murphy's work on territorial claims justified by historical factors is focused on interstate conflicts regarding territory, yet many points he makes are relevant to the Kurds as a stateless nation in a struggle for an independent homeland. His statement that "territory is at the heart of national identity and cohesion"⁹⁵ applies to the Kurds and their perceptions of Kurdistan. His comments on the Paris Peace Conference make reference to ethnic claims to territory based on history, and he notes, "Consequently, justifications for territorial change during the

interwar years were frequently rooted in ethnic-cum-historical arguments.”⁹⁶ All of the major Kurdish rebellions during this period were rooted in this argument.

Blacksell makes a point that “territoriality must be communicated, either physically on the ground, or through some form of easily decipherable graphical representation on a map or plan.”⁹⁷ Two interesting studies pertaining to Kurdish territoriality and the perception of Kurdistan have been conducted by O’Shea⁹⁸ and by Culcasi.⁹⁹ O’Shea’s work involves the Kurdish perception of Kurdistan, while Culcasi’s work examines Kurdistan as portrayed in Western media. O’Shea¹⁰⁰ presents the concept of Kurdistan from its early placement on maps up to present claims of territory in the minds of Kurds. Perceptual geography provides some psychological underpinning to the concept of a people’s perceived territory and its link to nationalism. O’Shea’s work is filled with maps depicting differing ideas of where Kurdistan is. She offers explanations for the visualizations through discussions on political agendas, resource concerns, and cultural preferences of the Kurds.

Culcasi¹⁰¹ offers a different perspective on Kurdistan, one which explores the Western, often Orientalist, concept of Kurdistan. She examines hundreds of map depictions of Kurdistan from Western press agencies to determine the purpose or error of depiction on the part of the presenters. These depictions often obscure Kurdish territory or anger states whose own political territory is included in the depiction.

Political Geography

An objective of this study involves the consideration of the geopolitical ramifications of Kurdistan in the larger context of the interwar period and the renewal of the Great Game. Two interesting and controversial theories are of use to this analysis: Mackinder's Geographical Pivot/Heartland Theory¹⁰² and Spykman's Rimland Theory.¹⁰³ Since Mackinder's works have often been criticized as environmentally deterministic, many scholars have shunned them.¹⁰⁴ However, these works provide part of a useful framework for examining Kurdistan's situation within the competition for control of territories and resources between Turkey and Iraq. While this is not an examination of Soviet foreign policy, it will examine the British and Turkish fears of competition from a resurgent Russia in the form of the Soviet Union.

In 1904, Halford Mackinder proposed the idea of the Geographical Pivot¹⁰⁵ in the heart of the Eurasian continent. A power controlling it could become a superpower if it applied itself to the task. This zone included the lands of Central Asia, the Transcaucasus, and a large portion of the Eastern European Plain. The area includes large swaths of fertile lands and is bordered on the south by barriers of deserts and uplands that comprise a natural fortress. At the time, Russia was an adversary of Britain's, and the two countries were still engaged in the Great Game throughout Central Asia. However, Mackinder also saw the rise of Germany on the horizon and recognized the potential of either Germany or Russia, or an alliance of both, to control the Geographical Pivot. In all cases considered, the British saw India threatened, and the specter of the British

Empire's demise looming should the threat go unchecked. However, the Great Game ended, albeit temporarily, with the 1907 Anglo-Russian Conference. With World War I, and the ambitions of Germany and its alliance with the Ottoman Empire, a competition in Asia ignited between the Central Powers and the British. The Russian Empire, in alliance with the British and French, planned for new territories to be annexed from a defeated Ottoman Empire. However, the Bolshevik Revolution took hold in Russia and brought about a new government and a Russian withdrawal from the war. The changes in Russia included a nullification of all treaties and agreements the Russian Empire had made with other countries. The emergence of the Soviet Union and the appeal of Bolshevism among working classes in many countries, including the British Empire, brought on a sense of anxiety among the British and a renewal of the Great Game. As Gottmann notes, Mackinder "warned constantly against the danger of a possible decline of the British Empire."¹⁰⁶

The Soviets eventually began to assert their claims to lands of the Russian Empire in the Caucasus and in Central Asia that had been virtually independent since the fall of the empire. The rise of Soviet power along the fringes of the Middle East and South Asia worried British officials and was predicted by Mackinder's 1919 *Democratic Ideals and Reality*,¹⁰⁷ in which the Geographical Pivot was refined and replaced by the term Heartland. In this work, Mackinder revised some of his boundaries for the Heartland. A criticism has been leveled by some¹⁰⁸ that the lack of clarity regarding the Heartland's borders is a great weakness of his theory. However, clear boundaries for such an overarching

theory would be a weakness because the Heartland is a zone rather than a country. The zone can change based on different criteria. The fact that the theory does not have definite boundaries allows it to be flexible over time and circumstances. This accounts for the theory's reemergence several times across the past century.

As a global sea power, Britain had to devise a method for countering the force of a rising Heartland power. This counter was not articulated in a published form until World War II, during a time when Germany made another drive at the Heartland. This time the strategist was Nicholas Spykman, his manuscript *The Geography of the Peace*¹⁰⁹ being published posthumously. What he envisioned was the importance of Mackinder's Inner or Marginal Crescent, what he termed the Rimland, against the Heartland. Spykman saw strength in the Rimland rooted in its populations, its resources, and its control of the strategic gateways between itself and the Heartland. Some observers have maintained that Spykman's theory refutes Mackinder's theory, yet this argument appears misplaced. Spykman's work is more appropriately termed a solution to Mackinder's Heartland superpower problem. Indeed, either directly or indirectly, the Rimland Theory was the basis for containment against the Soviet Union after World War II.¹¹⁰ Critical analyses of the Heartland Theory and the Rimland Theory are of use to this study. Meinig¹¹¹ offers interpretation of these theories of "positional supremacy" by examining them in a historical context. Parker's¹¹² biography of Sir Halford Mackinder features both Mackinder's life and a defense against criticisms of his

ideas. Blouet's study of geopolitical developments across the twentieth century offers continuing relevancy of Mackinder's ideas.¹¹³

The relevance of both of these theories is born out in the geopolitical situations this dissertation examines. The position of Kurdistan is between the Heartland and the Rimland. Furthermore, Kurdistan is one of the gateways between the two zones. It leads from Anatolia, Mesopotamia, and the Iranian Plateau into the Caucasus Mountains. Kurdistan had been divided among the British, French, and Russians in a variation of the Sykes-Picot Agreement. After World War I and the Paris Peace Conference, Ottoman Kurdistan was an area of contention. Since Russia left the war, its claims were no longer held, which left the British and French to their claims. This settled, the British and the Turks vied for control, and the idea of an independent Kurdistan was killed.

In addition to the works of Mackinder and Spykman, ideas from other geopolitical studies are supplementary to this study. One articulation of the usefulness of these theories has been made by Zoë Preston in *The Crystallization of the Iraqi State*.¹¹⁴ However, she stops short of in-depth investigation of the physical setting in relation to the interests of the parties involved, be they British, Arabs, Turks, Kurds, or Soviets. As Preston notes, "Iraq was an important buffer for the Ottomans, between their core areas, and the tribal unrest of southern Arabia, and between their empire and European encroachment into the Gulf region."¹¹⁵ She also notes that the location of the country "shaped the British interest,"¹¹⁶ thus enabling the British to establish a Middle East link to India. This link stretched from Egypt and Cyprus in the west to

Burma in the east. The British held sway in some form or another from the Mediterranean to the eastern Indian Ocean. The significance of this can be found in Mackinder's Heartland Theory. The British strategy that materialized is spelled out by Spykman's Rimland Theory, which was published two decades later.

Lattimore's "The New Political Geography of Inner Asia"¹¹⁷ offers many insights on physical and political geography that may be applied to the Kurds and the renewed Great Game by the British following the Russian Revolution.

Lattimore's study examines the positions of frontiers and the people that inhabit those zones. Indeed, zone is a more appropriate word than borders because "the frontier 'line' is in fact a legal abstraction."¹¹⁸ These lines often "divide kindred peoples from each other and place them under different political sovereignties."¹¹⁹ This describes exactly the situation of the Kurds. Another aspect of frontier society that Lattimore observes is that "the divided frontier people has no sense of kinship with either of the major nationalities between which it is divided;"¹²⁰ therefore the frontier people tend to shift loyalties to the prevailing side. This is another accurate description of Kurdish history whether relating to the Turks, Persians, Arabs, or British.

Lattimore's description of Mackinder's ideas is useful because he notes the context of the Great Game and the "stabilization of the balance between sea-power and the 'heartland.'"¹²¹ This stabilization came with the 1907 Anglo-Russian Conference, which "ended" the Great Game by establishing recognized domains for the Russians and the British in Asia. The situation changed with World War I, when Germany set its sights on Russian territories for its eastern

ambitions. When Russia withdrew from the war and the Bolsheviks gained power, previous treaties and other agreements were nullified. The Russian Revolution sparked renewed fears among the British that the Russians would advance on India or incite the population there to mutiny.

The political landscape of the region and of Kurdistan following the First World War was one characterized by instability and uncertainty of the future. The war brought out animosity within the myriad of ethnicities for which the region was known. Mass deportations and massacres caused trust to wane quickly as neighbors who once coexisted peacefully became enemies. All that was familiar to Ottoman subjects was overturned with the defeat of the Ottoman Empire and the invasion of British forces. The British strategic imprint became visible on the political landscape following the treaties and parceling out of territory. The political geographical theories presented above provide an understanding for the changes and the objective of those changes.

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CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF METHODOLOGY

The methodology presented in this chapter is used to aid analysis of the rise of Kurdish nationalism and territoriality within the context of the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres, the fall of the Ottoman Empire, and British and Turkish policies toward the Kurds and Kurdistan. It uses documents housed in the British Public Records Office in association with other historical and academic works to analyze the difficulties Kurds faced in their attempts to gain an independent homeland and to unify the Kurdish people in a fashion that neighboring nations had accomplished. Qualitative methods are employed for extraction, organization, and analysis of information from the documents.

Historical Methods

The primary sources for this research are declassified documents from the British Foreign Office, Colonial Office, and Air Ministry.¹ The collections contain thousands of documents and cover a wide range of interests to the British Empire. Not all of these documents are important to this study, and an effective method of sorting the relevant documents from the rest is required. Hoxie notes the dangers and difficulties in dealing with large amounts of information in

archival research in an “attempt to get at the meaning of any definite problem by first filling the mind with a mass of information, relevant and irrelevant, indistinguishably intermixed.”² Some mixing of relevant and irrelevant information is unavoidable, but an overall sorting of the two can be achieved. If specific topics are known, as they are here, these topics and others relating to them can be used to sort documents. Harris³ recommends no single approach to dealing with archives. Instead, he believes the researcher should decide the appropriate method for examination. He also notes the importance of the researcher studying secondary sources prior to archival research for an understanding of what work has been done before. Familiarity with previous studies helps the researcher to know what to look for and what sorts of questions to ask when perusing historical documents.⁴

Fortunately, each document used in this research has a brief description listed in the table of contents of each volume. Documents are first flagged based on their association with relevant topics. This process narrows the search considerably, as the vast majority of documents in the collections are not relevant. However, after the initial sorting, hundreds of documents are left for the researcher to examine. The next step is the time consuming, but necessary, process of reading each document.

Harris⁵ warns against preconceived biases regarding information. In the case of documents examined for this dissertation, such biases could include the argument that British oil interest was what denied the Kurds an independent homeland, or that British imperial arrogance divided Kurdistan. By the same

token, a belief in British benevolence toward the situation would qualify as a bias. Potential biases are something the researcher should be aware of to prevent clouding the meaning of data. A number of interpretations and assumptions should be made based on the same sets of information. Note taking should capture points from documents without changing the context of the source in the process.⁶ Sometimes quotes should be lifted to preserve their meanings. Because copying archival documents can be impractical and expensive, notes need to capture all pertinent information.

Content analysis is an effective and efficient method for examining documents and extracting important information.⁷ The type of content analysis employed here involves taking notes and cataloguing information. Dibble⁸ identifies four types of inference, which include testimony, social bookkeeping, correlates, and direct indicators. Testimony is defined as a document based on a single interview or an account of something.⁹ Testimonies used here include the memoirs of British officials and accounts of events recorded by officials in the Foreign Office, Colonial Office, and Air Ministry. Social bookkeeping refers to a document or a series of documents produced by an institution or a group detailing events.¹⁰ Documents from the above-mentioned British governmental institutions may also fall under this type of inference because some documents are group efforts that involved information collection, analysis, and production. Correlates are data that do not deal directly with an event, but may be used as ancillary evidence to validate or invalidate historical claims.¹¹ However, correlates are a type of data that the researcher may happen upon rather than seek out.¹²

An example of a correlate could be a travel account of an individual who witnesses refugees streaming across an international border from a rebellion. The account does not focus upon the rebellion, but could provide information on it where information is suppressed. This type of information is particularly helpful when official accounts lack information about activities in remote areas. The final type of inference is the direct indicator, which provides a direct answer to a historical question.¹³ Sources containing such direct answers are treaties such as the Treaty of Sèvres or the Treaty of Lausanne. These are agreements between conflicting powers that define conditions of peace, and they provide direct information on what was supposed to occur as a result of cessation of hostilities. Dibble notes that Foreign Office correspondences may also be considered direct indicators if the historical question asked is the theme of a correspondence.¹⁴ While these categories are not mutually exclusive, they aid in organizing large volumes of information for historical analysis.

The historical documents examined here contribute information pertaining to the activities of the Kurds and to the activities and ideas of the British and Turkish governments. These sources offer first-hand accounts of what took place. They also offer rumors and fears regarding the Kurds and the general geopolitical situation then. The information extracted from the documents is not necessarily factual, but it does lend itself to the British, Turkish, and Kurdish perspectives at the time. Many of these documents relay British officials' conversations with Turkish officials and Kurdish nationalist figures. The British Empire as a world power enabled British officials to access a variety of people,

including non-state actors. Candid conversations are reported along with analyses of the interactions. Additionally, these British documents provide an inside view of the inner workings of the British Empire. Historical documents as textual representations of events should be understood through the lens of context in which they were written rather than as absolute historical fact.¹⁵

Another useful method employed here is classification. This is used in association with content analysis. Classification aids organization of the large amounts of information.¹⁶ Documents that are useful may have a particular theme, or they may address several issues. Categorizing data according to different aspects of this research makes the data easier to locate and connect to other relevant information.¹⁷ General classifications used in this study are nationalism, territoriality, and geopolitics of states. More specific categories are direct relation with the Kurds, relationship to Kurdish lands, relationship to other governments regarding the Kurds, or relationship to other governments regarding Kurdish lands.

Following extraction and organization of information, the data is interpreted through a series of theoretical frameworks involving nationalism, territoriality, and political geography. This analysis is accomplished through the construction of a political geographical history of the problem. The use of history here enables a reconstruction of events and how they played into the situation that resulted.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Historical Descriptive Research

A benefit to researching historical questions is that the events are constrained by a period of time. The events in question are not continuing to unfold as the research is progressing; therefore, revision of analysis does not usually occur because of current events. Owing to the reliability of the sources, a reasonably clear picture of events and their significance can be constructed. Description allows for richness of interpretation of the problem, and it allows for a story to unfold. The results of this research may offer a reinterpretation of history as has been known or accepted. It is an opportunity to expand existing knowledge and invigorate further investigation into events of the past. This research does not merely involve reading historical documents and organizing them into a chronology on a given theme, but rather it analyzes information contained within the records against academic works and against theories in order to answer the research questions.

Historical descriptive research offers a medium to explore the past in a way that promotes expanded inquiry. In geography, this type of research entails the geographical dimension in addition to events across time. Geographic thought regarding how nations coalesce and how the concept of territoriality rises among nations lends much to the understanding of these issues. Geopolitical positioning of competing states is also an area of contribution from geographic thought. This is the case with the British and the strategy behind their global empire. Geography played a major role in Britain's securing of the perimeter around India. An understanding of how this positioning affected the Kurds and

their bid for independence is essential to understanding their position as a stateless nation today.

An argument against historical descriptive research in geography is that it is more history than geography. Geography and history are intertwined, and to leave out history results in a one-dimensional understanding of the “Kurdish question.” Theories used in this dissertation are based in political geography, and this research is intended to be an application of that subdiscipline to the situation of Kurdish nationalism and territoriality during the interwar period. Geography’s cross-disciplinary ventures are frequent and necessary, and are in keeping with geography as a holistic discipline.¹⁸

A disadvantage of historical research of this nature is that history is open to wide interpretation with biases in politics, economics, and various worldviews. Because this is qualitative research, there are many possible perspectives that could be held using the same sources. Sources may be skewed in favor of the prevailing power, namely the British. Because the Kurdish people lacked a strong voice at the time, no definitive history of events was chronicled from a Kurdish perspective. A British perspective on the Middle East is often met with accusations of orientalism, or emphasis of the exotic and “backward” aspects of Middle Eastern society. This is the criticism Edward Said levels regarding many western observations of the Middle East.¹⁹ However, the diplomatic and intelligence documents used here are of a nature that severely discourages sensationalism, since they were intended to inform policy makers and other officials.

Mindsets and biases are another difficulty to recognize when dealing with historical descriptive research. These can be linked to orientalism, or quite the opposite in attempting to glorify the populations being studied as being something they are not. An orientalist bias might characterize the Kurds as noble savages. Alternatively, Kurds could be characterized as ignorant hill people, as is evidenced in David Lloyd-George's memoirs.²⁰ Often, revisionists seek to rewrite history, only to do further harm to the record by introducing ideas from another period or values from another culture onto the people and the events of the past. These problems highlight why it is important to understand the perspective and motivations of the actors involved. While the totality of historical figures' mindsets cannot be known, enough can be gleaned from documents to reconstruct those mindsets and how they related to the issues of their day. This problem may also be present in the narratives of secondary sources. By relying on these works, there is a degree of risk associated with an author's bias toward issues.

Finally, a criticism of historical descriptive research is that it is not rigorous enough. This accusation is misplaced because not all value is to be gleaned from hard science or mathematical calculations. Statistics can reveal some aspects of the past, but only within certain limitations. A historical approach involving events, policies, and human relation to geography may come across as being entirely subjective to some researchers. An absence of hard, agreed upon facts makes some scholars nervous about this type of research. However, this apparent absence offers a worthy challenge for objective research to be conducted, and to tell the most complete story possible while considering a

variety of relevant factors. Historical descriptive studies offer a wealth of information about the past that can be used as guides or lessons toward current or future problems.

Content Analysis and Organization of Information

The method of content analysis used here aims to bring out the meaning and importance of what is being said and who is saying it from the British documents, and serves as a means to organize the information for historical analysis. The method used here is used as a follow-on method after the appropriate documents have been pulled from the collections, and is meant to aid in collecting information from the documents regarding the intentions of the British and their perceptions from interacting with the Kurds, Turks, Arabs, Iranians, French and Soviets. Because the British Foreign Office, Colonial Office, and Air Ministry were the UK's main foreign affairs instruments in the Middle East, the importance of the discussions and reports is paramount to this study.

The content analysis performed on the primary documents focuses on what is being said about geopolitical, national, and territorial issues involving the Kurds and Kurdistan. Information gleaned from the documents is used to understand what influenced the British on Kurdistan and what in turn influenced other parties, especially the Turks, involved there. By understanding what the British and the Turks were focusing on in their geopolitical policies, an understanding of Kurdish actions can be constructed in terms of their emergent nationalism and territoriality. The benefit of using these declassified British

documents is that they yield an insider's view to the geopolitical maneuverings of the British Empire, their adversaries, and would-be clients.

To accomplish this content analysis, the documents are first read in full to examine them for information relevant to the themes. When information connected with these themes, directly or indirectly, is recorded, the information is used to construct an idea or set of ideas regarding British perceptions of the issues. The language the British use and the importance of the individuals writing gives insight into British policy toward the Kurds and the region. Even if ideas discussed were never put into practice, they still lend themselves to an understanding of what the influences upon decisions were. The reshaping of the lands of the Ottoman Empire was a dramatic change to the geopolitical landscape, and the British authorities held a great deal of power in the matter.

Categories were chosen based on their relevancy to the research questions. These categories make the data easier to deal with by organizing the large volumes of information for historical analysis. The major categories are further subdivided to create an ease of use and to add extra dimensions to the catalogue of information. These further divisions, or subcategories, are based on themes discovered from reading the documents. Subcategories emerge as a mental construction of events and their significance becomes known from the data. While these categories are not necessarily perfect, they go a long way toward putting the documents in the proper context for this study. From these contexts, links can be drawn among the events that might not otherwise be

made. Subcategories are based on themes evident in the data; therefore, it follows that they should be organized accordingly.

The theme of nationalism applies mainly to the Kurds, but also to neighboring populations. Accounts of the activities of these other groups are important because they affect the Kurdish nationalist efforts. Nationalism is subdivided according to its relationship to the Kurds. Turkish nationalist efforts to subjugate Kurdish identity is an example of a subdivision. This is an important subcategory because so much of the history of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey across the twentieth century is tied to Turkish governmental suppression of Kurdish identity. Another example is Kurdish nationalism and Armenian nationalism working in concert. This subcategory is important, but limited to a certain period. It should be separated because it is a distinct theme within the context of nationalism, and represents a shift away from Islamic appeals to Kurdish identity.

Territoriality is a theme based on the concept of Kurdistan as a geographical expression. This category is applied to characterizations of Kurdistan by the Kurds, Turks, and the British. The Kurdish perspective of Kurdistan is one of the major focuses of this dissertation, but the Turkish and British perspectives are valuable as well. Kurdish land claims is one subdivision of this category, and it involves the mental concept of Kurdistan as an entity, albeit an elusive one. Turkish and Iraqi claims to Kurdistan as integral parts of their state territories are another subcategory. These countries' claims are linked

more to civic nationalism than to ethnicity, but their pull is powerful and integral to understanding why Kurdistan became divided politically.

Geopolitics applies to a wide spectrum of items. This category is intended to be general because it includes the various dealings of the powers involved. By organizing the information under this umbrella links may be determined about how one event influences another, and influences the Kurds in turn. Subdivisions of this category include British relations to the Turks regarding strategic territory and resources, British perceptions of Soviet intentions, Turkish relations to the British and Iraq, and Turkish perceptions of Soviet intentions. These subcategories are important to define because they provide a basis for linking events, policies, and ideas together. This research does not focus on the actual Soviet policies toward the lands south of the Caucasus, but the reported perceptions of the Soviets and what they might do is key to understanding the actions taken by the British and the Turks.

The information extracted from the sources is then assembled into a chronological sequence for analysis of how events were shaped and how they played out onto the political, cultural, and physical landscapes of Iraq and Turkey. This method eases organization and enhances clarity of the information for analysis with other sources used here. Additionally, this process helps manage information for use with the geopolitical and nationalist theories explored in this study.

Limitations of the Study

This study faces several limitations. Most of the primary sources used are British, but as Great Britain was the main shaper of the modern Middle East's borders, these documents provide a window to the inner workings of that shaping. Turkish and Kurdish perspectives on these events are limited. The Kurds do not have a national archive; therefore, there exist no official Kurdish histories of the events of the time. Turkish archives have only recently been opened to scholars. Most of the documents are in Turkish, some of which are in the Ottoman form of Turkish no longer understood by most contemporary Turks. Such sensitive issues as Kurdish nationalism and rebellions would not be a well-received request for study in these archives, especially with the attention to the ongoing conflict between Turkey and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). However, many authors whose works were featured in the last chapter have been able to access Turkish documents and other materials; therefore, confidence in these sources is accorded. These secondary sources provide a window into the Turkish archives and the perspectives of the Turkish administrations regarding the post world war situation.

A similar problem exists with Iraqi records. However, with the British having run Iraq until 1932 and having held close cooperation with Iraq immediately thereafter, most of the records are covered by the Foreign Office, Colonial Office, and Air Ministry. Iraqi perspectives, apart from those reported in the British documents, are more difficult to come by; therefore, secondary sources have been used as a solution to this information gap.

Not all documents from the British Public Records Office have been examined for this research. That would be an impossible task for one person. However, the best available documents have been used. The primary source documents used here number in the hundreds. These documents offer a picture of the British perspective on many fronts as well as reporting conversations with other actors and the “feeling on the street” among local populations in Iraq and Turkey. While these documents provide most of what is desired to answer the research questions, they do not provide everything needed. Where there are primary source gaps, secondary sources are meant to fill these. By filling these gaps clear answers to the questions can be articulated.

Finally, the historical period and the area of focus are limitations on the study. Kurdish populations exist in neighboring states, and have engaged in nationalist and territorial activities over the past century. However, this dissertation is limited in its emphasis on these communities because it focuses on Kurds in Iraq and Turkey, where nationalism and territoriality were most pronounced after World War I. This is also where an independent or autonomous Kurdistan was proposed by the Treaty of Sèvres. This focus is intended to be specific with regard to the research questions. By placing focus on Kurds in Iran, Syria, and the Soviet Union, the focus would be lost. These Kurds are relevant to this dissertation, but did not play a major role in the events that unfolded in Iraq and Turkey.

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CHAPTER 4

KURDISTAN AND THE BIRTH OF AN IDEA

The end of World War I, the Paris Peace Conference, and the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres mark the beginning of attempts to define the boundaries of Kurdistan and the first instance of international promotion of the right of the Kurds to an independent homeland. The treaty and the ideas it embodied were adopted by Kurdish nationalists as justification for their efforts, both peaceful and violent, to achieve self-determination. British and Turkish geopolitical maneuvers in and around Kurdistan prevented the Kurds from obtaining their homeland. The Kurds themselves were unable to unite because of geographic, political, and cultural divisions. Despite these hindrances, strong Kurdish nationalist movements developed during this period that would serve as examples for later movements.

During this period, British policy went through three stages with regard to the region and its peoples. The Kurds were affected by British policy because initially it provided for a Kurdish homeland. A postwar objective of the Allies was to break up the Ottoman Empire to establish a series of nation-states in the European mold, including a Kurdistan. The policy changed when Turkey emerged to become a regional power once again. The rise of Turkey brought confusion to London's policy until George Nathaniel Curzon, the former Viceroy of India, gave it a new direction by brokering a peace with Turkey. Curzon was

influenced by Halford Mackinder's geopolitical ideas regarding the Geographical Pivot/Heartland Theory. Both men recognized the importance of geography and its role in the Great Game. Curzon's experience in India and Mackinder's ideas led to a defined British policy of containing threats from the Soviet Union by surrounding the Heartland through British presence and influence. The Turks, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, were attempting to create a new Turkish identity that included Kurds, as long as they adopted the new Turkish civic identity, to reassert Turkey's position as a regional power. Some Kurds chose to follow Ankara's new direction, while others sought separation from the Turks in favor of an independent Kurdistan.

Sharif Pasha, a Kurdish expatriate living in Paris, was the sole representative of the Kurdish people at the Paris Peace Conference, and the negotiators only briefly took him seriously. His spirited effort did little to influence the negotiations, as the Allies had planned to award a Kurdish state of some sort. However, his map of Kurdistan (Figure 4.1) became a visual representation of Kurdish territory that captured the imaginations of nationalists. The Allies had made up their minds to provide for a Kurdish state before negotiations even began. The British had already experimented with a Kurdish government in Sulaymaniyah prior to the war's conclusion.

Kurdistan under the previous Ottoman regime had served as a guard against Russian expansionism through the Caucasus. The British renegotiated the terms of the Treaty of Sèvres with the Turks with the aim of restoring the Turkish buttress against the Heartland, at the expense of an independent

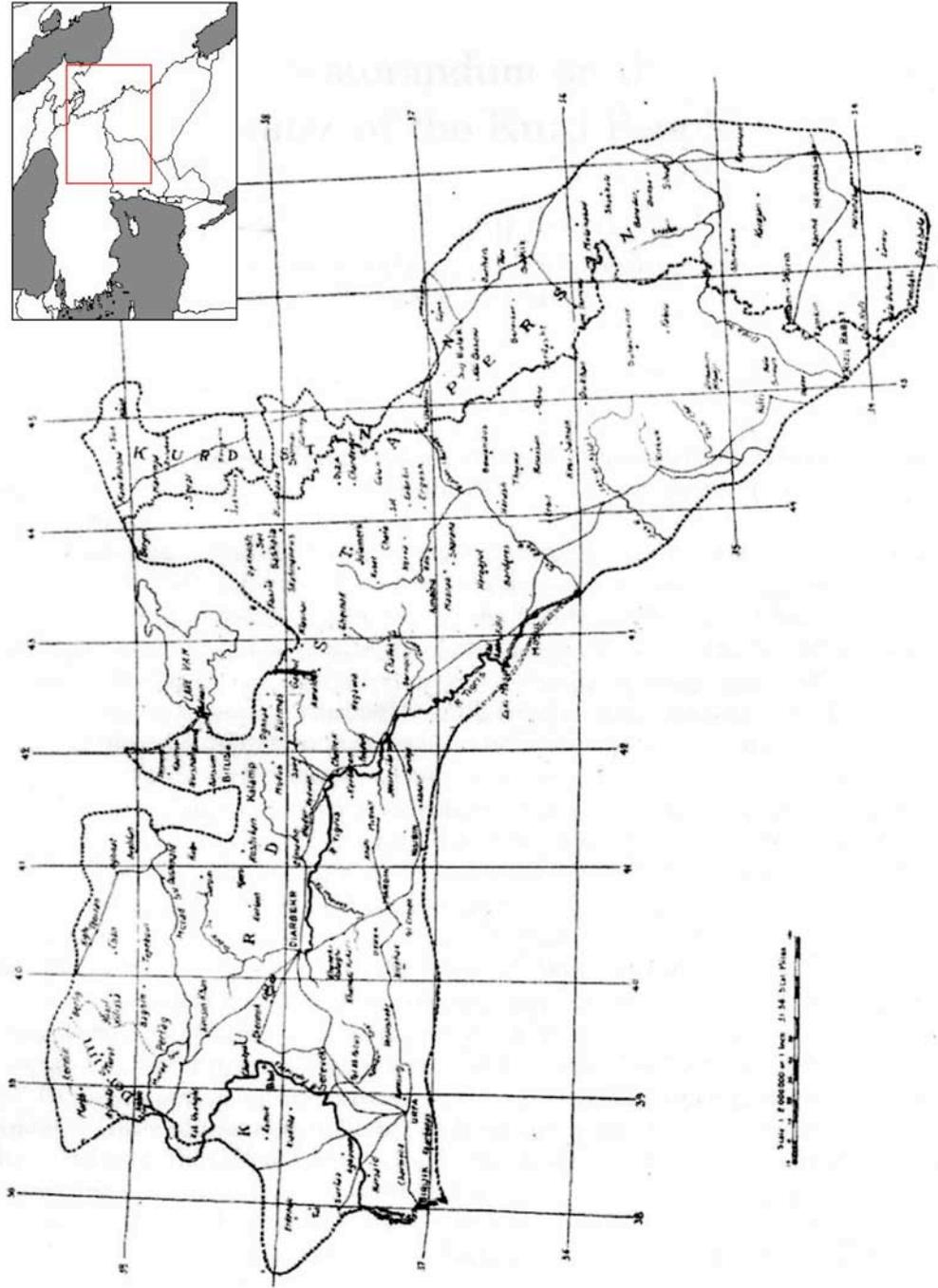


Figure 4.1: Sharif Pasha's map of Kurdistan. Source: Pasha, General Sharif. 1919. Memorandum on the Claims of the Kurd People. Paris: Imprimerie A.G. L'Hoir.

Kurdistan and Armenia. The Treaty of Lausanne established Turkey's claims to Anatolia to the borders of the Soviet Union and Persia. The question of Mosul, then claimed by the British in Iraq, was left open for later settlement. Possession of Mosul by the Turks would have given Ankara control of most of the formerly Ottoman Kurdish lands, thus enabling the Turks to deal with the Kurdish nationalists without foreign interference.

A nationalist sentiment among Kurdish elites had occurred in the late 1800s, and events during and after World War I had prompted a wider notion of nationalism and territoriality among Kurds. However, not all Kurds bought into these concepts, as some still clung to a pan-Islamic sentiment. As postwar events unfolded, more Kurds were brought into the fold. Kurdish elites needed a wider base of support, which rural sheikhs could provide. Some of these sheikhs sought to lead, themselves, instead of cooperating with the urban elites. The power shift that occurred in the 1800s from Kurdish princes to the sheikhs held fast as figures such as Sheikh Said emerged to lead a brief insurgency against the Turks. Similarly, Sheikh Mahmoud fought against the British and Arabs in Iraq.

Kurdish Nationalism Versus Postwar British and Turkish Geostrategies

Kurdish nationalism following World War I was characterized by the emergence of territoriality. This rise in territoriality was precipitated by the Paris Peace Conference and the Treaty of Sèvres, particularly articles 62-64, which proclaimed the rights of Kurds to a homeland and self-determination in

government. The Kurdish delegate at the conference, Sharif Pasha, following his sidelining presented a pamphlet with a map depicting a future independent Kurdistan, which is the first Kurdish inspired representation of Kurdistan.¹ As such, the idea gained momentum with the Kurds of Kurdistan and those in the diaspora.

Factors influencing the rise of Kurdish nationalism and territoriality during this first stage were the British concern over Soviet control of the Eurasian Heartland and over the position of the emergent Republic of Turkey in relation to the Soviet Union. The British had planned to create a buffer against the Heartland by using Armenia and Kurdistan in the same fashion as Afghanistan relative to the Heartland and India. The gateway from the Caucasus into the Middle East was a natural route for the Soviet Union to take for a southward move. The security of the Middle East and the Arabian Peninsula were essential for the British link with India, and London wished to protect it.

Though the Russian Empire had fallen and the communist revolutionaries were striving for control in Russia, communist intrigue in the Caucasus and the Middle East began to revive fears in the British Empire of the Great Game renewed. This fear was expressed in 1919 in correspondences between British Royal Navy officials who noted the Bolsheviks' aim was to turn Muslims against the British Empire.² How this could be achieved was addressed by British Oriental Secretary Andrew Ryan, who observed, "We cannot crush Pan-Islamism any more than we can crush the nationalisms of the West. Our aim must be to divide, to conciliate, and to rule. It is necessary to divide and to conciliate,

because we do not want Moslems to rally as a whole round the fundamental but at present half-forgotten principle that Moslems should not be ruled by non-Moslems."³ Ryan recognized the strength of nationalism and religion, and it would be this very combination that Kurdish leaders would use to rally followers to their causes in the following years.

Ryan met with several Kurdish leaders as peace negotiations were still taking place in Paris. Seid Abdul Kadir sought the support of the British for Kurdish aspirations.⁴ Kadir expressed confusion over French designs in Kurdistan, and voiced Kurdish concern over Turks and Bolsheviks,⁵ as well as stating that the Kurds wanted British protection only, yet they would be content to remain under the Turkish flag with complete autonomy granted.⁶ He noted that the Turkish Grand Vizier made no distinction between Turks and Kurds.⁷ Kadir, like the British, sought a barrier against Bolshevik advances from the Caucasus.⁸ He "insisted that all the Moslems this side of the frontier were Kurds, and that if they were to be used at all as a barrier against Bolshevism, it must be as Kurds."⁹ He acknowledged Kurdish disunity, but claimed that if the British helped the Kurds, the Kurds would serve the British.¹⁰ Kadir feared the partition of Kurdistan into several small states "based on a very definite prognostication in a letter from Sharif Pasha,"¹¹ who thought Kurdistan was better undivided under the Turkish government, but with autonomy.¹² Ryan thought the Turks had influenced Sharif Pasha into this conciliatory mindset, and wrote that Kurdistan should be separated from Turkey into British and French protectorates.¹³ British Foreign Secretary Curzon clarified Britain's position on a future Kurdish state as

a policy for an autonomous Kurdistan, not British, French, or Turkish.¹⁴

Rifts in the Russo-Turkish alliance began to show. Curzon was made aware that conflict had emerged between the Kemalists (supporters of Kemal and his vision of a modern, secular Turkish republic) and the Bolsheviks, and that the Kemalists hated everything about the Bolsheviks, but took aid for their nationalist aspirations.¹⁵ Curzon was informed that the Kemalists might be ready to drop the Bolsheviks as soon as Turkey established normalized relations with the Western powers.¹⁶ The subject of the Straits offered Turkey an opportunity for settlement with the West, and the head of London's Commercial Mission in Moscow, R.M. Hodgson, alerted Curzon that "Russia would be opposed to Turks gaining a footing in Europe or controlling Dardanelles, and would accept a solution which would internationalise latter while respecting Turkish sentiment," and that the Soviet Union might "act as intermediary."¹⁷ Curzon was wary of Soviet ambitions south of its borders when he wrote to the British ambassadors in Istanbul and Moscow stating that the Soviets were to propose an alliance with Turkey, Persia, and Afghanistan.¹⁸ The latter two countries were especially worrying because they were key to the protection of India.

Kurdistan was again up for discussion, and it again alarmed the Persians. The Persians asked the British, French, and Italians for admission to the Lausanne Conference because of Kurdistan and the potential effects on the Persian lands adjacent, but Curzon refused the Persians entry because there was to be no modification of boundaries with Persia.¹⁹ Curzon sought to allay Persian anxieties when he stated "there is no question of setting up a Kurdish

State or a Kurdish autonomous province under Turkey as was contemplated in Treaty of Sèvres."²⁰

Though Kurdistan's independence was no longer up for discussion, the land an independent Kurdistan would have encompassed was. The status of Mosul had become a contentious issue with the Turks, since the British had seized it after the armistice had taken effect. The Turks appealed to the French for Mosul with no results, and the British feared the Turks would ally with the Soviets and move southward.²¹

Curzon knew that the Turks had accused the British of causing agitation of Kurds in Iraq, which meant trouble in Turkey. However, the British intercepted Turkish commander Euz Demir's communications with the Persians and the Kurdish leader in Sulaymaniyah, Sheikh Mahmoud, which indicated he was working with them to drive out the British.²² The British chargé in Istanbul observed that Ankara was seeking to restore Kurdish confidence in Turks.²³ This was a new tactic by the Turks to gain control over Anatolia. Soviet sponsored communist activities uncovered in Anatolia and Istanbul began to concern the Turks.²⁴ This concern was an opportunity the British aimed to turn to their advantage by obtaining peace and containing the Soviet Union.

The end of this first stage of British policy marks the British attempts to reconcile differences with Turkey while maintaining order in Iraq with its Kurds. This also marks the shift of Turkey toward the West and away from the Soviet Union, which would transfer Turkey to a buffer against the Soviets and end the idea of Kurdistan as a state. However, the Kurds remained important to the

British, but they were a potential tool of the Soviets within border states. Because Turkish nationalism had clear leadership under Mustafa Kemal, and its organization was firm and objectives clear, Turkish nationalism trumped Kurdish nationalism. The British were entering a period of undefined, or perhaps flexible, policy toward the Kurds of Iraq. The Kurds were as yet unorganized and the establishment of new states and their borders would serve to keep the Kurds that way, or that was what the governments in those states believed. The next stage of British and Turkish policies toward the Kurds is also a stage for the beginnings of Kurdish mass organization and revolt.

The Great Game, the Heartland, and the Geopolitics of Kurdistan

As a marchland between the Ottoman Empire and Persian empires (Figure 4.2), Kurdistan had a degree of autonomy. Kurdish principalities were allowed to thrive by the empires in return for not causing them grief. This changed when the Ottoman Empire removed its subsidies to the principalities and dismantled them in favor of centralization throughout the empire. An examination of the overarching geopolitical context of Kurdistan and the beginnings of Kurdish nationalism and territoriality provides insight into why an independent Kurdistan did not emerge, even after its being sanctioned by a treaty.

Following the Russian Empire's defeat by the Japanese in 1905, the Liberal government in power in London felt that St. Petersburg no longer posed a threat to the British Empire. The British ended the competition for territory,

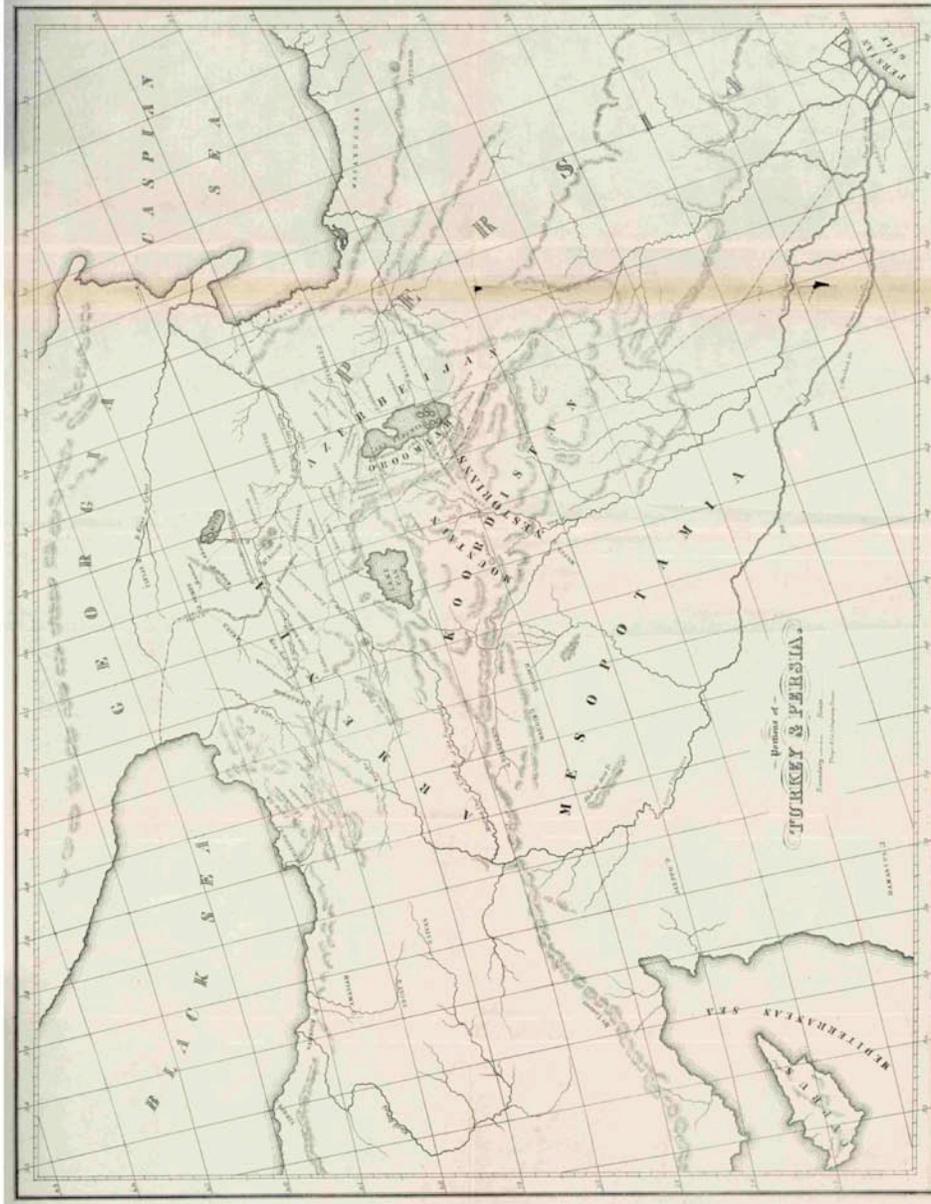


Figure 4.2: Kurdistan (labeled Koordistan) between Turkey and Persia. Source: Perkins, Reverend Justin. 1843. "Portions of Turkey and Persia" in *A Residence of Eight Years in Persia, Among the Nestorians; with Notices of the Muhammedans*. Andover, United Kingdom: Allen, Morrill and Wardwell.

influence, and markets it had waged against the Russian empire, otherwise known as the Great Game, with the agreements reached at the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907.²⁵ This entente involved the recognition of British and Russian spheres of influence regarding Persia, Afghanistan, and Tibet²⁶ (Figure 4.3). Three years previously, Sir Halford Mackinder gave a lecture that was published in the *Geographical Journal* entitled “The Geographical Pivot of History.”²⁷

Early in his career, Mackinder noted that history without geography is a narrative without a context, arguing that geography and history are intertwined and lend insight into human-environmental interactions.²⁸ Mackinder’s examination of the history and geography of Eurasia resulted in his Geographical Pivot/Heartland Theory. This idea, first introduced as the Geographical Pivot (Figure 4.4), stated that control of the interior lands of Eurasia, the Heartland, by a power could allow that power to control the whole of the continent and beyond.²⁹ The Heartland is difficult to place exact boundaries upon, but Mackinder generally associated it with the European Plain and the steppes of Central Asia. These lands were suited to horsemen and camel-men, who had long roamed the region, sometimes with the purpose of conquest. The Silk Routes traversed these lands, thus connecting Asia with Europe and Africa. Across these lands, Genghis Khan launched his great empire, which eventually

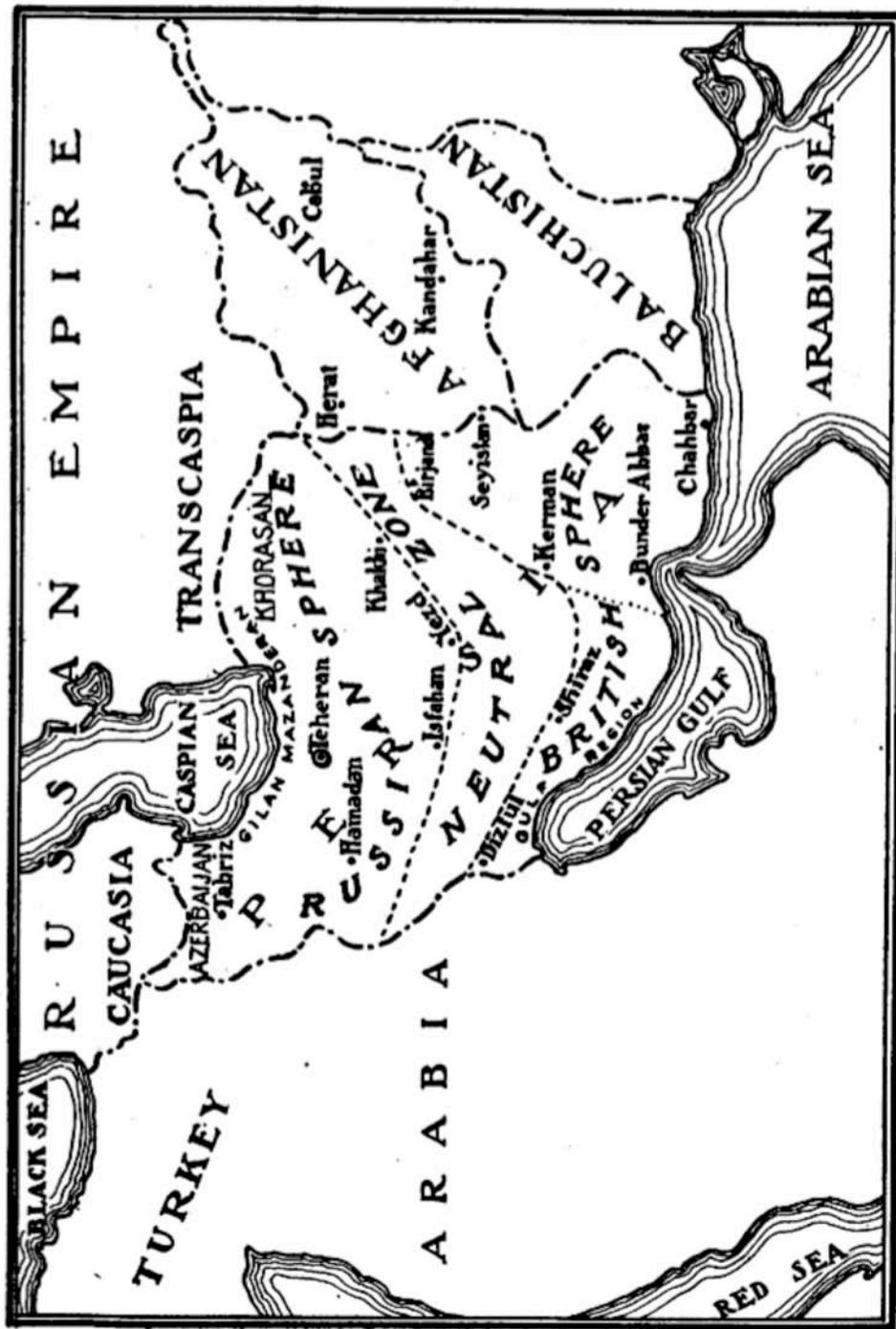


Figure 4.3: Spheres of influence established by the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. Source: Huntington, Ellsworth. 1907. The Anglo-Russian Agreement as to Tibet, Afghanistan, and Persia. *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society*, 39(11): 653-658.

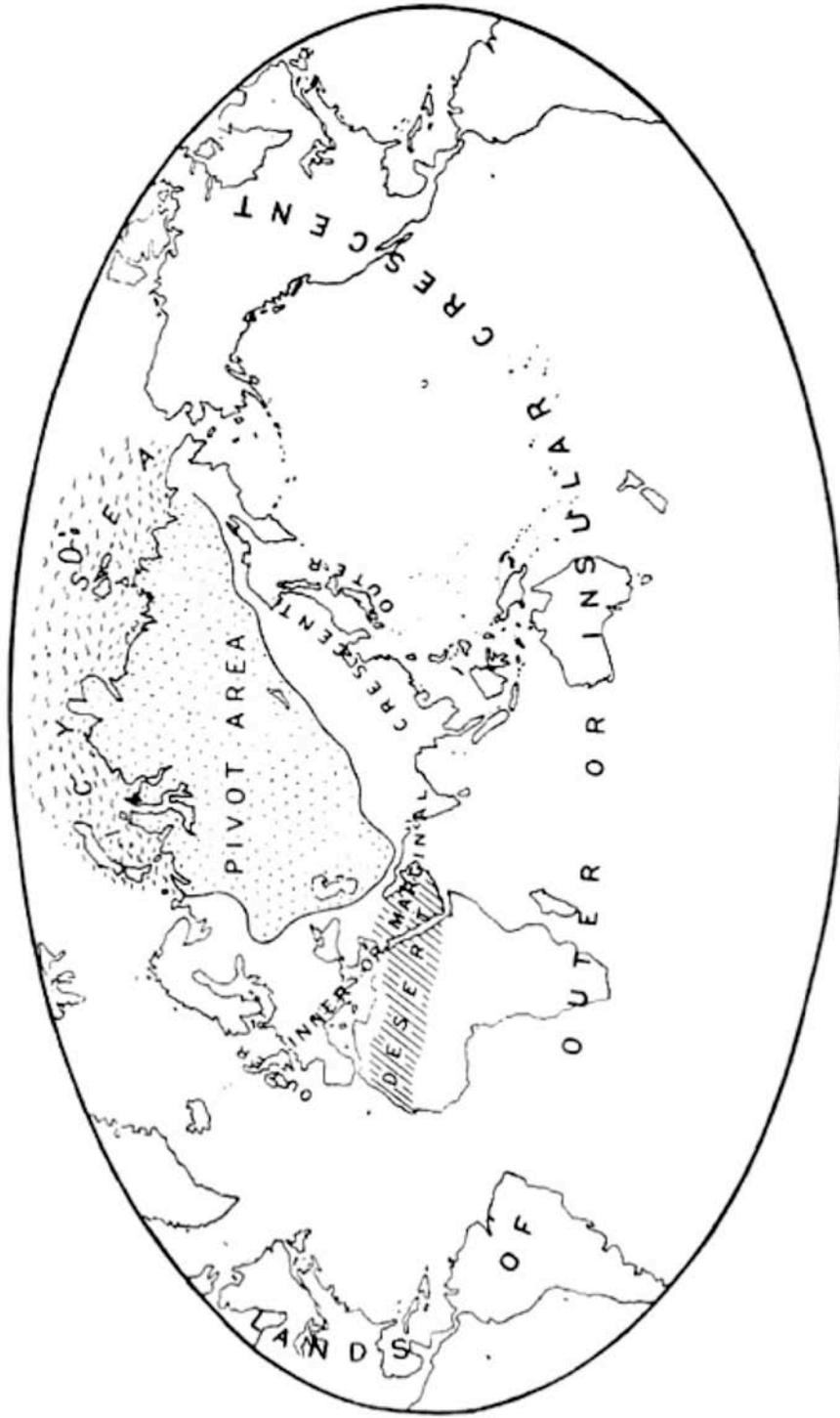


Figure 4.4: Mackinder's Geographical Pivot.
Source: Mackinder, Halford. 1904. *The Geographical Pivot of History*, *The Geographical Journal* 23 (4): 435.

spanned the continent. European discoveries of sea routes diverted commerce from the Heartland and led to the demise of the Silk Routes, but the physical geography remained unchanged. Technological advances in transportation during the late 1800s promised to connect more places and make travel faster. Curzon, then Viceroy of India, noted the potential of railroads to connect Eurasia after his travel on the newly opened Transcaspian Railroad in the Russian Empire in 1888. When he presented his observations and concerns to the Royal Geographical Society, his Oxford classmate, Mackinder, took interest in and shared his thoughts on the matter. Both Curzon and Mackinder agreed that the transcontinental linkage of the Russian Empire foretold of networks of rails to be built throughout Eurasia and the implied power this would entail. The two men found the prospect troubling, for if Russia could mobilize in such a way, it or another power held the potential to become the world's most powerful state.³⁰ What troubled Mackinder and Curzon most was that this potential superpower was not likely to be the United Kingdom, but Russia, Germany, or an alliance of the two. Such a power posed a threat to the British Empire, especially its interests in India and, increasingly, the Middle East.

Kurdistan, like Afghanistan, falls within both the Heartland and the coastal fringes of Eurasia, what Mackinder called the Inner Crescent and Spykman later called the Rimland.³¹ Kurdistan's peripheral position became important to control, even if only through proxy. The region had served as a marchland between the Ottoman and Persian empires, and served as a gateway between the Heartland and Rimland. Kurdistan as an invasion route provided the Mongols and Turks

access to the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, and the Persian Gulf. This was a troubling thought for Mackinder when he mentions the region, though not as Kurdistan, in 1904³² and 1919.³³ Indeed, Curzon regarded the Persian Gulf as India's western maritime frontier.³⁴ Kurdistan in Mackinder's 1919 *Democratic Ideals and Reality* sits at the point where the Heartland meets the European Coastland and Arabia.³⁵ Because of its location, Kurdistan was likely to be divided by the powers of the Heartland and Rimland. When Turkey began to reassert itself with Soviet help, it seemed very likely that this division would occur, with Turkey in the Heartland's sphere. The political geography of the region influenced Kurdish territoriality by causing Kurdish nationalists to believe Kurdistan was not peripheral, but central, in regional affairs.³⁶ The importance of Kurdistan at states' peripheries did not lead to importance accorded to the Kurds and their bid for statehood.

The events that transpired at Sèvres at first seemed to secure the Kurds a place of their own in the region. The terms of the treaty were also favorable to the British, who wished to enhance their interests in the region. This was all the more important since the fall of the Russian Empire, and London sought security for India against whoever came out on top in the Heartland. However, the treaty was never ratified, and its terms became unlikely to be implemented with Mustafa Kemal's successes in establishing the Turkish republic and expelling foreign forces from Anatolia. The focus of the Allies changed from redrawing the region's borders to obtaining a new peace agreement with Turkey. Kemal's threat to British control over Mosul made the Turkish reclamation seem imminent. Kemal

felt that if he controlled formerly Ottoman Kurdistan, he could crush Kurdish nationalism without foreign interference, and make Kurds into Turks in the process, thus increasing the manpower of his new republic. A peace was negotiated with the Turks at Lausanne, with Curzon as London's main negotiator, though the status of Mosul was tabled for later resolution. Turkey acted for a while as a buffer for the Soviets against Allied interests in Arabia. Moscow needed time to solidify its power, and did not wish to expose itself to the British or others seeking to redirect its future. Turkey provided a diversion. The Kurds were left further divided as a result. There was not to be a future Kurdistan as both components that were originally slated to be joined together as a Kurdish state were incorporated into Iraq and Turkey. Having achieved a meaningful peace agreement, the British and the Turks moved to consolidate their interests in their respective portions of Kurdistan, though they did so in different ways.

For the Soviets, access to warm water ports through either Moscow's direct control or a strong ally would insure their weight on the high seas. The Soviet Union had warm water ports on the Black Sea and at Vladivostok on the Pacific, thus leaving Moscow with a far-flung port at the eastern terminus of the Trans-Siberian Railroad and ports that were bottled up by a series of chokepoints. The British greatly feared that the Soviets would push southward to access the Indian Ocean. The invasion route most feared by the British during the Great Game was through Afghanistan into India. Another option that worried the British was a Soviet move through the Caucasus and Kurdistan, possibly with Turkish cooperation. This would give the Soviets access to the eastern

Mediterranean, the Red Sea, and the Persian Gulf. Adding to the troubles was the wealth of hydrocarbons beneath the soil, the extent of which had not been thoroughly evaluated. The British Royal Navy had recently switched from coal to oil to power its vessels, and was depending on these finds to fuel the British Empire.

This Geographical Pivot, later renamed the Heartland, was loosely defined as the Eastern European Plain and Central Asia. This area, if properly exploited, provided a wealth of resources for an empire and opened to all points of Eurasia through gateways.³⁷ Mackinder saw rapid transportation, particularly through railroad networks, as the driving force of a Heartland power.³⁸ This was the first time in history in which world domination was becoming a possibility based on technological advancements in transportation, communication, and weaponry.³⁹ Mackinder's warning was that those countries that had the means could place themselves in such a unique position to advance beyond being a great power to a superpower.

The British heeded this warning, and countered the potential threat from the Heartland by surrounding it with a presence in the Rimland. British policy in the Middle East was first and foremost oriented toward protecting India, the crown jewel of the British Empire. Britain wanted a connection to India from the eastern Mediterranean. This involved the Suez Canal as an outlet from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean, but it also involved a chain of control and influence across the southern coastal fringes of Asia.⁴⁰ This was partly aimed at providing a direct land and sea link from Europe to India, and partly to surround

the Eurasian Heartland.⁴¹ This second goal was tied to the first in that it sought protection for India from any power in the Heartland seeking to venture southward to threaten the British Empire.⁴²

Prior to World War I, the Ottoman Empire had become known as “the Sick Man of Europe” for all its financial troubles and inability to retain control of many of its territories from encroaching European powers in Europe, the Caucasus, and North Africa.⁴³ The Ottomans had at one time held territories linking Europe, Asia, and Africa together. These lands had long been of strategic value to empires, and were becoming more important strategically and economically for the European empires. Transportation since the Industrial Revolution had become ever more rapid, and the use of machine transport was extended to Ottoman lands.⁴⁴ The importance of oil was becoming evident, especially to the British Navy, but was still not clearly defined as an international interest.⁴⁵ World War I and the breakup of the Ottoman Empire changed the British Empire’s interests as well as those of other countries in the more developed world.

The British did not seek outright annexation of formerly Ottoman territories; rather they strived to create a string of friendly and supportive Rimland states to guarantee against a threat to India from the Heartland.⁴⁶ What troubled the British going into World War I was the alliance between Germany and the Ottoman Empire because Germany had positioned itself not only to command Eastern Europe but the Middle East and Central Asia should Russia be defeated or somehow co-opted into their geopolitical scheme.⁴⁷ Such an alliance posed a direct threat to India. The Germans knew how to develop and utilize a

transportation network of the kind that Mackinder described in the Geographical Pivot to dominate Eurasia.⁴⁸ Adding to this threat was the power held by the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire as leader of the Muslim world. The British retained the memory of the 1857 Mutiny, reinforced the potential of a Sultan-proclaimed jihad.⁴⁹ During the First World War, Germany attempted this plot, with the Kaiser allegedly proclaiming to the Ottoman people and Muslims in the British Empire that he had converted to Islam; but the strategy backfired.⁵⁰

The British remained concerned about threats to India, and Kurdistan became an area of interest akin to that of Afghanistan.⁵¹ Though the British knew they might not be able to control Kurdistan directly, they saw the region as a gateway to and from the Caucasus and into Russia.⁵² During World War I, the Russians had penetrated into southern Kurdistan from Persia.⁵³ The political maneuverings of the Bolsheviks to make peace with the Turks following the Russian Revolution worried the British. The Russians under monarchic rule had continued expansion of their Asian empire, and the British did not believe the Bolsheviks' anti-imperialist pronouncements.⁵⁴ The British, particularly Curzon, feared the Great Game was to be renewed with Russia under a new guise.⁵⁵

Roots of Kurdish Nationalism

The idea of an independent Kurdistan had been promoted in the past and had been attempted four decades earlier in the 1880s, during the revolt of Sheikh Ubaydullah. He promoted the establishment of an independent Kurdistan consisting of territories then in the Ottoman Empire and Persia. His rebellion was

the first of its kind; therefore, it is necessary to turn to these events and others that led to the organization of the Kurds before proceeding to the matters that led to their nationalist efforts between world wars.

Kurdish national consciousness dates back centuries before the rise of Kurdish political nationalism. Epic stories and poems, such as the *Sharafnama* and *Mem-u-Zin*, demonstrate this self-awareness and struggle.⁵⁶ Kurdish political nationalism is mostly a phenomenon of the twentieth century, but it has roots in events of the late nineteenth century.⁵⁷ The Kurds were never fully under the direct rule of any non-Kurdish authority despite foreign entities claiming Kurdistan as part of their territories.⁵⁸ Kurdistan's mountainous and remote setting afforded the Kurds a degree of isolation from foreign powers, but Kurdish communities were also isolated from one another.⁵⁹ This geographical seclusion made it difficult for the Kurds to unify culturally and politically. With the rise of the Ottoman Empire and the Safavid and Qajar empires in Persia the Kurds became important as subjects of those foreign entities, particularly during conflict between the powers.⁶⁰ The Kurds were fairly autonomous since Kurdistan served as a marchland between the empires.⁶¹ In competition for loyalty from the Kurds, the two empires set up feudal systems, which allowed for the establishment of several Kurdish principalities in the mountainous frontier area.⁶²

Turkish and Persian efforts to organize Kurdish allies represent the beginnings of Kurdish nationalism. These empires granted local powers to Kurdish chieftains, thereby allowing cohesion of Kurds within these areas to take place, albeit to a limited extent.⁶³ It was during the nineteenth century that

Kurdish leaders began to recognize their people as separate from the groups surrounding them. Until the nineteenth century, organized Kurdish nationalism was absent, as most Kurds saw themselves as Muslims and thereby kin to Arab, Turk, and Persian alike.⁶⁴ At the same time, these Kurdish principalities were at odds with one another, and on occasion a leader appealed to the Turks or Persians for assistance against their own family members.⁶⁵

During the last phase of Ottoman control in Kurdistan, from *Tanzimat* (modernizing reforms, 1839-1879) until World War I, Kurdistan enjoyed autonomy as a buffer zone between the Ottoman Turkish heartland of Anatolia and the Persian Empire in the east.⁶⁶ Kurdistan also served as a buffer to Ottoman-ruled Mesopotamia lying to the south of Anatolia and to the Russian controlled Caucasus to the north.

The mountains of Kurdistan had never been subject to direct rule, because such a pursuit had proved fruitless time and again as a result of Kurdish superiority in alpine warfare.⁶⁷ Indirect rule, through autonomous and semi-autonomous principalities, allowed the Ottoman and Persian empires to maintain relative calm in their Kurdish borderlands over the centuries.⁶⁸

Two events in the Ottoman Empire of the nineteenth century led to the beginnings of Kurdish nationalism in the twentieth. The first element is the destruction of the Kurdish principalities in the frontier between the Ottoman and Persian empires.⁶⁹ This change left a power vacuum in Kurdistan in which ruling Kurdish elites were replaced by religious leaders.⁷⁰ The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 devastated Kurdistan, and left the region in lawlessness and poverty

with little help from the Sultan.⁷¹ The resulting 1878 Treaty of Berlin brought peace between the empires but gave special protection to the Armenians, thus giving rise to suspicions among the Kurds and other Muslims of an emerging Armenian state.⁷² Kurdish sheikhs saw Ottoman policies as ineffective and un-Islamic, thus they attempted to lead their faithful away from any allegiance to the Sublime Porte.⁷³ The Kurdish leader Sheikh Ubaydullah sought a complete break of a united Kurdish population from Ottoman rule, thus severing the pan-Islamic ties that held the empire together for centuries.⁷⁴

In 1879, tensions gave way to violence between the Kurdish and Armenian populations, and led Ubaydullah and his followers into a full-scale revolt against the Ottoman Empire.⁷⁵ Ubaydullah also invaded Persia's Kurdistan region seeking to unite both Ottoman and Persian Kurdish subjects.⁷⁶ He failed to win the support he needed in the Kurdish populations of the empires and the revolt crumbled under combined pressure from Ottoman and Persian forces.⁷⁷ Where Ubaydullah did not succeed, his idea of an independent Kurdistan and pan-Kurdish unity endured. This rebellion was the first occasion in which the idea of an independent Kurdistan and unification of the Kurdish people was promoted in a far-reaching effort. Other groups met new Ottoman centralization plans with resistance, but Ubaydullah's goal was the outright severance of the Kurdish people from the empire.

The second development toward Kurdish nationalism came after the Ottomans crushed Ubaydullah's revolt and saw the need to counter religious backlash.⁷⁸ Sultan Abdulhamid II was still Caliph, the supreme leader of the

Islamic world, and his court in Constantinople wanted to reassert that authority over the Kurds. The Ottoman Empire was also trying to balance Islam with modernization.⁷⁹ Officials believed that much of the religious backlash was out of simple ignorance of the ways of the rest of the world, and that by planting enlightened and modernized Kurds back into Kurdistan they could bring the majority of Kurdish society to their side.⁸⁰ To accomplish this feat, the Porte devised an all-Kurdish cavalry, known as the Hamidiye Light Cavalry, later known as the Tribal Light Cavalry.⁸¹ The cavalry was created in 1891, and officials sought out officer recruits from influential Kurdish tribal populations.⁸² These officers were trained in Istanbul, thereby being educated and exposed to modernity and its values.⁸³ The Ottomans attempted to instill loyalty to the state while addressing Kurdish pride through the creation of this new force.⁸⁴ Thus, a corps of loyal Kurds was sent back to Kurdistan to act as a new elite, keeping check on unruly elements as well as an increasingly restless Armenian population. The Hamidiye was also designed to monitor Russian ambitions in the east; therefore, they served the dual purpose of early warning and frontier force.⁸⁵

The irony of the Hamidiye was that it was created to instill a loyalty to Turkey but instead it gave some Kurdish nationalists military and organizational experience for their cause later in life.⁸⁶ While serving with Ottoman forces in the Balkans, these Kurdish officers were exposed to nationalism of the Turkish and Arab officers as well as the various peoples of the Balkans. The cavalry provided

Kurds with a form of structured solidarity.⁸⁷ This group of Kurds understood modern technology and how to use it to their advantage.⁸⁸

Nationalism of groups surrounding the Kurds (Figure 4.5) had an influence upon the future of Kurdish nationalism. The Young Turks sought to modernize Turkey and base the new identity upon secularism and Turkish traditions rather than the Islamic cosmopolitanism that had prevailed for centuries in the empire.⁸⁹ A nascent Pan-Turanian, or Pan-Turkish, feeling was expressed among some individuals who turned toward other Turkish populations in the Caucasus and Central Asia.⁹⁰ This sentiment affected the Kurds in two ways. It caused some to question the Pan-Islamic future of the Ottoman Empire, while in others it led them to consider the prospects of Kurdish identity and a united Kurdistan.⁹¹

The Armenians also influenced the Kurds. Armenian nationalist groups had formed in the middle of the nineteenth century, and had been subverted the Ottoman Empire, often at the behest of the Russian Empire.⁹² The Armenians began pushing for greater rights, and secret societies such as the Dashnaksutiun (Dashnak) and the Hunchak Committee engaged in subversion and revolts against the Ottoman Empire.⁹³ The nationalist boundaries of Armenia overlapped considerably with Kurdistan.⁹⁴ Kurdish and Armenian interaction for centuries had been cordial, but the exchanges across the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries became increasingly hostile and bloody.⁹⁵ The Armenian nationalists both angered and inspired the Kurds around them.

These various influences combined to push Kurdish identity toward political nationalism. The geopolitical context in which Kurdish nationalism and

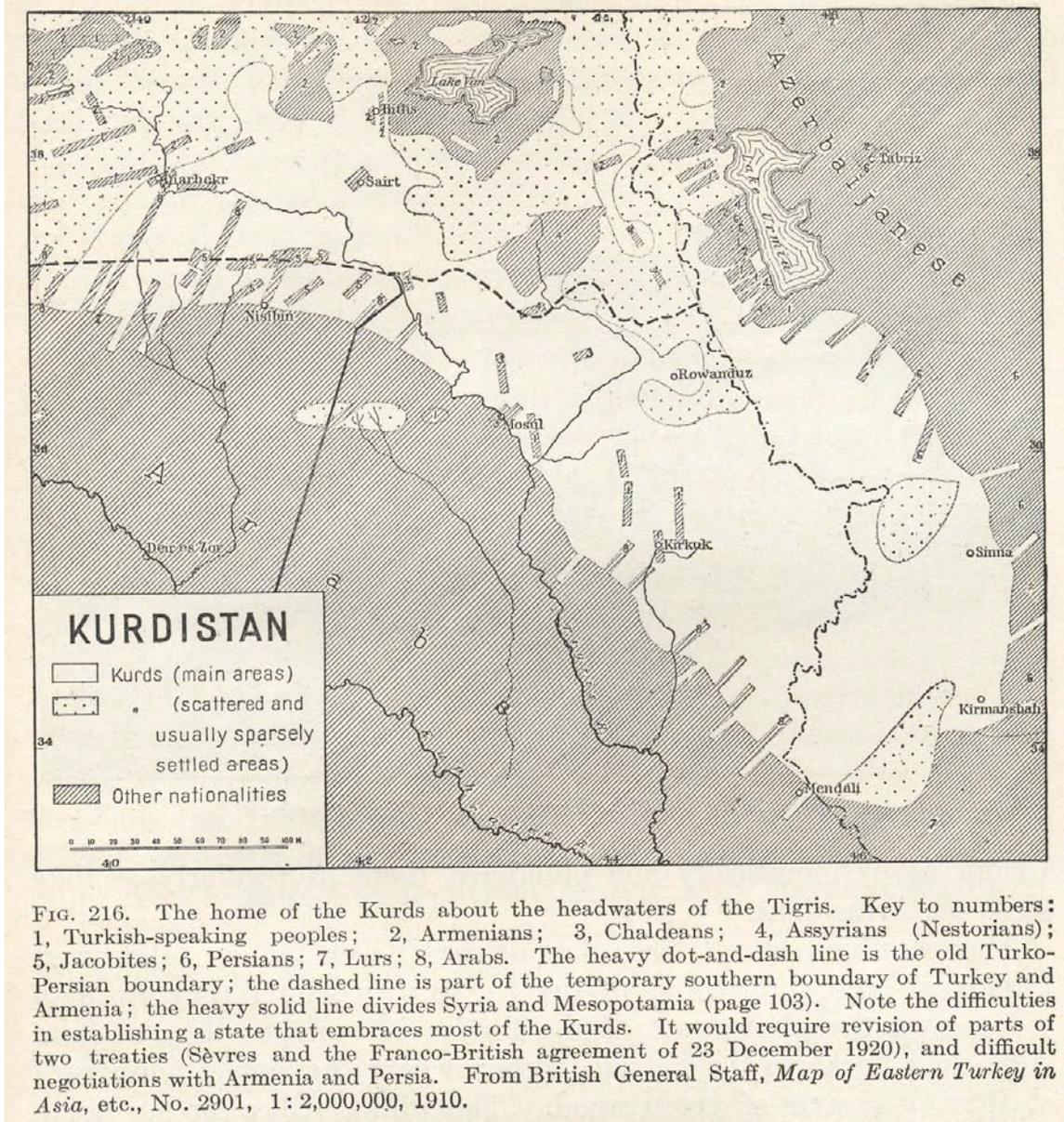


Figure 4.5: The Kurds and neighboring peoples.

Source: Bowman, Isaiah. 1921. *The New World: Problems in Political Geography*. New York: World Book Company.

territoriality rose and was challenged is essential to this discussion. The following section addresses the external influences involving strategic policies of major powers upon Kurdistan.

World War I and Geopolitical Intrigue

World War I brought calamity to Kurdistan, though it was not part of the main theater. Kurdistan had been swept through by Ottomans, Russians, and the British. Crops had been devastated because of the fighting and lack of attention to the fields.⁹⁶ After bitter fighting between the Kurds and the Armenians, a circle within the Ottoman government plotted to ethnically cleanse the Armenians from Anatolia.⁹⁷ Many Armenians fled to the Caucasus with hopes of Russian protection, while others were marched into the Syrian Desert, often being attacked and killed *en masse* along the way.⁹⁸ However, these hostilities between Kurds and Armenians were to be short-lived.

The British and the French thought they had the entirety of the Ottoman Empire within their grasp before the close of World War I. The Sykes-Picot Agreement was a secret arrangement between the British and the French, which parceled out the lands of the Ottoman Empire between them in the event of an Allied victory.⁹⁹ The agreement was made in 1916, but was altered with the Russians to make the Sykes-Picot-Sazonov Agreement (Figure 4.6), thus giving Russia a share of strategic territory.¹⁰⁰ Later, the Greeks and Italians made claims to the defeated Ottoman Empire's territories, further complicating the scheme.¹⁰¹ Kurdistan was divided among the British, French, and Russians prior

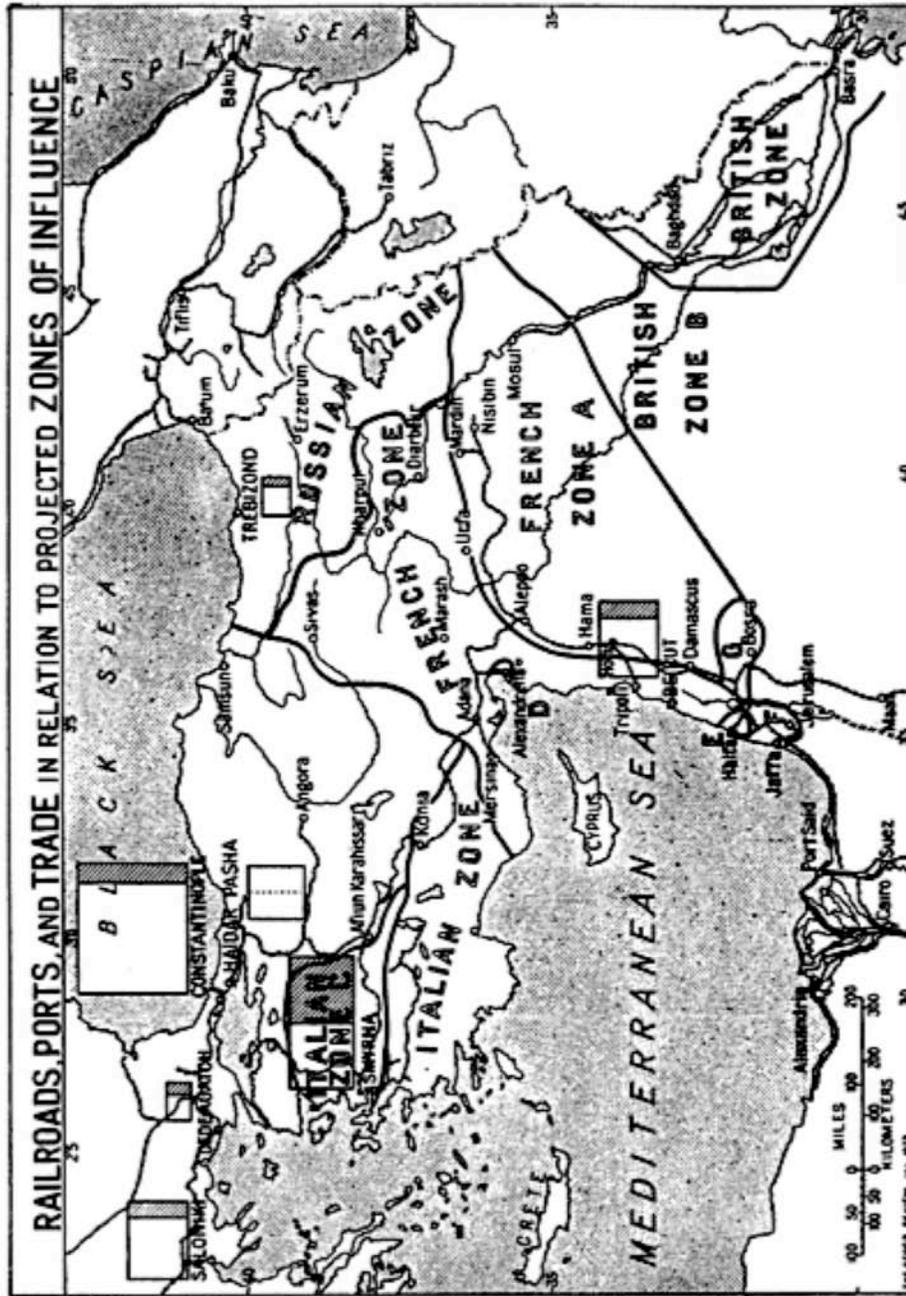


Figure 4.6: A variation of the Sykes-Picot-Sazonov Agreement depicting British, French, Russian, and Italian claims. Source: Geographical Elements in the Turkish Situation: A Note on the Political Map. 1923. *Geographical Review* 13 (1): 122-129.

to the Russian Revolution of 1917.¹⁰² The British and the Russians had put away their Great Game rivalry since 1907, though having a French buffer between their claims was likely satisfactory to both empires.

A turning point in the Middle East's future came with the Russian Revolution in 1917, when the Bolsheviks gained enough power to oust the monarchy and bring about a Russian withdrawal from the war. The Bolsheviks made a separate peace with the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰³ Unbeknownst to the Ottoman Empire's subjects, large swaths of Ottoman territory had been promised to the Russians including the straits and Constantinople as well as much of Armenia and the northern portion of Kurdistan by the Sykes-Picot-Sazonov arrangement. The Bolsheviks soon denounced and made public these secret agreements, much to the embarrassment and chagrin of the British and the French.¹⁰⁴ This change affected the Sykes-Picot maps in that there was no longer a need for the French to hold the Mosul *vilayet* as a buffer zone between the British and Russian interests.¹⁰⁵ Thus the area's future was left in question.

A new contest in the war's eastern theater emerged with the removal of the Ottoman Empire's most feared rival, the Russian Empire.¹⁰⁶ Some Ottoman officials, however briefly, sought to build a new Turkish empire stretching from Anatolia to the Turkic areas of the Caucasus, Central Asia, Siberia, Mongolia, and Xinjiang.¹⁰⁷ The Bolsheviks sought to spread their doctrine among the former Russian Empire's territories.¹⁰⁸ The British, fearing threats to India and its new security interests in the Middle East, wanted to defeat both Bolshevik and Turkish ambitions to attempt restoration of order surrounding the British Empire.¹⁰⁹ The

Kurds were caught in the middle of this turmoil, and their future would be shaped by the outcome of the events to follow.

The British had advanced inland from the Persian Gulf intending to drive the Ottoman forces out of Mesopotamia, but the resistance they met was firmer than expected. The British had been embarrassed by the incident at Kut in 1915, where forces had become stranded and encircled by Ottoman troops. The loss of thousands of British and Indian forces in attempts to lift the siege was a high toll the British wanted to insure was not wasted.¹¹⁰ After more resources were directed at the Mesopotamian problem, the British were able to push northward. British troops were stretched thin upon their entry into a largely deserted Baghdad, and their commanders knew they needed every advantage for control and stability they could muster.¹¹¹ When Kurds hostile to Ottoman authority appeared capable of controlling southern Kurdistan, the British leapt at the opportunity to form a Kurdish autonomous government.¹¹²

The British experimented with a Kurdish government based in Sulaymaniyah in 1918.¹¹³ They embarked upon this course to create stability in that portion of Kurdistan and as preparation for an independent Kurdistan to be carved out of the Ottoman Empire. The British saw an independent Kurdistan at that time as a potential buffer state at one of the gateways into the Heartland.¹¹⁴ An independent Armenia would have served the same function, though Armenian ties to Russia troubled the British.¹¹⁵ The British had many other security concerns to deal with directly; therefore, an autonomous Kurdish area was welcome as long as it did not interfere with neighboring areas and peoples.¹¹⁶

The Kurdish government in Sulaymaniyah was led by Sheikh Mahmoud Barzinji, an ambitious Kurdish leader who believed in uniting the Kurdish people under his rule.¹¹⁷ Mahmoud's ambitions, however, undermined his cause as his attempts to incorporate more territory under his jurisdiction offended other Kurds and the British alike.¹¹⁸ A Kurdish revolt against the British in Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyah broke out in response to British efforts to limit Mahmoud's power, and Mahmoud's followers were able to briefly seize Sulaymaniyah, Rawanduz, and Erbil.¹¹⁹ Activities of the Kurds beyond the Persian frontier would eventually influence Kurds in the Persian Empire, thus raising the Persian government's concerns over the sanctity of his territory. Any concerns Persian administrators had were also concerns of the British, as they wanted to maintain their influence in Persia.¹²⁰ The British abandoned the Kurdish government only to resurrect the idea a few years later.¹²¹

British Royal Navy Vice-Admiral Sir John de Robeck voiced his concern to Curzon, then chief of the Foreign Office's Eastern Department, that some who were representing the position of the British government were opposed to Kurdish nationalism and wishing to support its destruction. De Robeck went to great lengths to voice British non-interference and emphasized that Kurdistan should be decided by others.¹²² He also expressed his fear of a Pan-Islamist movement rising from the Ottoman Empire's ashes and its implications for the British Empire in India. He expressed his weariness of the Bolsheviks in Russia, and informed Curzon of the many threats and challenges Britain faced in postwar Eurasia,¹²³ all of which played heavily into British views on Kurdistan.

The Paris Peace Conference and the Treaty of Sèvres

After the cataclysm of World War I, the Paris Peace Conference offered the opportunity for a new world. The optimism and idealism promoted by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson aimed for a lasting peace reinforced by an international framework and fraternity of states.¹²⁴ The principle of self-determination from Point Twelve of Wilson's Fourteen Points instilled false confidence in minority populations of the Ottoman Empire that they would soon be able to choose their own paths as independent nation-states.¹²⁵

The British found the Ottoman theater of the war much more difficult than they had imagined. At war's end, the British had a hard time maintaining troop concentrations in the Ottoman Empire.¹²⁶ The cost of the war was enormous, and the politicians and population back in Britain sought to hasten troops' return home.¹²⁷ The Allies' plans to carve up the Ottoman Empire were equally challenging to execute because the different peoples of the empire were seeking their own futures, rather than leaving outsiders or their old overlords to decide for them.¹²⁸

During the war, more attention was paid to the Armenians than to the Kurds. This was likely because the Armenians were primarily Christian, and thereby more prone to identify with the West and vice versa. The Kurds were considered complicit in the atrocities committed against the Armenians within the Ottoman Empire during the early stages of the war.¹²⁹ Little attention was given to Kurdistan until after the war when the prevailing thought was a realignment of

the Ottoman territories along the European model of nation-states in which Ottoman minorities each would govern their own people in their own territories. British Foreign Office documents of the time indicate a certainty of a future Armenian state, but leave out other parties such as the Kurds and the Assyrians. A sketch of the Draft Treaty of Peace between Turkey and the Allied Governments by Middle-Eastern Political Section of British Delegation¹³⁰ and a map of the "Proposed Settlement of Turkey in Asia" depict various boundaries for Armenia, but make no mention of Kurdistan.¹³¹

U.S. President Woodrow Wilson went so far as to order a draft of boundaries for an Armenian state (Figure 4.7).¹³² This was the atmosphere going into the end of the war and into the peace conference. The horrors of the war pushed idealism to its extreme in the minds of some negotiators and some heads of states, while the reality on the ground was starkly different from their grand visions of a new world.¹³³ Other statesmen, particularly Lloyd-George and Clemenceau, had imperial interests in mind rather than the international peace and reconciliation that Wilson professed.¹³⁴

After the surrender of the Ottoman Empire and the close of World War I, plans for the lands, resources, and people under former Ottoman jurisdiction were negotiated. While the U.K. and France were drawing their lines on the map of the Middle East, the Americans, whom they invited to take up mandates in Armenia and Kurdistan, refused to become involved on the ground.¹³⁵ U.S. foreign policy appeared hesitant because policymakers feared the U.S. would

Map showing the boundaries of Armenia as awarded by PRESIDENT WILSON.



- Turkish-Armenian boundary
- Other international boundaries
- Unmarked international boundaries
- Old Turkish-Russian boundary
- Vilayet boundaries
- Sandjak boundaries
- Kaza boundaries
- Railways, broad gauges

ERZERUM..... Names of the vilayets of Erzerum, Trebizond, Van, and Bitlis and other administrative units

Map compiled under the direction of Major Lawrence Martin, General Staff, U. S. Army, by the topographic branch U. S. Geological Survey, in cooperation with the Department of State, from field observations by the Harbord Mission and from maps of the Turkish General Staff, scale 1:200,000, German maps prepared during the war, scale 1:400,000, and British maps of Persian and Transcaucasian territory, scale 1:1,000,000



Woodrow Wilson

Figure 4.7: Woodrow Wilson's plan for Armenia, 1919. Source: Martin, Lawrence. 1920. *Map showing the boundaries of Armenia as awarded by President Wilson*. Washington, DC: United States Department of State.

become entangled in a colonial-style scheme that ran counter to U.S. ideals and taxpayer wishes. According to Tejirian, “the internationalism of the 1910s, which followed the first acquisitions of the ‘American empire’ after the Spanish-American War and led to U.S. entry into World War I, was followed by the isolationism of the 1920s, emphasized most dramatically by U.S. refusal to join the League of Nations.”¹³⁶ Lack of international sponsorship was a problem that would plague the Kurds.¹³⁷

The Foreign Office’s Political Intelligence Department presented British negotiators with a thorough study of the Ottoman Empire’s lands and peoples before they attended negotiations in Paris.¹³⁸ This document placed heavy emphasis on Armenia and commitments to the French and Arabs. The situation of Kurdistan was addressed with the statement, “We are thus committed to the partition of Kurdistan into three sections, in the two largest of which certain rights are secured to ourselves, the French, and the Arabs, but none to the Kurds.”¹³⁹

The study noted the strategic value of Kurdistan thus:

The Power paramount in this country will command the strategic approaches to Mesopotamia and control the water supply of the eastern affluents of the Tigris, on which the irrigation of Mesopotamia largely depends. It is therefore essential that the paramount Power in Kurdistan and Mesopotamia should be the same; in other words, that Great Britain should have an exclusive position in Kurdistan as opposed to any other outside power. At the same time, the arguments against annexation apply even more strongly to Kurdistan than to Mesopotamia. It is desirable that the county (sic) should form an independent confederation of tribes and towns, and that His Majesty’s Government should assume functions intermediate between the administrative assistance, amounting to direct responsibility for the conduct of government, which they intend to undertake in Mesopotamia, and the mere control of external relations, to which they propose to limit themselves in the case of the independent rulers of the Arabian Peninsula. In the hills British control should be exerted with the least direct intervention possible. In the lowlands bordering on Mesopotamia, where there are important oil-fields and other natural resources, it may have to approximate to the Mesopotamian pattern.¹⁴⁰

The study further recommended that the Kurdish region in the upper valley of the Greater Zab River be formed into an autonomous enclave, "under the Government of the Nestorian Prince-Patriarch, with a constitution modelled on that of the Lebanon -- the necessary outside assistance to be given by Great Britain."¹⁴¹ Independence, with British administrative assistance, would be subject to no limitations of period or function in this situation. The study notes of Kurdistan, "It would be almost equally safe to rely here too upon the choice of the inhabitants, though it might also be well to point out that the country is bound up with Mesopotamia geographically and economically, and could not lead a satisfactory existence if dissociated from it."¹⁴² The office argued for southern Kurdistan's attachment to Mesopotamia for economic convenience, since Kurdistan is landlocked.

A memorandum issued by the British Delegation in Paris on British Policy in the Middle East stated, "It is impossible to include all Kurdish tribes and settlements in a Kurdish State without violating the integrity of Persia; nor would the Kurds, if united, be capable of governing themselves."¹⁴³ The delegation further argued that if Kurdistan was to be independent it would be bound to Mesopotamia for markets and would be dependent, as would Mesopotamia to Kurdistan for water; therefore, the delegation recommended that the mandate be extended from Mesopotamia to Southern Kurdistan.¹⁴⁴ They attached a caveat to this recommendation, bearing in mind British experiences in India's Northwest Frontier and Afghanistan, by emphasizing that any power involved should intervene with "mountain tribes" as little as possible.¹⁴⁵

The peace negotiations dealt with territorial divisions, but many of the proposed states or protectorates had never been clearly defined by boundaries prior to the conference. For centuries, cartographers agreed on Kurdistan's existence, but its boundaries had never been clearly defined. The British were the primary drivers behind determining where the potential country would be located. In one of the Foreign Office's early descriptions, Kurdistan was defined "as the territory south of the Bohtan River, and east of the Tigris and the Jebel Hamim, which has hitherto belonged to Turkey, and is bounded on the east by the Persian frontier."¹⁴⁶

The Kurdish representative at the Paris Peace Conference was General Muhammad Sharif Pasha.¹⁴⁷ After the Young Turk Revolution deposed Sultan Abdulhamid II and sentenced Sharif Pasha to death, he fled the Ottoman Empire.¹⁴⁸ Sharif Pasha had offered his services to the British at the beginning of the war, but his offer had been refused because the British did not anticipate their being engaged with operations in Kurdistan.¹⁴⁹ He spent the war years in Monte Carlo waiting for another opportunity.¹⁵⁰ Despite his disappointment with the British, Sharif Pasha reestablished his contact with the British near the end of the war.¹⁵¹ In 1918, he began communicating with Sir Percy Cox, the head of British forces in Mesopotamia, to discuss establishing British protection over an autonomous Kurdistan.¹⁵² He argued for similar arrangements in Mesopotamia and elsewhere, describing something akin to the mandate system.¹⁵³ He also argued for a British sponsored committee aimed at reconciling relations between the Kurds and the Armenians.¹⁵⁴ Kurdish nationalist organizations nominated

Sharif Pasha as their representative at the Paris Peace Conference because of his strategic views and high level contacts within the British government.¹⁵⁵

At Paris, Sharif Pasha carefully laid out Kurdish claims to territory and constructed an argument for Kurdish independence. His claims were based on areas where Kurds constituted the dominant population.¹⁵⁶ He included the Persian Empire's Kurdish territories in addition to Ottoman lands. His inclusion of the Persian Kurdish lands was merely to make a point that the Kurds were a large nation spanning a large area, thereby worthy of a homeland free from the outside interference that had often plagued Kurdistan.¹⁵⁷

Delegates representing the Kurds, the Armenians, and the Assyrians presented claims to territory and independence. Bughos Nubar, the chief Armenian delegate, had confided to Sir Louis Mallet of the British Delegation fears that the Allies were "abandoning Armenia to her fate."¹⁵⁸ He worried about French ambition in Armenia, and sought British and US recognition for Armenian independence.¹⁵⁹

Sharif Pasha and Bughos Nubar agreed to support each other's bid for independence even if there were disagreements as to the particulars of territory. The two presented overlapping claims and criticized each other's demands, but the scheme worked.¹⁶⁰ The negotiators were convinced that both the Kurds and the Armenians deserved homelands in the new Middle East, and granted provisions for statehood and self-determination in the resulting Treaty of Sèvres.¹⁶¹

Sharif Pasha grew frustrated with the Allies over his sidelining in negotiations and with the Kurdish League over his agreement with the Armenians, and eventually resigned his post.¹⁶² Following his marginalization, Sharif produced a pamphlet outlining the justification for Kurdistan's territories.¹⁶³ He began with historical claims to the lands, noting many academic works on the geography of Kurdistan and taking care to distinguish between Kurdish and Armenian lands.¹⁶⁴ His argument against the Armenian claims in Kurdistan is that greater Armenia is not "the ethnical cradle of their race."¹⁶⁵ In an unusual turn in his case, Sharif asserts that the Armenians in Kurdistan came as émigrés, abandoning agriculture in Armenia for urban life in Kurdistan.¹⁶⁶ Sharif further accuses the European powers and Turkey of conspiracy against the Kurds by inventing Armenian history in Kurdish lands.¹⁶⁷ He likely made this last statement out of anger from being sidelined at the conference. Nevertheless, Sharif Pasha made a difference in that his case for a Kurdish homeland was written into the peace treaty. The "Kurdistan" specified in the treaty did not include all of the Kurdish territories, but it contained a large portion of Ottoman Kurdistan.

Some groups formerly under Ottoman dominion desired reclamation of lands they perceived as their own. Greek irredentism gained the support of the British, thus enabling them to land Greek forces at Izmir.¹⁶⁸ However, the Greeks became too covetous toward the Turks, and found themselves on the retreat before Turkish retaliation near the plateau of Ankara.¹⁶⁹ The Turks had found a new nationalist leader, and the fall of the Ottoman Empire and its Sultanate was certain.

Britain's Prime Minister and chief diplomat, David Lloyd-George, summarizes and laments the difficulties in dealing with the post-world war

Ottoman Empire:

In some respects the settlement of the Turkish Empire presented greater difficulties than that of any other enemy country. There was a greater variety of races and religions to be dealt with. They were more hopelessly intermingled without any trace or hope of merger. There were historical complications which had never been unraveled. There were the jealousies of Powers, each of them with real or imaginary interests—historical, religious, financial or territorial—in some corner of this dilapidated Empire. There was a wilderness of decay and ruin, the result of centuries of misrule prolonged to the last hours of Turkish dominion, which had to be dealt with. There were whole provinces devastated and depopulated by butchery inspired, decreed and directed by the State. Records and ruins prove that during centuries of history there once existed in a vast area of this decadent Empire the most flourishing civilizations in the world. There was hardly one corner of it which would not have to be reconstructed and rebuilt from the foundation upwards to recall a faint memory of its pristine opulence and splendour.¹⁷⁰

The situation was indeed a difficult one to sort out, and any agreement was likely to anger the Turks. The idea of Kurdistan seems to be an afterthought with Lloyd-George as he states, "Kurdistan was accorded local autonomy, with the right to secede in one year from Turkey."¹⁷¹ This is his only mention of Kurdistan throughout his memoirs of the Paris Peace Conference.

The British viewed an independent or autonomous Kurdistan as a means of establishing a buffer, along with an independent Armenia, against Russia and any renewed territorial ambitions under the new leadership there. However, they did not wish to over-commit British involvement with the Kurds. The Foreign Office Oriental Secretary, Andrew Ryan, made clear the British policy of reserve toward Kurds and all minority groups to Reshid Pasha, the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs.¹⁷² Ryan had been approached by the Kurdish Club, but stated the British government's noncommittal response to their requests for

assistance.¹⁷³ The Turkish minister asserted that he did not believe the Kurdish Club spoke for a majority.¹⁷⁴ Ryan told Reshid Pasha that the Kurds were an "undoubtedly constituted nationality," and that they "had the same right as other nationalities to express aspirations."¹⁷⁵ He noted that the Kurdish question was of "great interest" to Britain, and spoke of the importance of Kurds in Turkey, Iraq, and Syria. Reshid informed Ryan of Turkish fears of Britain dismantling Turkey, and asserted that the Kurds "were on too mediaeval a plane of thought and custom to make it possible to apply modern democratic criteria."¹⁷⁶

Meetings on the Turkish settlement and the Ottoman minorities progressed with much favor given to the Armenians. French diplomat Philippe Berthelot communicated to Curzon that the French had great concern for the Armenians.¹⁷⁷ Both Berthelot and members of the Political Section of the British Peace Delegation believed Armenian population numbers were underestimated noting, "the Armenian is more prolific than the Turk, or Kurd."¹⁷⁸ This statement reveals a strong bias by Britain and France for the Armenian population.

The British Peace Delegation's Political Section produced a memorandum on December 18 detailing provisions for an autonomous Kurdistan as part of the Turkish settlement. This was what the British were prepared to discuss with the French, and in turn the Ottomans:

It is considered that there should be south of the above-mentioned Armenian zone an autonomous Kurdish zone, in which Turkish sovereignty should obviously cease to run. The eastern boundary of this zone should be the Turco-Persian frontier; the western boundary would run approximately south-west of Mush to Diarbekir, but would depend on the northern and eastern frontiers of the French mandatory zone (see below); details would have to be drawn by an expert commission. The southern boundary and size of the zone must depend on a decision regarding the northern frontier of Mesopotamia, which, in turn, must depend on British security and administrative convenience. It is understood that

this question has recently been discussed by the Eastern Committee, and, as far as we are aware, the three possible frontiers discussed are shown on the annexed map. It will be seen that the size of the autonomous Kurdish State must depend on the final choice among these frontiers, but after the experience of this war the safety of the Nestorian colony (to whom the Allies are under some obligation), on the upper waters of the Greater Zab, if included in an autonomous Kurdish area, would be precarious. Some preference is therefore felt on this score for the most northerly frontier.¹⁷⁹

The Anglo-French Conference on Turkey took place days later in four meetings across December 22 and 23, but Kurdistan was discussed only in the third meeting. In that meeting, Lord Curzon reviewed a note by M. Berthelot on Kurdistan, which "proposed that part of Kurdistan should fall within the British Mesopotamian mandate, but that the rest might be formed into a federation of Kurdish tribes under some form of loose Anglo-French control, but with the maintenance in theory of Turkish sovereignty."¹⁸⁰ Curzon doubted the Sultan's control in Kurdistan even in name only, and considered the division of Kurdistan into spheres of influence or control between Britain and France to be a bad idea. He suggested to Berthelot that their governments pursue this outline in coming to a final decision regarding Kurdistan:

1. No mandate, whether English or French, or Anglo-French, was possible or desirable for Kurdistan as a whole, except perhaps for the more settled areas in Southern Kurdistan.
2. Turkish rule, for obvious reasons which past experience made clear, should not continue in Kurdistan in even a nominal form.
3. The Kurds were quite capable of making (and according to his latest information were disposed to make) a working arrangement with the Assyrians on one side and the Armenians on the other. The Kurdistan question could not therefore be considered apart from the formation of the Armenian State on which the French and British were agreed.
4. Lord Curzon's own idea was to allow the Kurds to decide whether they would form a single State or a number of small loosely knit areas. Time and non-interference by the Turks could alone show what they were capable of.
5. The Kurds should, if possible, be guaranteed against Turkish aggression, but should preferably not have formally appointed advisers, whether French or British.
6. Both from the British and French points of view it was undesirable to create a frontier problem similar to that with which the British were confronted in India.¹⁸¹

These guidelines were used to shape the policies to be enacted toward the Kurds, Armenians, Assyrians, and other minorities of the Ottoman Empire. Negotiations wound on until a final agreement was reached in August 1920.

The conclusion of negotiations regarding the Ottoman Empire resulted in the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres.¹⁸² The negotiations were viewed by many Turks as forced capitulations, exercised upon the Ottoman authorities who no longer held credibility as rulers.¹⁸³ This treaty attempted to address all of the concerns over the status of the empire's different nations. Articles 62 through 64 pertained specifically to the Kurds and Kurdistan.¹⁸⁴ The Treaty of Sèvres was the first international recognition of the Kurds and their right to a homeland (Figure 4.8), and Kurdish nationalists immediately seized upon this as justification for their activities.

This article had been heavily influenced by the ideas of Woodrow Wilson. Point 12 of Wilson's Fourteen Points "declared that non-Turkish minorities of the Ottoman Empire should be granted the right of 'autonomous development.'"¹⁸⁵ Indeed, the Treaty of Sèvres included Article 62 providing the Kurds with autonomy, Article 63 forcing the Turks to honor that autonomy, and Article 64 allowing for possible independence.¹⁸⁶ These two articles became important to informed Kurdish leaders. Figures such as Mahmoud and Ahmed used the treaty and the articles to justify their causes, rally followers, and fight for control of territory.

The main problem with the success of the treaty was that the conditions imposed upon the Turks were too harsh to be implemented without Turkish

retaliation. Sections of Anatolia were set to become territories of Greece and Italy and Cilicia was to become a French controlled area.¹⁸⁷ Had the Russian Revolution not occurred, much of Turkey, including the straits, would have gone to the Russian Empire as a strategic corridor from the Black Sea out into the Mediterranean.¹⁸⁸

Something the Western delegates to the conference did not understand was that their ideas and agreements held no currency with Turkish nationalists. They expected the Turks to behave like schoolchildren at the direction of a headmaster, but the Turks had no intention of being directed so. To have expected complete capitulation on the part of Turkey based on agreements made with the Ottoman authorities was unrealistic. To the Turks, it was inconceivable that the Turkish people would allow their lands to be parceled out to European powers while they were left with a small territory surrounded by hostile neighbors.¹⁸⁹ The British had found it difficult to maintain a troop presence in Turkish territories, and the question remained of how such agreements were to be enforced without force.¹⁹⁰ The treaty did not delve into how this agreement was to be implemented or enforced, and was doomed from the moment of its signing.¹⁹¹ Stemming from the harshness of the treaty's conditions and the naïveté of the Allied negotiators at Paris was the rise of a new Turkish nationalism under the celebrated General Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk). He commanded respect among both Turks and Kurds throughout Anatolia and was able to gain a following from them.¹⁹² Mustafa Kemal believed the Ottomans had signed under duress, but had nevertheless sold out the Turkish people.¹⁹³ To

many Kurds, this treaty represented success and a new beginning for the Kurdish people.¹⁹⁴ Not all Kurds felt this, and some viewed any dealings with foreign empires with suspicion. It was this sentiment that Kemal sought to exploit in his drive for control of Turkey's destiny.¹⁹⁵

Mustafa Kemal and the Republic of Turkey

The European powers had not foreseen the rise of the Republic of Turkey under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal. His surprising gains in the west against the Greeks as well as his movements in the east caused the British and the French to take notice.¹⁹⁶ Churchill argued early that by negotiating with Kemal, the British would be able to remove Turkey from the Soviet's orbit, and "re-create that 'Turkish barrier to Russian ambitions' that had been the traditional British policy during the Great Game."¹⁹⁷ Lloyd-George refused to entertain the idea; he did not feel that British resources could be stretched any further than they already were, and placed his confidence in the Greek effort to capture Anatolia.¹⁹⁸

Like the Soviet Union in relation to the Russian Empire, the Republic of Turkey sought to undo the dealings of the Ottoman Empire. The Treaty of Sèvres was never ratified, and Kemal wished to seek new terms of agreement. Kemal's military victories allowed for the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, which did away with "the hated regime of capitulations" that the Treaty of Sèvres stipulated.¹⁹⁹ This new treaty made no direct mention of the Kurds or Kurdistan.²⁰⁰

Mustafa Kemal was a man of singular vision for the future of his country. He sought to topple the Ottoman government and create a new secular Turkish republic, and he did just that.²⁰¹ Kemal forced the French to relinquish some of their claims, notably Cilicia, and the British feared a Turkish invasion of Mosul. The French made peace with Kemal and began supplying the Turks with arms.²⁰² Because the British had seized Mosul after the armistice, the Turks claimed the British illegally possessed Turkish territory.²⁰³ Kemal's gains in the east enabled him to turn his attention westward toward the Greeks and Italians.²⁰⁴ The Italians had a negligible force and did not pose a significant threat to the Turks.²⁰⁵ However, the Greeks had been advancing from Izmir toward Ankara, and had plans to capture Constantinople. The British Foreign Office viewed Greek ambitions as reckless and greedy, and they apparently were because the Greek army crumbled before the onslaught of Kemal's troops.²⁰⁶ He pressured the British and the Greeks into negotiations by surrounding their forces stationed at Chanak (Çanakkale).²⁰⁷ Kemal established the Republic of Turkey, moving the Turkish capital from Istanbul to the more central location of Ankara.²⁰⁸

The Foreign Office caught wind that Kemal was organizing Turks, Kurds, and Arabs against Armenian statehood, and was launching his campaign from Erzurum.²⁰⁹ This location is significant because it was to be part of the Armenian mandate, and Kemal was sending a clear message to the Allies that it would remain Turkish. The British Ambassador to Constantinople, Sir Horace Rumbold, relayed to Curzon that the Greeks were possibly encouraging Kurds, and that Kemal was unwilling to allow Kurdish autonomy or independence.²¹⁰ He also

reported a local insurrection in and around Dersim by the Alevi Kurds,²¹¹ a sect blending Islamic and Zoroastrian beliefs.²¹² These Kurds had not as yet identified with any nationalist elements, but their restlessness attracted the attention of Kemal and he would bide his time in dealing with them. The Kurds in general were becoming more agitated by the political developments around them. Ambassador Rumbold informed Curzon that Oriental Secretary Ryan had been visited by Emin Ali Bey and Jeladet Bey, both Kurdish nationalists. They sought British support for the Kurds and the Greeks, but Ryan had to disappoint them by stating that the British were to maintain neutrality in the matter.²¹³ Rumbold reported that despite Kemal's refusal to allow Kurdish independence, some Kurdish nationalists allegedly held a commission in Turkey's Great National Assembly to draw up plans for governance of Kurdistan.²¹⁴

Kemal was proactive in establishing Turkey as a regional power. He forced a renegotiation of peace with the Allies, knowing their weakness in enforcing the conditions of the Treaty of Sèvres.²¹⁵ The treaty was never ratified, and Kemal argued it was a treaty signed by a government under duress that no longer existed, and did not represent the Turkish people.²¹⁶ Kemal's triumphs enabled Turkey to renegotiate a peace that Kemal considered a disgrace, brought by an inept Ottoman government and by overbearing Europeans who wanted to humiliate and reduce the Turkish state to insignificance.²¹⁷ Kemal was able to capture much of Kurdistan before any provisions of Sèvres were put into practice.²¹⁸ His dream was to create a modern state based upon Turkish heritage, but the problem with Kemal's idea was that not all within Turkey had

Turkish heritage.²¹⁹ The Kurds recognized this and many began to resist Kemal's authority and his concept of Turkishness.²²⁰ The Turkish army had become a highly disciplined and capable fighting force that had already proven itself a challenge to Allied troops stationed on territory desired by the Turks.²²¹ As their position became untenable and the Turks threatened further conquests of formerly Ottoman territories, the British sought reconciliation with Turkey.²²² The previous promises that had been made to Ottoman minorities for self-determination quickly began to seem ill conceived.

The Aimless Drift of British Policy

Upon capturing Mesopotamia, the British had immediately set forth a policy for the Kurdish territories they controlled to be included in a future Kurdish state. The Treaty of Sèvres reaffirmed their commitment to establishing southern Kurdistan as a state that would be able to govern itself, though with British advisors. For the most part, the British felt that a friendly Kurdish state, along with Armenia serving as a buffer against the Caucasus, was acceptable and even desirable.²²³ It quickly became clear that the conditions of the Treaty of Sèvres were not going to be met by the Turks. The Ottomans who made the agreement were forced from power, and Kemal and his newly formed government forced a new negotiation process.²²⁴

Until the rise of Mustafa Kemal and the Republic of Turkey, the British had been readying southern Kurdistan for merger with Turkish-held northern Kurdistan.²²⁵ The changes that occurred so quickly caused the British confusion

over what to do with southern Kurdistan. The land around Kirkuk was supposed to be rich in petroleum, and the British Navy having recently switched from coal to oil power, desired its incorporation into British control.²²⁶ What remained to be seen was whether or not an armed conflict would erupt with the Turks seeking to reclaim the Mosul vilayet,²²⁷ which they considered to have been illegally seized by the British after the armistice.²²⁸ The British had indeed marched into a deserted Mosul days after the armistice.²²⁹ The British argued that word of the armistice had not reached their forwardly deployed troops, and that they, not the Republic of Turkey, had been governing Mosul since the end of the war.²³⁰

The British were not at odds with Kurdish nationalism and Kurdish cultural rights, but they realized the difficulties posed by a Turkey hostile to such things.²³¹ Not only did the Turks challenge the notion of Kurdish independence or autonomy, but they also opposed cultural rights granted to Kurds outside Turkish territory. The Turks were creating a nationalism of their own, which was based on civic loyalty and Turkish culture.²³² It was extended to the Kurds of Turkey, but it involved the Kurds abandoning anything Kurdish. The Turks felt the British were giving too much to the Kurds in Iraq, and that these freedoms would undermine Turkish sovereignty in Turkey's southeast.²³³

In 1921, the new Secretary of State for the Colonies, Winston Churchill, had at first been supportive of establishing an independent Kurdistan as a buffer against the Bolsheviks. The High Commissioner for Iraq, Sir Percy Cox, thought southern Kurdistan should be incorporated with Iraq, and that the Kurds should be used against the Turks.²³⁴ In March 1921, Churchill called a conference in

Cairo to clarify British policy in the Middle East, and to “arrest the rather aimless drift that had started in 1920 and continued to characterize British policy in early 1921.”²³⁵ The political committee for Kurdistan was comprised of Churchill as chair, Sir Percy Cox, Gertrude Bell, Colonel T.E. Lawrence, Major Hubert Young, and Major E.W.C. Noel.²³⁶ The committee was reviewing a memorandum by the Middle East Department, which stated that the British policy should be to support an independent or autonomous Kurdistan not attached to Iraq and to support Kurdish unity and nationality.²³⁷ All of the committee was agreed to these principals except Cox and his secretary, Bell.²³⁸ In June, Cox wrote Churchill that the decision made at Cairo assumed a friendly Turkey, which was no longer the case.²³⁹ He further argued that only a solid Arab nationalist front, along with Persia, would counter Turkish and Bolshevik aggression, but proposed using the Kurds as a distraction from Mosul against the Kemalists.²⁴⁰ In the middle of September, Cox wrote Churchill that the Turks were wary of Bolshevik intentions, and that the time to negotiate with Kemal was approaching. Negotiations started with King Faisal of Iraq.²⁴¹ The British policy supporting the Kurds was trumped by the British need for peace with Turkey.²⁴² Cox had succeeded in convincing Churchill to attach southern Kurdistan to Iraq.²⁴³

In the Mosul *vilayet*, two Kurdish leaders emerged, Sheikh Ahmed Barzani and Sheikh Mahmoud Barzinji.²⁴⁴ Mahmoud was far more charismatic than Ahmed, and was able to recruit followers outside of his tribe. This gained Mahmoud an audience with the British early on.²⁴⁵ Mahmoud's relationships with the British and with rival Kurds were tumultuous, though he commanded much

respect and held a lot of promise to lead an independent Kurdistan.²⁴⁶ Both Ahmed and Mahmoud clashed with the British, but the U.K. gave Mahmoud several opportunities to lead the Kurds and hold a cooperative relationship with the Arabs and British. Mahmoud drew conflict by demanding territorial expansion of his authority and the right to command a Kurdish army.²⁴⁷

The first experiment at Kurdish statehood came in 1918-1919, when the British allowed a Kurdish government in Sulaymaniyah to form. Mahmoud was the key Kurdish player in this government.²⁴⁸ The British saw Kurdish self-rule as a way to bring the Mosul *vilayet* under control. Mahmoud's government was dissolved in 1919 when the British decided the Kurds were too anti-British and did not need a government yet. Mahmoud led a revolt against the British, which was met with a swift response by the British Royal Air Force (RAF).²⁴⁹ When Mahmoud was captured, he reportedly recited Point Twelve of Wilson's Fourteen Points and had on him a Qur'an containing a Kurdish translation of the Anglo-French Declaration, which supported the Fourteen Points.²⁵⁰ Mahmoud was forced into exile, only to be welcomed back by the British for another opportunity at a Kurdish state in 1922.²⁵¹ Sulaymaniyah had been left as an undecided entity for this purpose (Figure 4.9). However, Mahmoud ran into troubles with the British once again.²⁵² Many, both within Kurdistan and the allied countries, viewed Mahmoud as the wrong leader for the Kurds. This was also the view held by U.S. President Wilson.²⁵³ However, Mahmoud had gained the allegiance of the Zanganah and Talabani tribes, and it was during this time that the enduring political rivalry between the Talabanis and Barzanis emerged.²⁵⁴ Winston

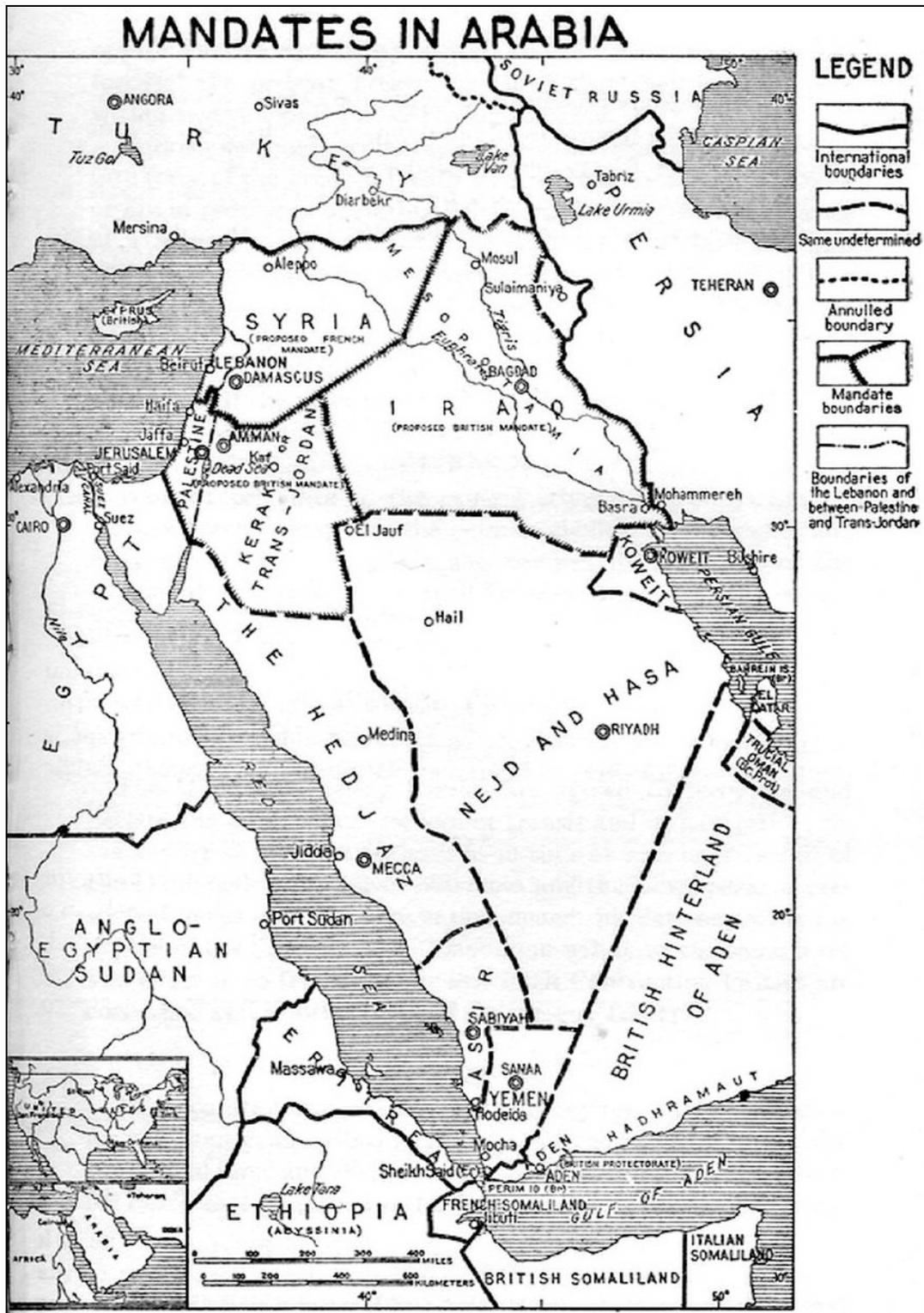


Figure 4.9: The undetermined status of Sulaymaniyah among planned mandates.
 Source: Allied and Associated Powers, (1914-1920). 1924. *The Treaties of Peace, 1919-1923*.
 Vol. 2. New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Churchill sought the creation of an independent Kurdistan to serve as a friendly buffer state between Turkey and Mesopotamia, but he was dissuaded from pursuing this.²⁵⁵ The U.K. opted to impose direct rule upon Kurdistan because of its instability and the threat the emerging Republic of Turkey was making to incite the Kurds there into rebellion. A sustained rebellion would have allowed for Turkey to reclaim the Mosul *vilayet*.²⁵⁶ British support for Mahmoud the second time “was simply for the purpose of preventing any strengthening of the Turkish position on the question of Mosul.”²⁵⁷ Mahmoud was ousted from leadership by the British after they caught him secretly dealing with the Turks.²⁵⁸

Treaty of Lausanne

The Treaty of Lausanne codified the new geopolitical alignment in the region by settling most of Turkey’s boundary disputes (Figure 4.10) and acknowledging the republic’s right to exist. The Turks had powerful friends in the Soviet Union, and by pursuing that relationship they were able to throw off the European yokes that had hurried the demise of the Ottoman Empire and sought to confine any future Turkish state. Given that no Kurdish or Armenian buffer state was created to abut the Caucasus, the British had to rethink their strategy in terms of countering a threat from the Heartland. The Kurds of Turkey were left without a hope for international recognition of an independent Kurdistan, or at least a mandate, when the Treaty of Lausanne was ratified. The Treaty of Sèvres had been a hollow promise made to the Kurds, and the nationalists among them felt betrayed. This perceived act of bad faith led Kurdish nationalists to clamor for special rights that were not forthcoming from Ankara.

The London Conference of March 16-19, 1922 was the beginning of direct negotiations between the British and the Turks, and the Armistice of Mudanya was signed on October 11, 1922.²⁵⁹ Mustafa Kemal had forced the hand of the Allies with his gains, and a new conference for peace took place at Lausanne, Switzerland beginning on November 21. Lord Curzon was the British official in charge of new peace negotiations between the Allies and the Republic of Turkey.²⁶⁰ It was through Curzon and the events at Lausanne that British policy toward Turkey and the Kurds began to be clarified. The new treaty made no mention of the Kurds or of Kurdistan, and the Turks sought to include the Kurds in their republic as reinvented "Turks."²⁶¹

Lord Curzon had at first found Kurdish statehood desirable because it would keep the Turks and the Bolsheviks at bay from British interests, but Arnold Wilson convinced him that the British should maintain southern Kurdistan for incorporation with Mesopotamia.²⁶² Curzon changed his mind out of fear that the Turks would continue their march into Mesopotamia, and he secretly became willing to transfer Mosul back to the Turks.²⁶³ Turkey had proven itself strong and the British and the French had already propped up the Arab-dominated governments in Iraq and Syria; therefore, it seemed only logical to continue on those paths from mandates to statehood.²⁶⁴ What brought Kurdistan's division was the rise of Turkey and its threat to British gains. The Kurds were set to be minorities in every country in which they resided, though some segments of the

Kurdish population were prepared to fight it out before submitting to these new regimes.²⁶⁵

Two major issues still remaining were the finalized border between Iraq and Turkey and the status of Mosul.²⁶⁶ Southern Kurdistan was still unresolved, apart from there was to be no independent Kurdistan. Discussions between Lord Curzon and Ismet Pasha, the chief Turkish negotiator, highlighted the debate over what was to become of Kurdistan under a new treaty. Ismet stated that the Turks felt no obligation to recognize the mandates, and that they desired a plebiscite for the Kurds.²⁶⁷ Ismet said the Kurds would receive equal representation in government, but Curzon doubted this.²⁶⁸ Ismet Pasha argued that Mosul was in Turkish possession when the armistice was signed at Mudros, and that Mosul was an integral part of Turkey.²⁶⁹ Curzon believed the Turks wished to exploit the oil question, and he noted that there were no Kurdish representatives from Mosul in the Turkish government.²⁷⁰ Furthermore, Curzon thought the Kurds would vote for independence in a plebiscite, while the Arabs would vote for an Arab state.²⁷¹

The future of the Assyrian minority in the region was left hanging in the balance by the indecisiveness of the British. They had not been granted a homeland under the Treaty of Sévres, and faced hostilities from surrounding populations, especially from the Kurds.²⁷² Since the treaty did not grant any special territorial provisions to the Assyrians, the British made plans to give them a special position in northern Iraq. British Air Staff Intelligence in Baghdad reported that Assyrian chiefs distrusted the British, and the chiefs believed the

British were willing to hand over Assyrian territories in Mosul to the Turks despite British denials.²⁷³ The Air Staff feared that the Assyrians would try to take the Mosul vilayet by force, and suspected French and Bolshevik propaganda and interference was motivating Assyrian reactions.²⁷⁴ These suspicions were not entirely without merit as there had been many Assyrian refugees in the Soviet Union exposed to Bolshevik influence.²⁷⁵ To resolve the precarious situation, the British Secretary of State for the Colonies, Victor Cavendish, recommended the High Commissioner for Iraq, Sir Percy Cox, resettle and accommodate the Assyrians.²⁷⁶ The Assyrians were to be resettled in Iraq,²⁷⁷ and offered land grants.²⁷⁸ A small ethnic conflict erupted when Assyrians killed several Muslims in Kirkuk.²⁷⁹ The Muslims retaliated, and killed innocent Christians they mistook for the offending Assyrians.²⁸⁰ These developments put the British on edge, and they sought Iraqi cooperation on Assyrian settlement and accommodation in hopes of preventing further bloodshed.²⁸¹

Rumors were circulating that the Turks were willing to offer the Kurds autonomy if Mosul was given to Turkey.²⁸² The Turks wanted Kurdish portions of Mosul, because of "anxieties caused by Kurdish agitation in Anatolia."²⁸³ The Turks were convinced that Britain and Iraq were fostering Kurdish nationalism in Turkey, and the Turks believed Sheikh Mahmud and Sayyid Taha were the chosen leaders of the instigation.²⁸⁴ The Turks kept up a psychological campaign over Mosul and its Kurdish population. Reports that Turkish troops were moving in an easterly direction, though not definitely against Iraq, were attempts to pressure the French in Syria and the British in Iraq to acquiesce to Turkish

demands.²⁸⁵ The Turks established forward operating bases in Turkish territory opposite Mosul.²⁸⁶ Tensions over Mosul were aggravated by Turkish activities along the border and in neighboring Syria, where the French were allowing Turkish troops to move on the Syrian portion of the Baghdad Railway to access otherwise inaccessible rebellious Kurdish areas in Turkey.²⁸⁷ The British intended to use the RAF in Syria if the Turks threatened Iraq.²⁸⁸ London was concerned that the Turks were seeking "reacquisition of territory inhabited by people of other than Turkish race."²⁸⁹

The British strategy for retaining Mosul involved granting Iraq independence.²⁹⁰ London sought unity of purpose with Baghdad to strengthen Iraq's claims to Mosul.²⁹¹ The British believed the Turks were seeking friendly relations with them, despite the contentious atmosphere of the Mosul negotiations.²⁹² The Turks finally brought up the oil issue in negotiations for Mosul. A Foreign Office memorandum noted that oil in Mosul was of great interest to the Turkish Petroleum Company, but had nothing to do with frontier negotiations.²⁹³ The British blamed Turkey's unwillingness to negotiate Mosul on the oil question.²⁹⁴

The Treaty of Lausanne, when ratified, would obligate Turkey to arbitration at the League of Nations.²⁹⁵ The Turks drove a hard bargain and proposed the Turkish frontier line as the southern boundary of Mosul. Since the negotiations were dealing with the boundaries of Mosul, not Turkey, London was infuriated with Ankara's inflexibility.²⁹⁶ The British offered justifications for Mosul's inclusion in Iraq. Included in these were that the Turks were a minority there and that

Mosul was geographically linked to Iraq rather than to Turkey. They further argued that if the Turks owned Mosul, Baghdad and Basra would be at Turkey's mercy for wheat. Furthermore, it was argued that winter makes communication between Mosul and Turkey nearly impossible.²⁹⁷ The Turks accused the Mosul Government of arming Christians for an offensive toward Van,²⁹⁸ and the British remained frustrated with the Turks at the negotiating table and on the ground.²⁹⁹ Because no agreement on Mosul's future had been reached with the Treaty of Lausanne, the final status of Mosul was to be left to the decision of the Council of the League of Nations.³⁰⁰

London accused the Turks of not complying with British demands for withdrawal from Iraq.³⁰¹ The Turkish press, reflecting the views of the Turkish government, was in favor of resisting British demands.³⁰² Turkish commanders claimed not to have been supplied with the correct boundary information by the Turkish government, thus border intrusions in Iraq by the Turks were frequent.³⁰³ Border incidents between British and Turkish forces heightened the already strained atmosphere of the frontier dispute.³⁰⁴ The Turks still wished to retain Mosul because they stated they did not want the Kurds divided.³⁰⁵ The more likely story was that they wanted all of Kurdistan, so they could control the Kurds without concern for international incidents.

The Treaty of Lausanne marked a shift away from the Wilsonian ideals of ethnic sovereignty represented in the Treaty of Sèvres. The new treaty aimed for regional stability over ideals, and embodies more realism in its purpose. Lausanne did not satisfy everyone, but it recognized the powers that would

endure rather than ethnic groups struggling, often among themselves, for statehood. One could conclude that the agreement reached at Lausanne was a triumph of realist policy. It lent itself to the conditions that were instead of those that were imagined in Paris years earlier. The period between the Treaty of Sèvres and the Treaty of Lausanne saw British policy change from supporting an independent Kurdistan to securing peace with Turkey by abandoning the idea of Kurdish self-determination.³⁰⁶

The new British policy in the region was based on air superiority. The RAF could be scrambled to deal with the Turks, as well as troublesome Kurds and others, in comparatively little time as opposed to the more traditional naval and ground forces.³⁰⁷ By securing peace with Turkey, the British began to shift the buffer against the Soviet Union from an independent Kurdistan or Armenia to the Republic of Turkey. The British wanted Mustafa Kemal's republic to become a bulwark against Soviet ambitions.³⁰⁸ The Kurds were divided between a desire for independence or to be left alone by their host governments. Many of those desiring independence from Turkey fought two violent conflicts during the period from 1925 to 1931.

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³ Bidwell, Robin, ed. 1985. Doc. 128 11675/47(i) Memorandum A. Ryan 29 Dec. 1919 Bolshevism in the Middle East, *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print. Vol. 1 The End of the War, 1918-1920, Pt. II Series B. Turkey, Iran, and the Middle East*. Frederick, Maryland: University Publications of America, 221.

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⁵ Bidwell, Robin, ed. 1985. Doc. 160 11675/127(i) Memorandum A. Ryan 24 Feb. 1920 Kurdish Question, *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print. Vol. 1 The End of the War, 1918-1920, Pt. II Series B. Turkey, Iran, and the Middle East*. Frederick, Maryland: University Publications of America, 281-282.

⁶ Bidwell, Robin, ed. 1985. Doc. 160 11675/127(i) Memorandum A. Ryan 24 Feb. 1920 Kurdish Question, *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print. Vol. 1 The End of the War, 1918-1920, Pt. II Series B. Turkey, Iran, and the Middle East*. Frederick, Maryland: University Publications of America, 281-282.

⁷ Bidwell, Robin, ed. 1985. Doc. 160 11675/127(i) Memorandum A. Ryan 24 Feb. 1920 Kurdish Question, *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print. Vol. 1 The End of the War, 1918-1920, Pt. II Series B. Turkey, Iran, and the Middle East*. Frederick, Maryland: University Publications of America, 281-282.

⁸ Bidwell, Robin, ed. 1985. Doc. 160 11675/127(i) Memorandum A. Ryan 24 Feb. 1920 Kurdish Question, *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print. Vol. 1 The End of the War, 1918-1920, Pt. II Series B. Turkey, Iran, and the Middle East*. Frederick, Maryland: University Publications of America, 281-282.

⁹ Bidwell, Robin, ed. 1985. Doc. 160 11675/127(i) Memorandum A. Ryan 24 Feb. 1920 Kurdish Question, *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print. Vol. 1 The End of the War, 1918-1920, Pt. II Series B. Turkey, Iran, and the Middle East*. Frederick, Maryland: University Publications of America, 281.

¹⁰ Bidwell, Robin, ed. 1985. Doc. 160 11675/127(i) Memorandum A. Ryan 24 Feb. 1920 Kurdish Question, *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print. Vol. 1 The End of the War, 1918-1920, Pt. II Series B. Turkey, Iran, and the Middle East*. Frederick, Maryland: University Publications of America, 281-282.

¹¹ Bidwell, Robin, ed. 1985. Doc. 160 11675/127(i) Memorandum A. Ryan 24 Feb. 1920 Kurdish Question, *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print. Vol. 1 The End of the War, 1918-1920, Pt. II Series B. Turkey, Iran, and the Middle East*. Frederick, Maryland: University Publications of America, 281.

¹² Bidwell, Robin, ed. 1985. Doc. 160 11675/127(i) Memorandum A. Ryan 24 Feb. 1920 Kurdish Question, *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print. Vol. 1 The End of the War, 1918-1920, Pt. II Series B. Turkey, Iran, and the Middle East*. Frederick, Maryland: University Publications of America, 281-282.

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CHAPTER 5

REBELLION AND UNCERTAINTY

The period from 1925 to 1931 was characterized by two large Kurdish insurrections in Turkey, and by tension over the status of the mostly Kurdish Mosul vilayet in Iraq. The British and the Turks sought to normalize their relations, but British and Turkish policies toward the Kurds were vastly different and presented difficulties in reaching agreement. The Turks sought to dismantle any vestige of Kurdish identity in order to supplant it with a more secular, modernist Turkish identity in the name of progress. To the Turkish government, Turkey was not a land comprised of different nations, as it had been with the Ottoman Empire, but a country of one civic identity. In Iraq, the British had encouraged multinational character, including Kurdish identity, to a point. The British were sensitive to the Turkish perception and response to Kurdish national expression in Iraq. Both the British and the Turks became concerned about Soviet ambitions in the region, and their perceptions of Moscow influenced their policies toward the Kurds and each other. It was within this geopolitical context that Kurdish nationalism and territoriality developed, and from which violent action sprang. The idea of Kurdistan as a land for the Kurds became a symbol for the Kurdish rebellions that ensued, and the rebellions in turn became grounds for mythmaking to inspire future Kurdish movements. By this time, the Treaty of

Sèvres and its provision for the Kurds had become well known throughout Kurdistan, but London's commitment to the ideas had died with the rise of Ankara's power.

In Iraq, the British were securing the new state's borders and preparing the monarchy there for the end of the British mandate and entry into the arena of independent states in the League of Nations. This was challenging because of Turkey's ambitions in the largely non-Arab Mosul province. The Kurds there presented a challenge to Baghdad's authority, but also to Ankara's authority in Turkey's Kurdish areas. The Turks feared they would be hurt by Iraqi Kurdish nationalist efforts, and acted to counter such movements in Turkey in addition to threatening Iraq. However, diplomacy triumphed between Iraq and Turkey and tensions eased. Despite the fact that possessing Mosul would have given Ankara a relatively free hand to confront Kurdish nationalism in the region, Turkey ultimately respected the League of Nations' decision to award Mosul to Iraq.

London's overall strategy was to leave Iraq's administration to a pro-British monarchy under King Faisal, while reconciling differences with Turkey to form a barrier to Soviet ambitions in the Rimland. The British had already made clear that they would not support a Kurdish state in the region when they signed the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. Other outstanding disputes were resolved, and led Ankara not to desert their benefactors in Moscow, but to distance themselves from the Soviet Union enough to serve as a friendly bulwark against the gateway through the Caucasus between the Heartland and Rimland. This was an ideal arrangement for the British, because the Turks did not represent a hostile

bulwark, merely a potential one, thus ensuring cordial but firm relations with Moscow.

In Turkey, two different movements combined to revolt against Ankara's authority through Sheikh Said and Azadi: an anti-Turkish pan-Islamic Kurdish movement and a secular Kurdish independence movement. Kurdish nationalism and territoriality reached new heights years later with the Khoybun rebellion around Mount Ararat. This rebellion was the most sophisticated to date, with support coming both from the Kurdish diaspora and from Armenian revolutionaries seeking to spite the Turks. The Khoybun introduced exclusively nationalist rhetoric and symbolism into the incitement as opposed to the tried method of declaring jihad to inspire the masses. Ankara gained difficult ground when it crushed the Mount Ararat rebellion, and planned to expand its gains in the next decade.

The Rebellion of Sheikh Said and Azadi

By 1925 Mustafa Kemal had made clear he was not going to tolerate an independent or autonomous Kurdistan. Previously, Kemal had given Turkey's Kurds some leeway for cultural expression because of his need for Kurdish cooperation over the uncertainty of Turkey's future.¹ After the Treaty of Sèvres was cast aside in favor of the agreement reached at Lausanne, the sentiment among many Kurds in southeastern Turkey became ideal for conflict with Ankara.² This, coupled with Mustafa Kemal's radical measures for a new secular Turkish republic, brought a wave of Kurdish nationalism to the fore. Sheikh Said

took advantage of the situation to push his movement for an independent Kurdistan and began organizing Kurds in southeastern Turkey for a major revolt.

The 1925 Kurdish rebellion, commonly referred to as the Sheikh Said rebellion, was the tipping point for Kurdish nationalist struggle in Turkey during the interwar period.³ The groundwork for this rebellion had been in the works for several years. An organization known as Azadi (Freedom), led by former Hamidiye cavalymen and Kurdish officers in the Ottoman army, had formed in 1921 for the purpose of establishing an independent Kurdistan.⁴ Sheikh Said, a religious elder from Piran, and the Azadi organization had common purpose, and they established contact to combine efforts. Azadi intended to launch a large rebellion throughout southeastern Turkey on March 21, 1925.⁵ However, Sheikh Said launched his revolt against the Turkish government prematurely on February 13.⁶

Sheikh Said was reported to have "proclaimed that he has a devine [sic] mission to establish Moslem religious law (the Shari) in Turkey."⁷ He appealed to religion in the face of emerging secularism emanating from Ankara allegedly stating, "Islam has been the sole bond of union between Turk and Kurd, and that the Turks having broken it, the Kurds must now ensure their own future."⁸ This was his effort to gain legions of followers, whether they understood nationalism or not. Martial law was declared in the southeastern vilayets of Mardin, Hakkari, Bitlis, and Van, as well as in 2 kazas (districts) of Erzerum.⁹ Ismet Pasha felt martial law should be more widely applied out of fear that Islamists would rally to the cause, but the Turkish government doubted there was a following outside of

the Kurdish community.¹⁰ The Turkish press alleged that the British were behind the Kurdish revolt, but behind the scenes Turkish officials assured the British Foreign Office that they did not believe the press.¹¹ The atmosphere of the rebellion was saturated with rumors and suspicions.

Kurdistan's rugged terrain and lack of infrastructure prohibited Turkish forces from rapidly deploying soldiers in the southeast. The problem was solved when Ankara negotiated with the French in Damascus to allow the transport of Turkish troops along a portion of the Baghdad Railroad to reenter Turkey from Syria.¹² The British gathered that the French were "suspicious that revolt is imaginary or exaggerated,"¹³ indicating that the French perceived the Turks to be staging theatrics in order to get their troops into the southeast. Nevertheless, the French allowed the Turks to move into the Taurus Mountains via Syria.¹⁴ The conflict was real and the movement was "religious, national and anti-republican," but to the British it remained to be seen how much each of these factors influenced the situation.¹⁵ Many stories were floating about, and British fears of renewed conflict with the Turks were stoked when the German ambassador to Turkey reported a rumor that Turkish troops used against the Kurdish revolt might be used against Iraq.¹⁶ This rumor may have been spread to the Germans by the Turks to psychologically improve their position with regard to Mosul.

Sheikh Said was captured along with other sheikhs and followers on March 15 and promptly taken to be tried in Diyarbakır.¹⁷ Days later, Turkish press reported that British involvement was proven by documents found on Kurdish detainees, "but the accusations, when they have any precision, seem to relate to

the period of 1919 and 1920, when ideas of Kurdish autonomy were very much to the fore."¹⁸ Turkish reports of Sheikh Said's capture alleged that he was taken with large quantities of gold in saddlebags and documents linking him to British authorities in Iraq.¹⁹ The Turks had not finished examining the documents, "but the extracts published so far do not incriminate anyone except the Kurds themselves."²⁰ By the middle of April, the Kurds lacked supplies to sustain their force against the better-equipped Turkish army, and would engage in guerilla warfare in the mountains where the Kurds had historically held the advantage.²¹

Prime Minister Ismet Pasha made Ankara's policy toward the Kurds clear while speaking to the Congress of Turk Ojaghi, the clubs that promoted Turkish culture throughout the country:

We are frankly Nationalist....and Nationalism is our only factor of cohesion. Before the Turkish majority other elements have no kind of influence. At any price, we must turkify the inhabitants of our land, and we will annihilate those who oppose Turks or 'le turquistes.' They say we lack solicitude for religious currents; we will crush all who rise before us to use religion as an instrument.²²

These comments of Ismet's left little doubt among the British, and likely among Kurds that read the speech, as to the direction the Turkish government would take in dealing with Kurdish grievances. This juncture marks the beginning of Turkey's plan to eliminate Kurdish identity in favor of making Turks of every citizen of the republic.²³

The Turkish press characterized Sheikh Said in the worst light possible by portraying him as a religious zealot, and an "uncouth, semi-idiotic individual, worthy only of ridicule."²⁴ He was made an example of in Turkey's case for the virtues of secularism and modernity. The trial of Sheikh Said and many of his conspirators resulted in his death sentence as well as those in his inner circle.²⁵

The informers among the defendants were acquitted, and lesser rebels were given prison and servitude as punishment.²⁶ The president of the tribunal acknowledged that those on trial were fighting for an independent Kurdistan.²⁷ These were comments that had they been made years later would have been censored. The use of the word Kurdistan became taboo, because it was perceived by Ankara to be at least a tacit acknowledgement of the geographical entity associated with the Kurds.

A period of silence fell over southeastern Turkey for the latter half of 1925, and precious little information was getting out. By the end of January 1926, it became evident that Turkish troops continued to suffer at the hands of the Kurds, and the Turkish government covered up news that the Kurds were still resisting. R.H. Hoare, the British counselor in Constantinople, observed, "There is little doubt that the Government will have to keep a firm hand on the Kurdish districts for a long time."²⁸ Hoare's observation proved correct. The organized insurrection led by Said was over, but that did not mean the nationalist ambitions for an independent Kurdistan had been crushed.

The Final Status of Mosul

In early 1925, the British and the Turks continued to dispute Mosul's final status, and the British feared the Turks would invade Iraq to reclaim the territory. Negotiations between the two did not resolve the dispute, and the issue went to the Council of the League of Nations for resolution.²⁹ The Turks proved stubborn in their efforts to regain the Mosul, citing the non-Arab parts of Iraq as integral parts of Turkey. Ankara's aim was to maintain control over the Kurds to prevent

an independent Kurdistan from emerging.³⁰ The Turks resented Britain's allowance of Kurdish freedoms in Iraq, fearing it would encourage Turkey's Kurds to seek similar rights that would undermine the new state and its Turkish identity.³¹ The Kurds of Mosul preferred British protection to that of the Turks, but some segments of the population still wanted independence or separation from the Arabs within Iraq.³² The Turkish government wanted to make proper "Turks" out of the Kurds, and continued to assert that the Kurds of Mosul wished to be part of the Turkish state.³³ Ankara viewed itself as obligated to obey the League of Nations and did not wish to destroy its already tense relations with the UK.³⁴

The oil issue in Mosul was never far away from discussions over the vilayet's future status. It was at this time that the large extent of the oil fields was becoming known. The British already controlled the Persian oil fields around Abadan, and had not thus far pursued exploitation of those in Mosul. Ankara may have perceived the British motivation to capture and retain Mosul was to gain rights to the petroleum resources beneath the vilayet's surface, and that if Ankara guaranteed those rights with the transfer of the land to Turkey the British would be satisfied.³⁵ London's position was that Turkey should not base its negotiations on assumptions that the British would "bargain away the rights of Irak, of which we were the trustees, in exchange for economic advantages to British subjects."³⁶ The Turkish press attempted to force the issue by reprinting anti-Iraq British press articles with the aim of leading the Turkish public to believe the British were not serious about pressing claims to Mosul.³⁷

The British Foreign Office thought that the Turks would likely be happy with a line tracing the Lesser Zab River as opposed to a boundary encompassing all of Kurdistan stating that the "Turks are concerned over the new form of their old minorities question,"³⁸ and "if, furthermore, the republic could incorporate within its frontiers all Southern Kurdistan, then it would be in the most favorable possible position for dealing freely and undisturbed with its Kurds."³⁹ The Turks would be unhappy with Iraqi Kurdish autonomy; therefore, Ankara would offer no voluntary settlement of Mosul's status. The British admired Ankara's desire for modernity and prosperity for Turkey, and understood that "Under the most favourable possible conditions there may have been just a chance that the Turks would succeed in Turkifying--perhaps even secularising--their Kurds, for the latter are a primitive race, and possess no strongly-marked culture of their own."⁴⁰ One of the dangers of Turkey's gaining Mosul was that if the vilayet became part of the republic, the city of Mosul would be eager to submit, but "Kirkuk would burst out in agitations, and that even further south unstable politicians would reinsure themselves by violent attacks on the mandate."⁴¹ Regardless of who controlled Mosul, Kurdish nationalism was going to present a challenge to that power.

Major H.I. Lloyd made the case for Mosul's inclusion in Iraq in his geographical study of Mosul in a 1926 *Geographical Journal* article, stating that it is "well known to all who have travelled in that area, the province of Mosul is an integral part of 'Iraq."⁴² Lloyd noted, "The Turkish government declared that the whole of Mosul province was Turkish in blood and sentiment, and if not Turkish was at any rate not Arab."⁴³ The disagreement between the Turks and the British

endured for the nine months after the ratification of the agreement at Lausanne, and as stipulated the issue went to the Council of the League of Nations.⁴⁴

The Brussels Line, or Brantling Line, (Figure 5.1) was established in October 1924 by a sub-commission appointed by the Council of the League of Nations after Turkey expelled Nestorian Christians from a disputed area along the border between Turkey and Iraq.⁴⁵ According to Lloyd, the Brussels Line "followed with minor modifications the old boundary of the Mosul vilayet."⁴⁶ This line was intended to be the status quo line between the two countries. The British feared Turkish gravitation toward the Soviets, and hoped for a League of Nations decision for something like the Brussels Line.⁴⁷

Turkish movements through Syria, though French forces accompanied the Turkish troops, continued to worry the British.⁴⁸ The British pressed the French administrators in Beirut for more information, and sought assurance that equal numbers of Turks would be headed westward.⁴⁹ The British Air Ministry was placed on alert should the Turks venture into Iraq. However, the Air Ministry did not believe a Turkish attack was imminent.⁵⁰

The Foreign Office's Eastern Department and its legal advisor provided a memorandum on the frontier dispute between Iraq and Turkey noting the importance of the Kurdish issue:

A second and more important consideration of internal politics is the question of Kurdistan. Kemal's policy is to assimilate the Kurdish population into the new state of Turkey. The Kurds are essential, both racially and militarily, as breeders of citizens and as defenders of the State. The policy of the Irak Government and of



Figure 5.1: The Turkish-Iraqi Border reconciled along the Brussels/Brantling Line with Mosul incorporated into Iraq. Source: Central Intelligence Agency. 2002. Eastern Turkey and Vicinity. Washington, DC.

His Majesty's Government, endorsed by the League Commission, is to plant the seeds of autonomy among the Iraqi Kurds. The inevitable result is that the Kurds over the Turkish border, always in a state of effervescence and at present openly rebellious, will be fortified in their resistance to the process of assimilation and sooner or later will claim their right to coalesce with their semi-independent brothers in Iraq. This will mean the loss of valuable population and territory to Turkey--a threat which must be averted at all costs. This realisation probably explains the Turkish suggestion of a guarantee of the Turkish and Iraqi frontiers, and it might go far to satisfy Kemal if we could in any way guarantee Turkey against this danger. But it is difficult to see how we can do so without betraying the unquestionable rights of the Kurds to national development and ultimate independence.⁵¹

The memorandum also noted that Kemal probably wished Turkey to be accepted into the realm of civilized states and sought a guarantee against Soviet dangers.⁵² This line of thinking became a guiding principal of the British approach to Kemal and efforts to urge Ankara from Moscow's orbit.

By October 1925, the Mosul dispute had become rhetorical, and the Turks were keenly aware of Russian activities within Turkey and the region.⁵³ Ankara desired its relations with Britain to be like the previous age when the two were allies. The Kurds were considered "a necessary evil" that Turkey and Iraq would have to deal with in their own ways since there would be no independent Kurdistan.⁵⁴ The Turks would have considered any Kurdish political unit, be it an independent state or autonomous region, as "a direct menace to the very heart of Turkish policy," and would see to it that no such entity would emerge.⁵⁵

The British government was concerned that Turks along the border would launch an incursion into Iraq to reclaim Mosul, but realized that Turkish border officials were trusted men who were not prone to adventures.⁵⁶ In late October 1925, rumors of a planned Turkish assault on Mosul were rampant,⁵⁷ yet the British believed that the Turkish force along the border was merely a bluff.⁵⁸ The Turks possibly felt that they could pressure the British in Iraq to fear renewed

conflict and relinquish Mosul to avoid any confrontation. This would have been a mistaken assumption on Ankara's part. In late November 1925, the British made clear to the Turks that there were no British plans for an autonomous Kurdistan, but Turks continued to believe there were.⁵⁹ British pressure over Mosul was causing problems for the upstart Turkish republic, and Ankara argued that "the possession of Mosul is essential for the policy of modernization in Turkey."⁶⁰ Much of the rhetoric emanating from Ankara began to settle, and a change in tone embodying an "atmosphere of détente" with the British on Mosul was evident in a speech by Ismet Pasha.⁶¹ Ankara appeared to resign to itself that the decision was in the League of Nations' hands, and that regardless of the outcome it would abide by that ruling.

The treaty between the UK and Iraq allowed for Iraq's eventual independence and League of Nations membership.⁶² An unsigned Foreign Office memorandum held a note of caution stating, "Regard must be paid to the desires expressed by the Kurds that officials of Kurdish race should be appointed for the administration of their country, the dispensation of justice and teaching in the schools, and that Kurdish should be the official language of all these services."⁶³ These measures were to be applied to the Kurdish dominated areas. The memorandum stated that the Kurdish language was not widely used prior to the war, while Persian, Turkish, and Arabic were. Everything was being done to develop its use, thus encouraging Iraqi Kurdish identity.⁶⁴ These were measures that troubled the Turkish government. Ankara feared a strong Kurdish identity in Iraq would spark Kurdish demands for similar rights in Turkey, thus undermining

Turkification.

When the League of Nations ruled in favor of Iraq's retention of Mosul, Ankara and the Turkish general public were dismayed. Indeed, Turkish officials were disappointed but relieved to be done with the Mosul question.⁶⁵ When the status of Mosul was referred to the Council of the League of Nations, the British in Iraq feared Turkey would become emboldened with its successes in Anatolia and force Britain's hand by invading and taking Mosul. The Turks had sent troops into southeastern Turkey via Syria to crush Sheikh Said's rebellion, and the British caught rumors that the troops would be used against Mosul next. Such was the atmosphere heading into negotiations at Geneva. The main problems Ankara had with London and Baghdad were the possibility of an autonomous Kurdistan in Mosul and the encouragement the British gave to Kurdish identity. To the Turkish government, these problems weighed heavier than controlling Mosul. However, this did not prevent Ankara from trying to win back the territory at the council. The leadership in Ankara was disappointed, but on the other hand, they understood the ruling and were content to leave it at that.

Turkey's Changing Kurdish Policy

Turkey was becoming a regional power once again, thanks in large part to Soviet assistance. Kemal's reforms gave Turkey a more modern, westernized outlook. As such, Turkey's position as a potential bulwark against the Soviet Union became recognized by the British, and was to be exploited to such an end. Ankara attempted to win over the Kurds by offering development in the southeast. The government considered all citizens of Turkey to be Turks, but this

designation ignored cultural differences. Many Kurds that had been sent to western Turkey following Sheikh Said's rebellion were allowed to return to the east as an intended sign of good will from the government in Ankara. These Kurds were not from notable families and posed no threat to the state. In another effort to incorporate Kurds into Turkish society, Ankara granted amnesty to all Kurds provided they submit to the state.

In early December 1927, Turkey's new inspector-general of the eastern vilayets gained expanded powers including control of the gendarmerie and the military.⁶⁶ The inspector-general's area of responsibility included El Aziz (Kharput), Urfa, Bitlis, Hekkiari, Sirt, Diarbekir, Mardin, and Van as one province.⁶⁷ A new law allowed Kurds that behaved well after being transferred to the west to return home to the east.⁶⁸ In January 1928, Ankara released the names of some 781 Kurds who could return east with their families at the behest of the Popular Party.⁶⁹ Many outside government believed conciliation would not stand a chance as the Kurds were greatly embittered.⁷⁰

In late March 1928, the British Consulate in Trabizond reported that returning Kurds passing through the city were commoners, not leading families.⁷¹ Thus, these Kurds posed no threat to Ankara's writ in the southeast. Some Kurds were unable to continue journey for want of resources, which Ankara had to provide before they could continue.⁷² In early April, Kurds were returning from Sheikh Said's rebellion through what appeared to be a change of policy toward pacification by Ankara.⁷³ The British believed most Kurds returning were to be individuals of no consequence to Turkish writ in the east.⁷⁴ There was no

indication that this policy was working, or would be able to work. The Inspector-General at Mardin allegedly was laying plans for the development in the east.⁷⁵ In May, Ankara instated another new law to grant amnesty to Kurds, in which those wishing to take advantage of this seeming change had three months to submit themselves to authorities.⁷⁶ By late June, it had become clear that the amnesty program was not a great success, and most Kurds transferred west had not returned. A proclamation by Ibrahim Tali, Turkey's Inspector-General of the Eastern Vilayets, offered "the surprising candour to admit in such a document that any backsliding in the future on the part of the "amnestied" will meet with a punishment corresponding with the magnitude of the offence which is now being pardoned."⁷⁷ In August, the Turkish press stated that both Sheikh Abdurahim and Sheikh Mehdi, brothers to Sheikh Said, had been pardoned and allowed to return, and that Ibrahim Tali "expressed himself as completely satisfied with the Kurdish policy of Iraq" to the Iraq Chargé d'Affairs,⁷⁸ thus pushing Turkey toward improved relations with Iraq.

In early November 1928, Turkish press accounts indicated that Ankara's Kurdish policy was successful.⁷⁹ More Kurds were returning from temporary exile in Iraq. Among these Kurds it was again reported, perhaps for emphasis, that the sons of Sheikh Said, the brother of Sayid Taha, and other notables returned to submit to authorities.⁸⁰ Construction projects, particularly roads, were ongoing in Turkey's southeast as part of Kemal's plan for development there.⁸¹ There were difficulties getting doctors and teachers for Kurdish areas, as the area remained volatile.⁸² Ankara's new policy toward the Kurds aimed to divorce the Kurds from

their Kurdish identity and the identity's association with the concept of Kurdistan in favor of a new Turkish identity associated with Anatolia and the Republic of Turkey. Turkish efforts to recreate the Kurds as Turks extended from legal measures and from Turkish ojak, or cultural clubs, set up throughout Turkey. Kurds relocated to western Turkey often found a more prosperous situation than in southeastern Turkey, and opted to remain in the west adopting a new Turkish identity, which suited Ankara in its push to reinvigorate the country through Turkish nationalism. A change in policy came when Turkish officials began denying the existence of Kurds in Turkey, citing a Turanian origin for Anatolia's inhabitants.

Rumors of Intrigue and Renewal of the Great Game

The British viewed Turkey and Persia as a buffer against the Russian Empire when the Great Game began in earnest during the late 1820s.⁸³ One hundred years later, London still perceived the two to be important against aggression toward India from the Heartland. The British recognized the importance of Turkey's position between the Russians in the north and Western powers in the south.⁸⁴ The buffer zone the British imagined Kurdistan or Armenia filling vanished, leaving only Turkey, then receiving aid from the Soviet Union. The relationship between Ankara and Moscow disturbed the British, who feared the rise of the Soviet Union as a new Heartland power. However, the British discovered that Ankara had become friendly with Moscow because Turkey had no other ally and no financial or material support from other countries. The Turks were suspicious of Soviet intentions and were willing to distance themselves from

Moscow if positive relations were established with the British and other former enemies.

To the British perception, the Persians seemed more likely to assist the Turks than to assist the Iraqis with the Kurds.⁸⁵ According to one British observer, the Persians seemed to be helping the Kurds of Iraq.⁸⁶ The Persians were concerned over the status of Mosul, and they wanted to know how to shape their future plans with regard to who would control the territory.⁸⁷

In late August 1925, Sheikh Said's son, Ali Irza, visited the British consulate in Tabriz to request passage to Baghdad to discuss with the British the establishment of "an independent Kurdish State."⁸⁸ Ali Irza stated that the Kurds were beaten by better-armed Turks in the last revolt, and sought British help and protection for Kurdish nationalism, but he did not believe the French would favor it.⁸⁹ The consul's assistant, Mirza Ali Khan, thought Ali Irza may have been smoking opium, and suggested the whole thing may have been a "feeling out" of the British by Bolsheviks or Persians.⁹⁰ Ali Irza was bold in asserting, "that whether or not the desired help would be forthcoming, the Kurds intended to continue the fight for their national independence, led by their sheikhs, and by his family and himself."⁹¹

In September, the Turkish press was reporting on British intrigues, which the press argued threatened Persia via its Kurds.⁹² This was an attempt by Ankara to get Tehran on its side against the British. In early October, the Turkish embassy in London let the British know they were prepared to fight if necessary. The British believed Turkey planned to ally with the Soviet Union, and that the

Soviets wanted the Turks at war with the British.⁹³ However, London required more definite information on Russian intentions and actions than mere rumors.⁹⁴

Another turn of events came in September 1927, when the Turkish press hinted that the Turco-Russian Treaty of Friendship of 1921 might not be renewed, which appeared to contradict previous messages of positive Turkish-Soviet relations.⁹⁵ Turkish press stories turned their attention to Bolshevik agents in Turkey and police investigations associated with the agents' activities.⁹⁶ In late November, the British gained more concrete information that the Turkish police were arresting communists. Investigations revealed that Soviets were working with foreign workers in Turkey, mostly Hungarians.⁹⁷ All the while, Ankara publicly stated that they desired good relations with Moscow, but wanted no communism in Turkey.⁹⁸ Despite this, the Soviet Union was still Turkey's main ally, and any wrong step by the British could undo London's efforts to move Ankara from Moscow's orbit.

In September 1928, Russia and Turkey renewed a reciprocal exports and imports agreement as a sign of continuing economic ties.⁹⁹ However, tensions ran high between Ankara and Moscow, and the Turks responded to Turkish property confiscations in the Soviet Union by confiscating Soviet property in Trebizond.¹⁰⁰ Turkish authorities made more arrests of communists or those suspected of such.¹⁰¹ The façade of good Turkish-Soviet relations was beginning to crack, and presented an opportunity for the British.

By the middle of December, the British Foreign Office had noticed that "Russian influence in Turkey has been declining slowly but steadily since the

settlement of the Mosul question in the summer of 1926," and advised that "A step tending towards the consolidation of Russia's neighbours, either internally or in their mutual relations, should proportionally contribute towards weakening the power of Russia for intrigue and intimidation in this domain."¹⁰² The British perceived that when the Turks said they loved Russia, they actually feared it, remembering how they fared during the days of the Russian Empire.¹⁰³ The Turks were delighted to be friends with the Soviet Union since "The bullying of the Tsars is not forgotten."¹⁰⁴ Despite appearances, Ankara was being pragmatic with its relations with Moscow. The Turks had only the Soviet Union willing to support their reemergence, both through material and moral means, following World War I, and until the situation changed to where Turkey was accepted among states the Turks would keep to the partnership.¹⁰⁵ To the Turkish public the Turkish-Soviet relationship was thought to be "a kind of vassalage,"¹⁰⁶ and the Turks were "uneasy about the strength of Russian influence in North-Western Persia, where they have affinities with most of the population, or where the Kurds may be used to make the Kurds on the Turkish side of the frontier disaffected."¹⁰⁷ The relationship was one of convenience and momentary necessity that could be changed with geopolitical shifts in the region.

The British perceived that the Soviets were trying to cause trouble between Turkey and Persia,¹⁰⁸ perhaps to reassert the deteriorating relationship between Moscow and Ankara. In August 1930, the Russian newspaper *Izvestiya* published a story in Moscow accusing the British, singling out T.E. Lawrence, of inciting Turkey's Kurdish rebellions. The article went on to state:

The aim of the rebellion -- the independence of the Kurds -- coincides with the

interests of the English Imperialists, who dream of forming a strategic point in this region against the U.S.S.R. The suppression of this rebellion has cost the Turks very dear. It is intended by this means to weaken the Turkish economic situation in such a manner that she will be more dependent on the offer of England of financial assistance. By this means, thanks to the revolt of the Kurds, it was possible to kill two birds with one stone. The second advantage was the chance of disturbing the relations between Turkey and Persia.¹⁰⁹

The article concluded that the Kurdish conflict in Turkey was intended by the British as a diversion, "and that the principal object is the preparation for a war with the Soviet Union, for which purpose her enemies are ensuring for themselves a suitable strategic position."¹¹⁰

By the middle of March 1931, the Soviets and the Turks announced a new commercial treaty and supplementary naval protocol between them.¹¹¹ The agreement railed against "Imperialist States" preparing a new world war against the Soviet Union.¹¹² The Russo-Turkish Treaty of Commerce and Navigation was signed on March 16, 1931, and represented the balance the two states struck with each other despite a decline in political ties.¹¹³ The Turkish press seemed pleased with the treaty.¹¹⁴

The British perceived the Soviet Union to be reigniting the Great Game by extending its influence to Turkey and among populations in Iraq and Persia. This frightened the British because such influence could have cut off India from the link the British had built from the Mediterranean. The British believed that the Soviet Union, like the Russian Empire, sought warm water ports and friendly neighbors to counter British influence. Indeed, the British move to connect India with Europe was an early form of containment against Soviet, or any other country's ambitions in the Middle East or South Asia.

Improved Relations Between Turkey and Iraq

Ankara and Baghdad sought good relations with each other, thus aiming to marginalize Kurdish nationalist efforts to drive a wedge between them. The Turks had been concerned about how the British were handling the Kurds in Iraq, and felt the British were giving Iraqi Kurds too many cultural rights such as Kurdish language education.¹¹⁵ They feared this would invite Kurds in Turkey to seek the same treatment, which was not forthcoming from Ankara.¹¹⁶ Ankara was still uneasy over the Kurdish situation in October 1925.¹¹⁷ The Dersim Kurds stood down from revolt, but the Turks attempted a precautionary removal of the Dersim Kurds from power lest rebellion erupted again on a grander scale.¹¹⁸

Autonomy and cultural rights granted to Iraqi Kurds worried the Turkish government, but the British were committed to this path. The British had been concerned that the Turks would still move on Mosul, and made plans to blockade the Dardanelles in the event of war.¹¹⁹ After the November decision by the Permanent Court of International Justice to bind Ankara and London to the League of Nations ruling on the final status of Mosul, many powers thought Turkey might defy the move. This was especially a concern after Turks signed a Treaty of Neutrality and Friendship with the Soviet Union in December.¹²⁰

The British position was to be made clear to the Turks that there was “no idea in this of creating anything in the nature of an autonomous Kurdish State for the Kurdish districts of Irak or of reviving the policy contemplated in the Treaty of Sèvres.”¹²¹ A thawing of relations came in April 1926, when bilateral talks reopened between the British and the Turks, and led to an agreement in which

Turkey would receive ten percent of oil royalties from the Mosul oilfields for a period of 25 years.¹²² This was an opening move by the British to bring the Turks into their orbit and away from the Soviets'.

As late as December 1928, the British felt that if they withdrew, Iraq would collapse or cling to a small territory along the Tigris from Samarra to Kut.¹²³ The British Administrator of Iraq, Sir Henry Dobbs asserted, "The strength of the administration rests almost solely on the knowledge of British support and control and on the fear inspired by British aeroplanes and armoured cars in the plains and by the Assyrian Levies helped by British aeroplanes in the Kurdish hills."¹²⁴ Dobbs went on to detail his ideas for how the British should deal with the Kurdish situation in Iraq:

The question of the maintainance of a special regime in the Kurdish districts needs no long discussion. It is a clear obligation towards the League of Nations on the part of both the British and Iraq Governments, and no other regime would abate the traditional dislike of the Kurd for the Arab and secure the retention of the Kurdish tracts in Iraq. Even Turkey and Persia, which had at first hoped to suppress the Kurdish spirit by force, have now been compelled to adopt much the same policy as has been followed in Iraq. If the Kurdish tracts were to get out of hand, the Kurds of the foothills would harry all the northern plains and the main line of communications through Kirkuk and Arbil to Mosul would become untenable. The Arab politicians, however, believe that they could hold the Kurdish hills by their own force, and they have greatly disliked my insistence on the rule that officials in the Kurdish districts shall, where possible, be Kurds. I fear that, if Arab conceit were ever given its head, South Kurdistan would be lost to them for ever, and a grave blow would be struck at the security and prosperity of Iraq. The oil industry, with all its promise, would certainly become impracticable.¹²⁵

Large numbers of Kurds had been deported to western Turkey over a period of two years. Ankara was likely moving Kurds to the Konya plain hoping to settle them into peaceful agrarian lives. They claimed there was calm in the east.¹²⁶

In late March 1928, Ankara became concerned with what they called brigands who were trying to incite ignorant Kurdish tribesmen and villagers into uprising in Iraq.¹²⁷ The threat of a Kurdish rebellion in Iraq appeared to the Turks as though it might sweep northward. In May 1928, the British position on the handling of border incidents was stated as a problem to be solved by border authorities instead of through diplomats, thus reducing distractions for high-level diplomatic interactions.¹²⁸ Leo Amery, Secretary of State for the Colonies, noted the difficulties of holding Iraq together in the face of an assault from within or without stating:

Iraq is still scarcely more than a geographical expression. The different races which inhabit the country have not yet been welded into a single Iraqi nation. A Kurd is still primarily a Kurd and only secondarily (if at all to his own mind) an Iraqi.¹²⁹

Amery understood the difficulties rising from the newly artificial boundaries and identity of Iraq. The formation of an Iraqi identity that trumped all other identities would be a troublesome project Baghdad would struggle with into the twenty-first century.

King Faisal was suspicious of the Kurds and of British support for them. The British wanted to remind him of his obligations to the Kurds and that the British were seeing that those commitments were met.¹³⁰ Despite Turkish assertions to the contrary, the British were also trying to prevent Iraq from becoming a base for Kurdish nationalism. In February 1929, all British passport officers were distributed "a special list of Kurdo-Armenian Nationalists to whom visas for Iraq should be refused."¹³¹ By September 1929, the British were prepared to support Iraq for League of Nations candidacy in 1932.¹³²

Neighborly relations had not been quick in coming for the states of Turkey and Iraq. Animosity lingering from the demise of the Ottoman Empire, especially regarding Mosul, still held some sway. However, the governments in Ankara and Baghdad, as well as London, knew they would have to work together economically, politically, and socially. The Kurdish issue was a stumbling block for the governments. Neither Iraq nor Turkey wished to see an independent Kurdistan rise between them. Both governments sought Kurdish integration into their national societies, though they took very different approaches.

The Khoybun and the Mount Ararat Rebellion

The late 1920s witnessed a culmination of the Kurdish nationalist efforts of previous years. Kurdish nationalist activities had continued to simmer after Sheikh Said's rebellion was crushed with small clashes persisting from 1925 through early 1927 in southeastern Turkey.¹³³ An organization called Khoybun (Independence) became the beacon for united Kurdish nationalism. According to Izady, "the earliest Kurdish political party in the modern sense is the Khoybun, established by Kurdish aristocrats and intellectuals in Paris in 1918," and "included tribal leaders, and some descendents of the old Kurdish princely houses."¹³⁴ The Khoybun merged various Kurdish organizations under its banner with Jaladat Badr Khan as its president.¹³⁵ The Badr Khan family had long been involved in Kurdish intellectual circles from the Ottoman Empire to Egypt to Europe.¹³⁶ For years the family ran a newspaper known as *Kurdistan*, which was distributed among the same intellectual circles.¹³⁷

In August 1927, the Khoybun, under the guise of the Kurdish National Congress, met at Bhamdoun, Lebanon, in the mountains east of Beirut to proclaim a Kurdish government in exile and present a united Kurdish nationalist force in the region.¹³⁸ The Khoybun established its headquarters at a forward operating location of Aleppo, Syria, where there was a large presence of Kurdish and Armenian refugees.¹³⁹ The organization opened offices in Paris, London, and Detroit.¹⁴⁰ This was likely to raise funds among Kurds in those cities for operations against Turkey. The Khoybun also opened clandestine offices in Iraq, Syria, and Turkey;¹⁴¹ likely seeking a broad support base aimed at Kurdish independence in formerly Ottoman Kurdish lands. However, the Khoybun's leadership understood it was not wise to anger Persia, Iraq, or Syria with its moves against Turkey.

The Khoybun emerged as an organization no longer of Kurdish exile elites, but of tribesmen, urbanites, and seasoned rebels as well.¹⁴² The Khoybun invoked the territorial image of Kurdish land, seeking to drive the Turks from Kurdistan.¹⁴³ The organization had to strike a delicate balance in maintaining friendly relations with Persia, Iraq, and Syria – all countries with Kurds who might seek independence.¹⁴⁴ Two main paths for Kurdish nationalism would exist if the Khoybun won independence for Kurds in Turkey. The movement would either expand its efforts to Persia, Iraq, and Syria, or it would take a diplomatic approach seeking cooperation for an independent Kurdistan through the framework of the League of Nations. The latter path was likely what the Khoybun sought. By presenting a unified Kurdish movement to the international

community, the Khoybun would make its case for Kurdish independence by pointing to its victory over the Turks and to the unfulfilled promise for Kurdish independence outlined in the Treaty of Sèvres. The Khoybun's partnership with the Armenian Dashnak may have reassured the British of Kurdish intentions regarding the Soviet Union. If the British were worried about Soviet influence in the Khoybun, the Kurds would have noted the Dashnak's anti-communist sentiment and the fact that the organization had been banned from the Soviet Union.¹⁴⁵ Despite their distrust of Bolsheviks, the Khoybun did accept aid from the International Minority Movement based out of Odessa.¹⁴⁶

Khoybun efforts began in earnest in 1928, when the organization declared the region around Mount Ararat (Figure 5.2) to be an independent Kurdish republic.¹⁴⁷ The Khoybun established a government, a military, and equipped itself for its coming struggle against Ankara.¹⁴⁸ Flags were hoisted above Kurdish held areas in an effort to create a rallying symbol for Kurds involved and those who would be inspired in the future.¹⁴⁹

The first signs of trouble in Turkey's east appeared when Turkish-Persian frontier negotiations were interrupted by a new Kurdish revolt in February 1929:

The report is to the effect that at Ari Dagh, in the Hekkiari Vilayet, 5000 Kurds have risen against the Government and have wiped out a battalion of troops which was sent against them. This disaster is said to have decided the Turkish Government to deal energetically with the rising in the spring. But any action against the Kurds of Hekkiari may have repercussions outside the frontiers of Turkey, and the Government is therefore anxious to settle the frontier dispute with Persia during the next few months.¹⁵⁰

Since Shiekh Said's revolt in 1925, Kurdish nationalists had become restless. The Kurds rose in revolt near the end of February, and the Turks were "afraid of collaboration by Russian Armenians and Persian Kurds."¹⁵¹ Because of these



Figure 5.2: The Turkish-Persian border bisecting Mount Ararat. Source: Perkins, Reverend Justin. 1843. "Portions of Turkey and Persia" in *A Residence of Eight Years in Persia, Among the Nestorians; with Notices of the Muhammedans*. Andover, United Kingdom: Allen, Morrill and Wardwell.

fears, Ankara attempted a rapprochement with the Kurds, part of which involved amnesty for past transgressions against the republic.¹⁵² The Khoybun used the time to better prepare itself for the coming conflict, while accusing Ankara of trickery.¹⁵³

Counted among the Kurdish nationalists were Ibrahim Bey (Celali chief), Halis Bey (son of Sheikh Abdul Necit), Selahettin (son of Shiekh Said), and the sons of K r Huseyn, the chief of Haydoranli.¹⁵⁴ The Ararat revolt had been organized by Halis, who had been deported from Bayazit to Bursa three years prior.¹⁵⁵ Selahettin had been arrested in February, along with "the Seal-maker," of which the arrests had been the first report of Kurdish trouble in the press.¹⁵⁶ This seemingly strange mention of a seal maker being arrested indicates that the Khoybun was attempting to create an official icon, or icons, symbolic of the Kurdish people and their struggle. Halis was captured, but escaped while being transited from Erzerum to Trebizond and fled to Persia,¹⁵⁷ and attempted to recruit Kurds there.¹⁵⁸

About 90 other Kurds were arrested with Halis and Ankara charged them with perpetrating the "'Kurdistan Committee's' program for a rising."¹⁵⁹ Soon after the incident, Celali tribesmen began raids around Ararat.¹⁶⁰ The Turkish commander, Asim Pasha, thought that the extermination of the Kurdish rebels was impossible because of the rugged and remote geography.¹⁶¹ Asim worried that Persian Kurds and Russian Armenians would join the fray, if they had not already.¹⁶²

In early May, Armenians were being targeted by the Turks once again, and

a "fear of Armeno-Kurdish intrigues has made the authorities at Diarbekir, Kharput and elsewhere give the local Armenians to understand that they would be well-advised to leave."¹⁶³ By this time, Asim had been replaced by Zeki Pasha and a very large Turkish force numbering around 15,000 was being sent against "a few hundred Kurds."¹⁶⁴ Fleeing Armenians were refused entry to the Soviet Union, entering Persia instead.¹⁶⁵

Turkish Ojaks, or cultural clubs, were established with the intent to bring "civilization" to the Kurds and to liberate women.¹⁶⁶ The Turkish army's role, apart from defense, was to make citizens, and one British official noted, "Kurdish soldiers are sent to Western Anatolia, to be turned into good Turks."¹⁶⁷ The soldiers were being taught to read and write in Turkish, and when they returned home, they were to get good jobs like headmen.¹⁶⁸ This was a revolutionary change for the Kurdish southeast in terms of realigning the socio-economic structure. Ankara was investing time and effort in the southeast intending the region to no longer be a place of banishment, but rather a prime focus for development. Ankara viewed the Kurds as integral for agriculture and population stability.¹⁶⁹

The Armenian Revolutionary Federation, or Dashnaksutiun (Dashnak), was willing to put aside Kurdish-Armenian hostilities lingering from Armenian ethnic cleansing in the Ottoman Empire during World War I.¹⁷⁰ The Dashnak lent its support to the Khoybun, believing that the Kurds would succeed in gaining their independence from Turkey, or that they would cripple Ankara by drawing the Turks into fighting against costly mountain guerilla campaigns.¹⁷¹ Indeed, a

Dashnak leader, Vahan Papazyan, had been present at the Khoybun's founding of a government in exile at Bhamdoun, Lebanon.¹⁷² The Dashnak connected the Khoybun to funding from the Greek and Italian governments, who hoped to use the Kurds to undermine Kemal.¹⁷³ An Armenian, Reuben Pasha, claimed to "have been a Minister of War in Armenia in 1914," and was assisting the Khoybun with training and arms acquisitions.¹⁷⁴ As an Armenian advisor to the Khoybun, Reuben Pasha claimed to have been on a secret mission to Tehran to acquire arms for Kurds at Ararat.¹⁷⁵ According to Reuben, the Khoybun had been fighting for the last three years, "at present, more or less independent, in spite of the efforts of the Turks to subdue them."¹⁷⁶ Reuben stated that the Turkish offensive around Ararat began June 10. He detailed the Khoybun's plans:

The Kurds control two spheres -- one to the north of Erjish, and the other, the area of the Mounts Ararat and to the west. They wish to absorb the region between these two spheres, and make the whole into one revolutionary area. The Turkish forces are divided into two groups, one operating from south of Erzerum towards the Ararats, and the second from north-west of Lake Van towards Erjish and Bayazid. The area of operations is very difficult for regular troops, and the Turks have much difficulty in maintaining forces in this region.¹⁷⁷

Reuben addressed the British concern about Soviet ambitions, knowing this would hold their attention and possibly influence London to support the Kurds. He argued that the Turks were merely the Moscow's "catspaws," and that their objective of helping Ankara rein in the Kurds held "the object of eventually themselves absorbing this area by peaceful penetration; the Soviet [sic] would then be in a position to extend their influence eastwards to the southern shores of the Caspian Sea, and southwards and into Iraq."¹⁷⁸ The Soviet Union was allowing the transit of the Turks' supplies through their territory. Reuben claimed that the Kurds only needed arms to hold off the Turks.¹⁷⁹ The British refused to

help Reuben on the grounds of, besides his trustworthiness, it being too dangerous a gamble.¹⁸⁰

As of July, the Khoybun was reportedly planning to march on Diyarbakır.¹⁸¹ A fierce battle raged from 5-9 July, scattering remnants of the Khoybun's forces in hills north of Lake Van.¹⁸² Kurds had expected wider support, and had reportedly used religious propaganda hoping to rally Islamist forces to their side. The Turkish Air Force bombarded and machine-gunned Kurdish positions.¹⁸³ It was reported that at least three planes were downed, and "The airmen were killed and mutilated by the Kurds."¹⁸⁴

Turkey was seeking to solve the eastern frontier question once and for all, and Ankara's goal was "to complete the liquidation of the Kurdish revolt of 1925."¹⁸⁵ Combat as of July 7 involved 10,000 Turkish troops, 100 casualties, 3 planes downed.¹⁸⁶ As with the 1925 Kurdish rebellion, the Turkish press began "to insinuate that Great Britain, who has always wished to create an independent Kurdish nation in Northern Iraq, may be connected with movement near Mount Ararat."¹⁸⁷

The British gained information from a Greek source on activities along the Persian frontier stating that the Turks began operations in April, and that fighting began in May and June with the Turks incurring a hundred casualties and three airplanes lost.¹⁸⁸ Some Kurds fled toward Lake Van, while others fled toward Lake Uramia across the Persian border.¹⁸⁹ The area where the Kurds were fighting was "in country eminently suited to guerilla tactics," and they "could hardly be dislodged for so small a price" as the Turks were willing to pay

initially.¹⁹⁰

In the middle of July, the Turks were having difficulties with the Soviets over refugees from the Caucasus being allowed to enter Turkey.¹⁹¹ The refugees were going into Persia instead making the Persians nervous about Soviet "aggression in the northwest."¹⁹² A British official observed, "The truth lies possibly in a Persian hope that a Kurdish rising would make it difficult for the Turks to enforce their claim to Persian territory in the Ararat district."¹⁹³

The Shah of Persia believed the Soviets had been trying to create trouble between Turkey and Persia.¹⁹⁴ The Shah emphasized Persian distrust of Russians "whether Tsarist or Communist," noting that "Both were equally unreliable and untrustworthy."¹⁹⁵ According to an extract from the Tehran Newspaper *Iran*, dated July 10, 1930, Persia demonstrated friendliness toward Turkey: a common policy toward Kurdish rebels, Persian closure of the frontier, ordering Persian Kurds away from the Turkish border, expulsion of Turkish Kurds from Persia, prohibiting Persian Kurds from aiding rebels, ordering Persian border authorities to cooperate with Turks.¹⁹⁶ The newspaper claimed that Persia and Turkey sought similar policies in centralization and modernization for prosperity.¹⁹⁷

The Turks were unhappy with Iraq's lenient treatment of Kurds, and Ankara believed it must be a British conspiracy to harm Turkey.¹⁹⁸ In late July, troop trucks were moved from Tabriz to Maku after Turks accused Persian Kurds of crossing the border.¹⁹⁹ In late July, a fight between Iraqi Kurds and Turkish troops set the Turks and the British on edge.²⁰⁰ In August, the British tried to

reassure Ankara that London was not supporting Kurdish revolts.²⁰¹ Trouble between the Turks and Sheikh of Barzan's followers led Ankara to cast doubt on these reassurances.²⁰²

Border disturbances abounded when Turkey attempted to pursue Kurds into Iraq, Persia, and Syria.²⁰³ A Kurdish leader from Syrian Kurdistan known as Hajo was going to launch his own assault against the Turks from Syria in a bid to plunge the region into a Kurdish war for independence. Hajo was alleged "to have issued a manifesto announcing that he is working for Kurdish independence, and calling on the Kurds to avenge the massacres of the others by the Turks."²⁰⁴ However, Hajo failed to win local Kurds' support, and was quickly arrested by the French in Syria.²⁰⁵ Events such as this fueled Ankara's paranoia toward the Kurds and the British.

At the end of July, there were many casualties among Kurds at Eraciş, and the remaining Kurds had taken refuge on the upper slopes of Ararat. British officials argued that the Persian conspiracy theory was destroyed, because the rebels were almost entirely Kurds from Turkey. The only incident involving other Kurds was a raid by Barzanis from Iraq.²⁰⁶ It was still unclear to the British exactly who was involved in the insurrection in eastern Turkey. The Foreign Office identified three Kurdish nationalist groups it believed to be involved in the insurrection around Mount Ararat:

- (a) *Kurd Ta'ali*, in Northern Kurdistan, comprising the sons of Sheikh Said. They are said to be in close touch with the Bolsheviks.
- (b) *Khayboun*, in Syria, whose head office is in Beirut, and who have enlisted the support of the Armenian Nationalist Society, called 'Tachmak.'
- (c) *Khalaskaran*, in Turkey and Persia, of which many leading Turks and Persians are said to be members.²⁰⁷

The British were perceptive to detect these currents, but the groups were all Khoybun. The Foreign Office noted that Syrian Kurds were paying close attention, "waiting and hoping for the rallying cry of independence," and that the French authorities were watching them closely.²⁰⁸ The Turkish 53rd Regiment had been deployed against the revolt, but had suffered major defeats, thus Ankara was moving larger numbers of troops into the southeast.²⁰⁹ By early August, villages around Mount Ararat had been abandoned. The supreme commander of the rebels was reported to be Ibrahim Bey of the Jalali Kurds. Ibrahim's chief of staff was Ihsan Nuri (Ihsan Nuri), and his chief adviser was Shiekh Khalil, which Palmer believed to be an alias.²¹⁰ The Jalali Kurds and the Persians had been battling near Maku, and many Persian casualties had resulted.²¹¹ By the middle of August, the Turkish strategy appeared to be to drive the Kurds into Persia and clear Ararat districts.²¹²

Tehran had become angered by Turkish and Soviet border incidents. Persia sought League of Nations' assistance to prevent its territory from being violated and to prevent its own Kurdish population from being agitated.²¹³ The Turks sought an exchange of territory with Persia and proposed joint operations against Kurds.²¹⁴ In late August, Tehran rejected Ankara's proposal for frontier rectification near Ararat in addition to rejecting the Turks' right to pursue Kurds into Persia. The Persians wished to deal with Kurds on Persian territory.²¹⁵

In late August 1930, there were reports that T.E. Lawrence was running the rebellion from northwest of Aleppo.²¹⁶ French authorities did not believe it, but the Syrians did. They believed his headquarters was in Maku, Persia, adjacent to

Ararat.²¹⁷ Similarly, the Shah of Persia was fearful that Colonel Lawrence was behind Kurdish nationalism, and that Sheikh Mahmoud had gained British support for leadership.²¹⁸ The British had abandoned Mahmoud years before, and reassured the Shah that they did not support the rebellion nor was Lawrence involved.²¹⁹

Tehran believed all Kurds should be Persian subjects, according to the Shah's minister of court, Abdolhossein Teymurtash.²²⁰ Tehran, like Ankara, feared the Wilsonian ideal of self-determination of minorities.²²¹ In August, the Shah of Persia expressed his worries about a united Kurdistan and an independent Armenia, claiming that there existed "a so-called Kurdish Government in the neighbourhood of Mount Ararat, which even included a Minister for Foreign Affairs."²²² Among the Armenians observing events there was "certainly an important section who would welcome a combined effort with the Kurds."²²³

Toward the end of August, the Turks appeared successful in containing the Mount Ararat rebellion despite setbacks.²²⁴ The Kurds had been successful in battles at Aralik and Bayazit.²²⁵ Turks based at Kara Kilissa numbered 10,000-15,000, while Kurds led by Ibrahim Beg of Jalali tribe numbered 5,000-8,000.²²⁶ The Turks were using around 15 planes, but several had been shot down by Kurdish sharpshooters.²²⁷ He noted that the Kurds captured sophisticated weaponry from Turks, but lacked ammunition.²²⁸ The Kurds had divided into small guerilla bands in an area that would prove "most difficult for regular troops; a great scarcity of good water, no local supply," and "very bad communications

and an extremely difficult terrain, particularly in the vicinity of the Ararats."²²⁹ The Kurds were being driven up Greater and Lesser Ararat's slopes, although some fled into Persia where they were ordered back across by Persian forces.²³⁰ When later the Persians were drawn into conflict with Kurds resulting in four officers and around a hundred men killed, Persian leniency toward Kurds ended.²³¹ The Persians were frustrated with the Turks for bringing them into the Kurdish conflict, while on the other side, the Turks felt the Persians had been inadequate at the border.²³² Press reports claimed the Turks were occupying Persian Kara Dagh as a result, and the Persians immediately denied the claim.²³³ Ankara accused Tehran of selling the Kurds ammunition and supplies at Tabriz, and the Turks threatened to occupy Persian territory.²³⁴ The situation escalated when the Persians sent reinforcements to Maku.²³⁵ The British Foreign Office was aware that "the Russians are working in close liaison with the Turks on the Erivan border, and it is probable that, in the event of serious trouble between Turkey and Persia, the latter would find themselves seriously hampered by the thinly-veiled or even open hostile action on the part of Russia."²³⁶

The Turks claimed no outstanding troubles with the Persians except that two prominent Kurdish chiefs from Turkey settled in Persia and had not been removed. Because of accidental territorial intrusions by the Turks into Persia, Ankara viewed rectification of the Ararat frontier as essential to prevent conflict between Turkey and Persia.²³⁷ Turkey under Ismet Pasha "frankly wanted to annihilate the Kurds"²³⁸ Persia wanted all parties with Kurdish populations to leave their Kurds alone, and not annoy them or accommodate for fear of the

effects on Persia's Kurds.²³⁹

The Turks, led by Salih Pasha, gained the ground between Ararats and won decisive victory on September 10, leading the Kurds to flee toward Persia.²⁴⁰

A week later, calm appeared to have descended to Turkey's east, but the British Foreign Office believed "Kurdish revolt and nationalism are only too likely to raise their heads again, and, unless the Turkish Government can substitute something more reasonable for its recent policy of stern repression, the process of the "Turkification" of the Kurds may not prove so easy, nor their subjugation so complete, as seems to be assumed to-day."²⁴¹

An extract from "Tabriz Political Diary and Military News," No. 8, for the period from August 7 to September 6, 1930, detailed the Kurdish situation.²⁴² The clipping stated that five Turkish airplanes had been lost, and that there were Kurdish successes around Aralik.²⁴³ According to the article, the Turks were driven across the Araxes into the Soviet Union, where the Soviets were helping Turks, supposedly joining the fight across the river.²⁴⁴ It noted that Persian reinforcements had been sent to the northwest to create a cordon from Sakiz to Sauj Bulak.²⁴⁵

The Khoybun released a propaganda report in October that was disseminated as far as the U.S., claiming 40,000 Turkish casualties among government troops, and accused the Turks of razing 500 villages and massacring 12,000 innocent Kurds.²⁴⁶ This was a last effort at rattling the Turkish public's confidence before the rebellion was completely destroyed.

By late November, major operations had been concluded at Ararat.

Posts were established along Soviet and Persian frontiers to prevent Kurds from returning. The British also received reports of operations "being carried out against the Kurds of the Dersim region in a manner which resembles the operations against the Armenians in 1915."²⁴⁷

In September 1930, the British Foreign Office had assured Nuri Bey of the Turkish General Staff that Iraq would not become a base for Kurdish nationalism.²⁴⁸ This move likely made him more comfortable having candid conversations with the British. Nuri Bey took a negative view of Kurds, questioning the validity of their origins and culture by suggesting "they derive very largely from Seljuk Turks, who preceded the Ottoman invasion."²⁴⁹ Nuri asserted that Kurds were formerly exempted from military service, thus leading many Turks to identify themselves as Kurds. Nuri stated that most of the insurgents were from Persia, suggesting Tehran had a hand in Turkey's troubles. Nuri Bey turned his attention to Ihsan Nuri, one of the main Khoybun military commanders:

Ihsan Bey, who had been one of the leaders in the Agri Dag rebellion, was a Turkish captain, who had deserted during the Nestorian troubles. He doubtless hoped in the recent revolt to attain a high position amongst the Kurds. Nuri Bey does not know if Ihsan is at liberty in Tehran, but thinks, in any case, that his power to do harm is exhausted.²⁵⁰

Nuri Bey stated that Ankara and Tehran had established garrisons around Greater and Lesser Ararat believing that no uprising would occur the following spring.²⁵¹ Nuri Bey perceived that villagers in the east had been angered by trouble the rebels had caused for them, and would not tolerate further disturbances.²⁵² Nuri Bey noted that "Complete pacification of the tribes is impossible as long as they can cross the boundaries with an impunity which is

not shared by their opponents."²⁵³

In March 1931, punishments were meted out for the Kurds arrested in connection with the Khoybun. Selahettin was condemned to fifteen years hard labor, which was a reduced sentence because he was not quite twenty-one at the time of the Erzerum conspiracy.²⁵⁴ Others received mild sentences as conspirators because not much could be proven in court.²⁵⁵ These light sentences are in stark contrast to the "wholesale hangings at Menemen."²⁵⁶ Nevertheless, Ankara was attempting to place itself as a humane state dealing fairly with its problem population, likely in an effort to further distance itself from the horrors of the Armenian ethnic cleansing of World War I.

That same month, the Turks were reported to advance 24 kilometers into Persia in pursuit of Kurds from the Ararat rebellion.²⁵⁷ Persian troops were sent to Maku, where Ankara wanted Tehran to round up fleeing Kurds for extradition back to Turkey.²⁵⁸ A subsequent clash between Kurds and Persians occurred at Maku.²⁵⁹

In late September 1931, the British consul in Trabzon reported that Kurds were arriving there from the areas around Ararat, and that they were being sent by steamship to western Turkey for resettlement.²⁶⁰ In early October 1931, Kurds crossing the Persian frontier petitioned Ankara for settlement in western Turkey, particularly the Halikanli tribe, a branch of Jalali tribe.²⁶¹ According to the British consulate at Trabzon, in late October 1931 the Halikanli tribe fled from Persian territory occupied by Turkish forces and was sent west to Bursa.²⁶²

Turkey's Consolidation of Control

If the Khoybun set out to draw Turkey into conflict with its Persian neighbor via the Mount Ararat rebellion, then that objective was almost met. Ankara and Tehran accused each other of grave offenses that almost led to an armed conflict between them.²⁶³ The Turks accused the Persians of allowing the Kurds to use Persian territory to launch attacks into Turkey, while the Persians accused the Turks of violating Persian territory in pursuit of the Kurds. The situation was diffused when Turkey and Persia agreed on a territorial swap involving lands around Ararat (Figure 5.3).²⁶⁴

The Khoybun rebellion around Mt. Ararat was crushed by the Turks thanks in large part to the Turkish Air Force (TAF).²⁶⁵ The RAF had previously used airplanes to stamp out Kurdish resistance in Iraq.²⁶⁶ Air power enabled the British and the Turks to extend their authority into the difficult terrain of Kurdistan. These areas were prohibitive of the movement of large ground forces because of their lack of transportation infrastructure and the Kurds' extensive local knowledge of the terrain for use in guerilla warfare. Without air power, the British and the Turks likely would have been at the mercy of Kurdish ground superiority, and their efforts to subdue the Kurds would have been more costly if successful at all.

The Khoybun succeeded in putting forward vigorous Kurdish ethnosymbolism to challenge Turkish assertions against Kurdish identity. The Khoybun's secular appeals for Kurdish nationalism gained footing among a

diverse group of Kurds. The area around Mount Ararat was chosen as the bastion of the Khoybun's rebellion, because it embodied several important geopolitical characteristics. The area was a part of historical Armenia as well as Kurdistan, hence the Dashnak's interest.²⁶⁷ Greater and Lesser Ararat presented rugged terrain on which the Kurds were well suited to fight large contingents of Turkish forces. Mount Ararat's remote location in Turkey's far east along the borders of the Soviet Union and Persia gave the Kurds time to establish their government and to prepare their defenses. The Khoybun's leadership knew it would take a supreme effort on Ankara's behalf to mobilize forces. The Khoybun may also have wanted the risk of conflict spilling across international borders in an attempt to either embarrass Ankara or to draw the Turkish government into conflict with either of its two eastern neighbors. The Dashnak agreed to set aside animosities with the Kurds to embarrass Turkey and to reclaim Mount Ararat and its significance to Armenian identity. Ankara won on the battlefield, but would not be able to prevent Kurdish nationalist sentiment from simmering after the violence had subsided and scores of Kurds were removed from Turkey's southeast. The Turkish government had taken the fight out of most Kurds for the time being, and it would seek to take it out of all Kurds in the following years. Kurdish challenges to Ankara's and Baghdad's authority remained in Iraq, but the Turkish government was content to leave the problem to the British and Iraqis to deal with for the time.

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CHAPTER 6

STATE OVER NATION

The years from 1931 to 1938 witnessed a weakening of Kurdish movements in Turkey and a change in Kurdish leadership in Iraq. Regional borders had taken shape to exclude Kurdistan (Figure 6.1). Turkey had demonstrated its strength by crushing the Khoybun's military capabilities at Mount Ararat, and simultaneously scuttled Kurdish nationalist aspirations in Turkey for decades. Kurdish nationalism in Turkey largely became an underground movement, and would not emerge again until the 1970s. However, Ankara took the opportunity to ensure that all Kurdish elements were quieted by pouncing on a group of fiercely independent Kurds belonging to the Alevi religious minority living in and around the Dersim area.

In Iraq, the final defeat of Sheikh Mahmoud in 1931 left a sense of uncertainty among many Kurds about how to proceed with their nationalist aspirations. Mahmoud had been the primary separatist in Iraq pushing for an independent or autonomous Kurdistan under British auspices. Unhindered by the British and barring intervention from Turkey or Persia, Mahmoud was the figure most likely to have formed a Kurdish state. For British officials in London and in Baghdad, he had been too effective for their comfort in consolidating territory and power. Under Mahmoud's persuasion, Kurds in Iraq made another attempt to

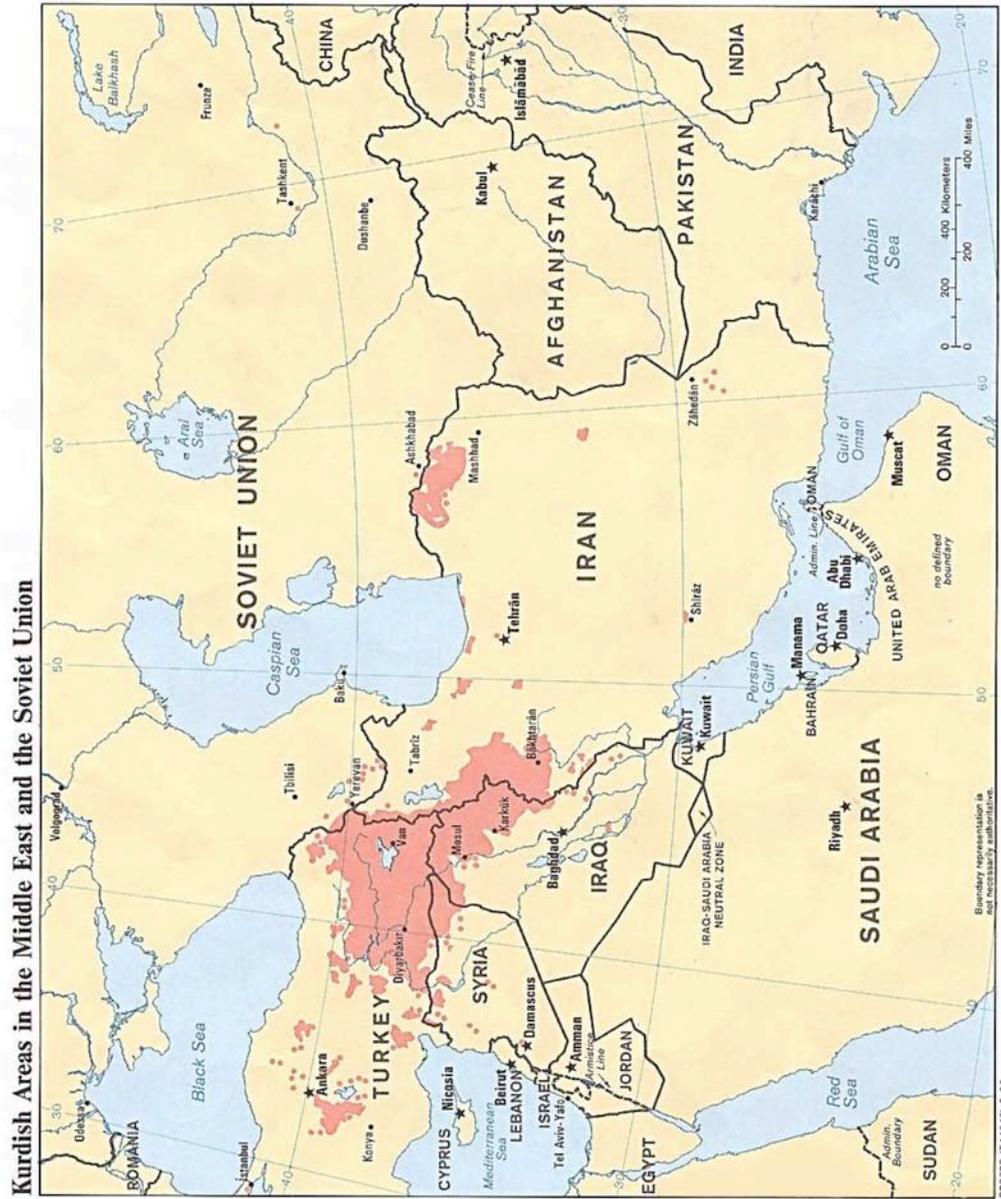


Figure 6.1: Kurdistan divided.
 Source: Central Intelligence Agency. 1986. *Kurdish Areas in the Middle East and the Soviet Union*. Washington, DC.

gain independence through the League of Nations. This effort intended to use an international legal system to establish a British mandate for Kurdistan, at least the Iraqi portion, and to bring attention to the Kurds' denial of statehood as invoked by Wilson's Fourteen Points and promised in the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres. The attempt, though native this time, met with even less success than that at the Paris Peace Conference of over a decade previously. Mahmoud had been stopped multiple times, and by 1932 the British had dealt with him for the last time, forcing him into retirement. However, the sheikh of Barzan, Ahmed Barzani, soon was able to mount his own campaign. The region of Barzan and the city of Arbil soon became another center for Kurdish nationalism, rivaling that of Sulaymaniyah.

It was during this time that the British strategy for containment of the Heartland was coming to fruition. The British had largely quieted Iraqi Kurdistan and readied Iraq for the end of the British mandate there. London also had forged friendly ties with Ankara, and sought to cultivate the new relationship to counter the Soviet Union's influence in the region. Turkey's role as an empire state was diminished, but its position as a regional power was again on the rise. British officials frowned upon Ankara for its harsh treatment of Turkey's Kurdish population, but recognized their balancing power for overall regional stability. It is for this reason that London became measured in its criticisms toward Ankara over its dealings with the Kurds.

Signs of a coming large-scale conflict were emerging in Europe and threatened the region once again. Though the British off-loaded Iraq when the

kingdom gained independence and entered into the League of Nations, London maintained a far-reaching presence in the region through the RAF. The British continued to aid Iraq via air power. Air supremacy gave the British the ability to police large areas without commitments of large numbers of troops.

The Kurds and the League of Nations

Some Iraqi Kurds continued to push for independence. This push was by no means unified, and was centered directly on Sulaymaniyah and Shiekh Mahmoud. His vision of an independent Kurdistan still included British support. Many Kurds in Iraq did not share Mahmoud's enthusiasm and viewed him as a troublemaker bringing hardship upon all Kurds. The British, against the wishes of Arab officials in Baghdad, wanted to let the Kurds have their say even if nothing was to be done with Kurdish requests. British officials wisely believed crackdowns would alienate Kurds regardless of their political inclinations.

The Turks were still angry with the British for their leniency and accommodation regarding Iraq's Kurds, and Ankara accused the British of encouraging Kurdish nationalism.¹ The British were planning to transfer power over to King Faisal's government, raising concerns among Kurds over what their future held under Arab domination. The nationalists among the Kurds feared oppression by Baghdad, and demanded from the British local autonomy in Kurdistan.² These Kurds wanted some sort of safeguard, recognizing that their Arab, Turkish, and Persian neighbors would likely crush a nascent Kurdish state. Because the British had many interests in the region, and because Kurds in Iraq had already had dealings with the British, the Kurds felt that London would be the

best choice for their guardian.

It was clear to the Colonial Office that the Kurds were unhappy with the government in Iraq, and that many among the Kurds wanted to establish a new mandate. The British perceived this as a unanimous request coming from Sulaymaniyah, but believed, at the time, that Kurds in Arbil and Kirkuk felt no such sentiment.³ Sir Kinahan Cornwallis, the British advisor to Iraq's interior minister, complained that Baghdad's policy toward the Kurds would lead to troubles.⁴ This was especially problematic because the British were readying Iraq for independence and entry into the League of Nations. Cornwallis disagreed with the Iraqi minister's aggression in seeking to clamp down on contrary Kurds for two reasons: military operations were a drain on Baghdad's resources and any arrests would alienate even moderate Kurds.⁵ In August 1930, Brook Popham, the Acting High Commissioner of Iraq wrote the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Passfield, expressing a dim view of Baghdad's approach to incorporating the Kurds, stating, "I am informed by Cornwallis that the Minister of the Interior who is more stupid and conceited than actively vicious has stated his intention of embarking upon a forward policy in the Kurdish area; replacing Kurdish officials by Arabs and prosecuting those Kurdish leaders who expressed at Sulaymaniyah their desire for independence during our recent tour."⁶

In August 1930, Kurds from Kirkuk and the Dauda tribe petitioned the president of the League of Nations, via the High Commissioner for Iraq, for support of demands for a Kurdish state.⁷ They claimed mistreatment by Arabs and Turcomans, and argued that the Kurds were the original inhabitants of the

region.⁸ The Kurdish petition to the League of Nations asserted that the Kurdish people had the ability to build a successful state separate from Iraq. The petitioners placed emphasis on Kurdistan's resources noting, "Our land, if it is tendered, can in short time become a second Switzerland, or give a daughter to Switzerland."⁹

In September 1930, a general election of deputies was being held throughout Iraq. The Sulaymaniyah Council, comprised mostly of members of the Kurdish National Committee, decided to boycott the election in protest for Kurdish autonomy.¹⁰ When officials decided to hold the election there, a crowd of protestors marched through the streets toward Government House gathering people along the way.¹¹ The protestors doubled from two hundred in short order, and soon became violent with police guarding the building.¹² When the dust cleared, several demonstrators and police lay dead or wounded.¹³ A crackdown against the demonstrators ensued with around four hundred people arrested, though most were acquitted and released.¹⁴ This incident put the British and Iraqi officials on the defensive, while some Kurdish nationalists began to use the events in attempts to rally a greater following against Baghdad.

The Kurds in Sulaymaniyah had been excited by the Khoybun revolt at Mount Ararat in Turkey,¹⁵ and likely had been inspired in their own right to do something. The telegraph line to Kirkuk had been severed, which led British and Iraqi administrators to anticipate an insurrection there.¹⁶ Kurdish tribes and Kurds in other cities were watching for the outcome of events in and around Kirkuk before making their own moves, and British aerial reconnaissance was watching

for any massing of Kurdish forces.¹⁷

The British received reports that Sheikh Ahmed was in correspondence with Sheikh Mahmoud, allegedly seeking cooperation for Kurdish autonomy, but no further information could be derived.¹⁸ Nevertheless, this piece of information was enough to worry the British that a wider Kurdish nationalist movement was afoot in Iraq.

In late September 1930, Shiekh Mahmoud crossed the border from Iran back into Iraq through Awroman country.¹⁹ He reached Pizhder while avoiding authorities in Sulaymaniyah, and was believed to be discussing an insurrection.²⁰ Iraq sought to gain control of the Pizhder tribal area on the Lesser Zab River, which had not been controlled since 1922.²¹ Mahmoud began reaching out beyond his urban power base to gain rural loyalties. It was one thing to control an urban area, but quite another to command the countryside as well.

The British intention was to be firm but calm with Mahmoud. A British official noted that Mahmoud, in his petition to the British, wished to "point out that it is no good dreaming of independence, and that the welfare of the Kurds is bound up with that of 'Iraq and the only hope of prosperity and happiness for the Kurds is to work with the 'Iraq Government and not against it."²² Mahmoud professed the loyalty of the Kurds to the British, but wanted separation from the Arabs. He sought British protection for Kurdistan, stating, "In the name of this Aryan nation, the Kurds as a whole request that you will liberate and separate them from the Arabs."²³ Perhaps Mahmoud was attempting to appeal to Indo-European kinship with the British, or was acting in hope that he would strike a chord with British

elitists who viewed the world's peoples as races of varying quality with the Indo-Europeans at the top. Regardless, of the underlying reason, Mahmoud was making the case that the Kurds were a separate people from their neighbors, thus in need of self-governance.

In October 1930, Kurdish chieftains of Pizhder, who were associated with Sheikh Mahmoud, made formal petitions to the secretary-general of the League of Nations seeking a British mandate for Kurdistan.²⁴ After repeated denied requests, these Kurds sought separation from Iraq altogether. They emphasized that the violence at Sulaymaniyah had been a wholesale massacre, and that they should be separated from the Arabs in Iraq to prevent further bloodshed.²⁵ They listed several demands, including establishing a Kurdish state "within its natural boundaries stretching from Zakho to the districts beyond Khanaqin," the evacuation of Arabs from Kurdistan, a League of Nations approved British mandate for the state, the release of Kurdish prisoners from the Sulaymaniyah riots, and the transfer of all Kurdish officials in Iraq to the Kurdish state.²⁶ Essentially, this state would stretch from the area around the Turkish-Syrian border with Iraq straddling the mountains to the southernmost part of the mountains on the Iraq-Iran border.

One petition came from the "Tribal Chiefs of the Maiwan tribes and the Kokhas of villages inhabited by Fatali Begi tribes now settled along the Persian border," stating, "We also demand to have His Highness Shaikh Mahmud the ruler of all Kurds to the exclusion of any body else and any other administration."²⁷ Another followed from "Ja'far Sultan, Paramount Chief of the

Awaman tribes and other Kurdish Chiefs," declaring, "We recognize no body as our Hukmudar (ruler) except Shaikh Mahmud, the famous Kurdish leader, under whose rulership we wish to live."²⁸ The British Foreign Office characterized the Kurdish demands as "an erroneous interpretation of the decisions reached by the Council on December 16th, 1925, when the area in which the petitioners live was assigned to Iraq."²⁹ To Mahmoud and his followers, this was not a misinterpretation; these demands were based on Wilson's Fourteen Points and the Treaty of Sèvres. The League of Nations took no action in consideration of the Kurdish demands.

In January 1931, London was considering what political and military steps would be taken to reduce the risk of a serious outbreak of unrest in Kurdistan in the spring in order to "detach all potential supporters from Shaikh Mahmud during the next two months."³⁰ The British needed to win the support of moderate Kurds to resolve all genuine grievances quickly. Failure to achieve this jeopardized Iraq's admission into League of Nations.³¹ London was keen to get out of everyday administration of Iraq, while still exercising military control through the RAF. They wished to maintain only a small presence to police the region from the air. The RAF's continued pressure in concert with Iraqi ground forces on Mahmoud and his followers contributed to his surrender.³² The British succeeded in marginalizing Mahmoud, and though he remained in Iraq for the remainder of his years his ability to rally followers to the Kurdish cause was no more.³³

In early 1931, the Turks were having problems with Kurds from Persia, while the Persians were having problems with Kurds from Iraq.³⁴ By March, the

Turkish government suggested that a joint protest should be addressed by the governments of Turkey, Persia, and Iraq to the League of Nations with regard to the Kurdish petitions.³⁵ These early troubles that the states had with the Kurds foretold of prolonged difficulties to come.

Turkey's Drift from the Soviet Orbit

Although the Soviet Union was the only ally Turkey had initially, the Turks recognized the relationship as a dangerous one. The Soviets supplied the Turkish government with money and arms while at the same time organizing labor and pushing communist ideology among Turkish and foreign workers.³⁶ The Turkish government realized that the Soviets were trying to undermine Turkish sovereignty by sowing seeds of revolution right under their noses.³⁷ The Turks began to view their problem with the Soviets as more damaging than any outstanding issues with the British and other Western powers. Kemal valued the modernization and scientific thinking of the West as models for the Republic of Turkey to follow,³⁸ and sought to develop new relationships with these states.

An abandonment of the Soviets would have drawn Turkey toward the West, but it posed a problem for the positive aspects of the Turkish-Soviet relationship. By leaning westward Turkey would force the British to accept a new relationship in the defense of India and other British strategic interests. This was something the British wanted. Turkey would help shore up the Rimland to the UK's favor. Officials in Ankara were aware of the storm clouds gathering above central Europe, and sought to remain out of a coming conflict. The Turks feared

what they saw taking shape in Germany and Italy, and hoped that cultivating ties with the British and the French would keep German and Italian ambitions in check.³⁹ By maintaining good relations with the Soviet Union, Turkey hoped to protect its northern approaches.⁴⁰

The Kurdish bid for independence was effectively lost upon the removal of Turkey's threat to Mesopotamia and former Ottoman territories south of Anatolia. The change in relations between Turkey and the UK guaranteed that the Kurds of Turkey and Iraq were to remain fractured politically and culturally. Though the borders between the two countries are artificial, northern Kurdistan had long been separated from the southern portion by mountain ridges and economics. At this time in history when nationalisms were awakening and transportation and communications undergoing revolutionary improvements, the Kurds were prevented from organizing as others around them had done.

To the British, the Turkish government's change of attitude toward the Soviet Union was precisely what was needed. Turkey fit neatly within Britain's array of Rimland states surrounding the Soviet Union. It seems as though the British were heeding Mackinder's warning and seeking a counter to the threat. Any post-Lausanne thoughts of Kurdish independence were sacrificed to create a balance of power in Britain's favor. While the British still granted Iraqi Kurds rights that Turkey denied its Kurds, the British were vigorous in stopping Kurdish nationalist momentum. The containment of riots surrounding the 1930 elections in Sulaymaniyah demonstrated these measures. The British wanted the Kurds to be active in Iraq, but as Iraqis, not exclusively as Kurds. British moderation with

Iraqi Kurds demonstrates the compromise between domestic politics of Iraq and the relations of the UK and Iraq with Turkey.

The British were readying Iraq for the end of its mandate and the Kingdom of Iraq's admission into the League of Nations. Turkey was cooperating with this transition, and was also preparing to enter the League. Toward the end of 1931, treaty negotiations between Iraq and Turkey were going smoothly. The negotiations covered a range of issues from commerce to extradition,⁴¹ and led to an agreement for most-favored-nation treatment between Iraq and Turkey.⁴² Both countries joined the League of Nations in 1932.⁴³ The Turks grew more comfortable with Iraq's measures to curb Kurdish nationalist activities from spilling across into Turkey, and viewed Assyrians in Iraq as a check on Kurds.⁴⁴ This was to cause sectarian violence between the Kurds and the Assyrians, in which the Kurds would ultimately triumph.

In early January 1934, plans for a non-aggression pact among Turkey, Persia, Iraq, the Soviet Union, and Afghanistan were being pursued.⁴⁵ This may have appeared to London as though Moscow was attempting to pull the carpet from under the feet of the British. This move served to add to British paranoia toward the Soviets, as well as to motivate London's strategy of blocking Moscow in the Rimland.

By the middle of November 1936, Turkey declared that there would be no disturbances to take place between it and the transition government in Iraq.⁴⁶ Ankara and Baghdad both perceived themselves to have a "Kurdish problem," and peaceful relations would pave the way to cooperation on the matter in the

future. At this point, the Kurds had largely become marginalized from the regional agenda. Turkey had effectively silenced its Kurdish population. Iraq would still have difficulties with the Barzanis, but could contain those difficulties.

The Turks realized their position in the region, and no more wanted to be a pawn of the Soviet Union than to be at the mercy of the Europeans. Leadership in Ankara, particularly Kemal, wanted Turkey to stand on its own. They also wanted to shed any signs of “backwardness” from Turkey’s image, thus moving the country onto the level of more developed European states. Kemal and those around him carefully packaged the process as modernization rather than Westernization. All of this involved engaging with the Europeans and surrounding countries, including Iraq. It would not have served Turkey well to continue antagonistic relations with these states after obtaining the security and most of the territory they desired.

The Rise of the Barzanis

In late March 1935, British officials met with Kurdish chiefs from Kirkuk, Arbil, and Sulaymaniyah, who were seeking to present to the Iraqi government a petition for reforms.⁴⁷ The Kurdish petition listed several grievances (Appendix C) the chiefs wished to see rectified.⁴⁸ Most of the demands were intended to improve economic and political opportunities for Kurds, but many also aimed to secure cultural rights and preservation of Kurdishness.⁴⁹ While these grievances dealt with some Kurdish cultural issues, they were mostly pragmatic affairs involving development of the region and betterment of society.

After the petition, the Kurdish chiefs did not seem to succeed in gaining anything definite from Baghdad, though discussions were ongoing among them.⁵⁰ A deputation of aghas from Dauda, Jaf, Dizdai, and Talabani tribes came to Baghdad for a discussion of Kurdish candidates for the next election.⁵¹ These aghas frequently gathered at Sheikh Mahmoud's house, and Mahmoud was warned against any tribal activities.⁵² He heeded these warnings for the rest of his life. Pan-Iranian propaganda by the Persians was aimed at recruiting Kurds, but Kurds seemed unreceptive to the appeals.⁵³

Another Kurdish nationalist leader emerged in Iraq in the sheikh of Barzan, Sheikh Ahmed Barzani, who held the allegiance of the Barzani tribe.⁵⁴ The Barzanis included Kurds from other tribes who had sought protection within this powerful tribe.⁵⁵ The Barzanis were considered outcasts because of their heterodox religious beliefs, and had been accused of having reverted back to paganism by mainstream Muslim Kurds.⁵⁶

The RAF carried out aerial operations against Ahmed in April 1932. The British sought to bring the areas of Shirwan and Barzan under Iraqi control.⁵⁷ Ahmed agreed to cooperate with the British, but he did so only in word. The Kurdish attacks were demoralizing for the Iraqis, and Baghdad had requested intensive RAF operations against the Kurds. The planes were used initially to drop cease and desist proclamations from the air.⁵⁸ Kurdish guerilla warfare ensued, and the RAF engaged the Kurds with aerial bombardment. Iraqi forces indiscriminately attacked Kurds and their property, and mistreated those Kurds who surrendered, creating further resentment by the Kurds toward Arab

authorities.⁵⁹

By January 1933, British officials had come to view the Barzanis as a potential threat to Iraqi stability. Ahmed's brother Mohammad Sadiq was leading organized bands of rebels. However, the British felt the Turks had no reason to be alarmed at the moment, as Kurdistan was under massive snow cover.⁶⁰ RAF operations during 1932 had largely quieted Iraq during the summer. However, Ahmed had refused to yield territories being brought under central control. British officials considered Ahmed a coward with few supporters, yet the RAF could not root out all of the rebels.⁶¹ While Ahmed did not have all of Iraqi Kurdistan on his side, he had enough to gain an enduring foothold for his family in the Kurdish nationalist struggle. Two of Ahmed's brothers, Mohammad Sadiq and Mullah Mustafa, gathered followers near Barzan in March 1933.⁶² By May 1933, the situation had become so frustrating that the Iraqis sought Turkish cooperation against the Barzanis.⁶³

In June 1933, RAF planes dropped copies of a proclamation and amnesty law on the Barzanis. This amnesty required them to report themselves to authorities and return to their homes within ten days. It also stipulated that the chiefs had to reside outside of the Barzan area. A report came that Sheikh Ahmed's brothers Sheikh Sadiq and Mulla Mustafa along with Oula Beg and Ahmed Nadir and around 100 forces had surrendered at Shirwan-i-Nazin Police Station for amnesty. The Ministry of Interior planned to furnish an agriculture grant for Barzanis.⁶⁴ This was probably in hopes that they would take interest in tilling the earth and profiting from farming instead of fighting. However, by late

June, it became clear that the Ministry of Interior had assumed too much as the report that Barzanis had surrendered was proven to be false. The Barzanis had actually been guests of Subi Beg, Director-General of Police, where they had been negotiating an agreement.⁶⁵ A surrender agreement was reached, though Sheikh Ahmed would be dealt with separately. Everyone amnestied was required to swear an oath of allegiance to the king of Iraq.⁶⁶ The authorities in Baghdad were attempting to create a civic national identity akin to what Ankara had engineered, but the Iraqi Kurds had rights as Kurdish people and could not be forcibly assimilated.

According to British officials, several factors led to Ahmed's surrender. The Barzanis were starving because Iraqi police were able to control supplies into the region.⁶⁷ With large numbers suffering, the rebellion could not last. Sheikh Ahmed was pressured by the Turks to surrender. Ankara was sending forces to secure their side of the border, and to possibly conduct joint operations with Baghdad against Ahmed.⁶⁸ The British observed, "The Iraqi Government on their side appear to have been only too glad to put a stop to the mountain guerilla warfare, as their troops and police are the kind that prefer to retreat from rather than march towards the sound of the guns."⁶⁹ By late October 1934, the Barzani rebellion had been put down, and Ahmed returned to Iraq under watch of authorities. However, the British were wary that he was becoming too friendly with those authorities.⁷⁰ Complete Iraqi security in the Barzan district was not achieved, and though the Barzanis were closely monitored the groundwork for further Kurdish nationalist struggle was established.

Dersim and Turkey's Illusory Solution

By crushing the Kurds in the vicinity of Dersim (Figure 6.2), Ankara was demonstrating the lengths it would go to enforce the republic's "Turkish identity." The Kurds of Dersim were of the Alevi religious sect,⁷¹ and had long been known for their fierce sense of independence.⁷² Turkish authorities would not tolerate other identities, and would destroy them accordingly. Ankara had the reach to do so with modern military technologies such as airplanes, chemical weapons, and sophisticated small arms and artillery. Dersim was a demonstration that quieted the Kurdish areas of Turkey for decades.

In retaliation for the Mount Ararat rebellion, Ankara enacted a law on May 5, 1932, divesting the Kurdish tribes of any legal standing.⁷³ The Turkish government set out to completely erase Kurdish identity from Turkey by inventing a myth that the Kurds were really Turks that had lost their way.⁷⁴ Turkish nationalist symbolism had by this time worked its way throughout society, and emblems began appearing on stamps and money.⁷⁵ The Kemalists probably believed if it was repeated enough that Kurdish identity did not exist, then it would vanish.

It was also during this time that Kemal, now known by the honorific title Atatürk, created the division between the Turkish government and the military, thus intrusting the military to act as guardian of the republic.⁷⁶ Acting as guardians, the Turkish military embarked upon a campaign to root out all elements and potential elements of Kurdish nationalism through mass

deportations of non-Turks, removal of Kurdish officials from within the government, and arrests of anyone suspected of Kurdish activism.⁷⁷ Ankara continued to characterize Kurdish nationalists as religious reactionaries,⁷⁸ thus also promoting Kemalist virtues of secularism with the anti-Kurdish agenda.

In Turkey's East, Ankara had two problems: the status of Alexandretta (Iskanderun) and the Kurds in Dersim. Ankara was interested in incorporating Alexandretta, then under the French mandate of Syria, and surrounding lands because of its sizable Turkish population and its militarily and economically strategic position along a bay in the northeastern corner of the Mediterranean. The Turkish government was focused on Alexandretta as the French were readying Syria for independence in 1935. The Dersim Kurds may have decided to revolt while the Turks and the French in Syria quarreled over Alexandretta.⁷⁹ Ankara decided in 1935 to stamp out Dersim's troublesome Kurds, and began preparing for major military operations there.⁸⁰ The region around Dersim had a history of military operations against the Kurds with eleven since 1876.⁸¹ The region became its own vilayet, though it was in effect a military containment area. The Turkish government renamed the city and vilayet with the Turkish name Tunceli, thus erasing Kurdish identity from maps.⁸² The following year Ankara declared a state of siege in Tunceli and named a military governor, General Aptullah Alpdogan, who spent the year building roads and infrastructure to support military operations.⁸³ When the Kurds attempted to negotiate with the general, he promptly had the Kurdish emissaries executed.⁸⁴ This move provoked the Dersim Kurds into open rebellion, and allowed the Turks to proceed

with their campaign.⁸⁵ This was the excuse Ankara had been waiting for to move on Dersim.

Military operations began in May 1937 after Kurds inflicted major casualties on Turks at Dersim.⁸⁶ Airplanes were used to bomb Elaziz (Elazığ), a city perched across the valley from Dersim.⁸⁷ Fighting intensified and more Turkish aircraft were called in. Three Kurdish villages were leveled, and one airplane was lost.⁸⁸ In June 1937, a Turkish press correspondent published telegrams, which accused British spies of inciting the Dersim rebellion.⁸⁹ Per the normal atmospherics, rumors and conspiracy theories had developed surrounding another Kurdish conflict. The press named the Kurdish chiefs involved as Hassan Mekki and Sayyid Riza.⁹⁰ By July, it was reported that the uprising had been crushed and martial law was in force in Dersim.⁹¹ Sayyid Riza was still on the loose, but Ankara was already enacting a policy of assimilating Dersim's Kurds by force.⁹² However, fighting continued around Dersim throughout the month. General Alpdogan was given a free hand to do as he saw fit.⁹³ Reportedly, he regretted that there had been too much violence toward the Kurds in the past, and that was what led to these uprisings.⁹⁴ According to that same report, he blamed the gendarmerie for unrest. Turkish casualties were higher than those of the Kurds because of snipers.⁹⁵

By November 1937, captured Kurdish leaders had been executed, including Riza. Others were being tried.⁹⁶ Turkish General Aptullah Alpdogan remarked to British officials that Tunceli's inhabitants were Turks, not Kurds, and of Central Asian stock, to which Lieutenant-Colonel Ross remarked, "This by no

means plausible theory is, of course, a convenient peg on which the Turks may hang the policy of nationalism.⁹⁷ Ankara carried out deportations of Kurdish chiefs and suspected followers to other parts of Turkey. According to General Alpdogan, Turkish developmental plans were in the works, including dams and the creation of a "Little Switzerland" in southeastern Turkey.⁹⁸ Eastern Turkey was silenced for several decades, but no "Little Switzerland" was created. The region remains the poorest in Turkey to the present.

Ankara's "solution" to its troubles with the Kurds ultimately led to the rise of a more violent and widespread movement under the Kurdistan Workers Party, or *Partiya Karkaren Kurdistan* (PKK), which formed in 1978 and took up arms against the government in 1984.⁹⁹ Turkey's effort during the 1920s and 1930s to create a nation based on one civic identity may have appeared successful for a while, but it would not last.

Prelude to World War II

By 1938, the region was becoming a hotbed for foreign intrigue, and the Kurds would be involved once again. Turkey kept its distance from the war as much as possible, and Kurdish nationalist currents within the country would remain silent until decades later. In Iraq, the Barzanis launched a rebellion during the war, only to be defeated and exiled in Iran where they would join Iranian Kurdish nationalists in the abortive Soviet-backed Mahabad Republic. While at the time considered by Kurds to be a triumph, the republic was a tool Moscow

would use to gain energy concessions from Iran. The Kurds were once again caught between empires and interests of outsiders.

The geopolitics of the region, especially the rivalry between the Soviet Union and the US and UK, overshadowed any effort for Kurdish independence from World War I until the Soviet dissolution. The move to contain the Heartland was also the move to maintain stability in the states that surrounded it. This directly impacted Kurdish nationalist and territorial ambitions. Relationships between the British, later the Americans, and the states of Turkey and Iraq trumped any would-be Kurdish state. Such a state would have created instability in the Rimland, thus opening a vacuum for Soviet interests. It was a delicate balance that the Turks walked, but they triumphed in maintaining their equilibrium in domestic and foreign policies for the continuation of their republic.

¹ Dastani, Bejtullah, ed. 2006. CO730/157/5 in *Minorities in the Middle East: Kurdish Communities, 1918-1974. Vol. 1: 1918-1930*. Chippenham, United Kingdom: Archive Editions, 227.

² Dastani, Bejtullah, ed. 2006. CO730/157/5 in *Minorities in the Middle East: Kurdish Communities, 1918-1974. Vol. 1: 1918-1930*. Chippenham, United Kingdom: Archive Editions, 229.

³ Dastani, Bejtullah, ed. 2006. CO730/157/5 in *Minorities in the Middle East: Kurdish Communities, 1918-1974. Vol. 1: 1918-1930*. Chippenham, United Kingdom: Archive Editions, 304-305.

⁴ Dastani, Bejtullah, ed. 2006. CO730/157/5 in *Minorities in the Middle East: Kurdish Communities, 1918-1974. Vol. 1: 1918-1930*. Chippenham, United Kingdom: Archive Editions, 318-324.

⁵ Dastani, Bejtullah, ed. 2006. CO730/157/5 in *Minorities in the Middle East: Kurdish Communities, 1918-1974. Vol. 1: 1918-1930*. Chippenham, United Kingdom: Archive Editions, 318-324.

⁶ Dastani, Bejtullah, ed. 2006. CO730/157/5 in *Minorities in the Middle East: Kurdish Communities, 1918-1974. Vol. 1: 1918-1930*. Chippenham, United Kingdom: Archive Editions, 325.

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- ⁷ Dastani, Bejtullah, ed. 2006. CO730/157/5 in *Minorities in the Middle East: Kurdish Communities, 1918-1974. Vol. 1: 1918-1930*. Chippenham, United Kingdom: Archive Editions, 341-342.
- ⁸ Dastani, Bejtullah, ed. 2006. CO730/157/5 in *Minorities in the Middle East: Kurdish Communities, 1918-1974. Vol. 1: 1918-1930*. Chippenham, United Kingdom: Archive Editions, 341-342.
- ⁹ Dastani, Bejtullah, ed. 2006. CO730/157/6 in *Minorities in the Middle East: Kurdish Communities, 1918-1974. Vol. 1: 1918-1930*. Chippenham, United Kingdom: Archive Editions, 424.
- ¹⁰ Ali, Othman. 1993. *British Policy and the Kurdish Question in 'Iraq, 1918-1932*, Department of Middle East and Islamic Studies, University of Toronto, 409.
- ¹¹ Ali, Othman. 1993. *British Policy and the Kurdish Question in 'Iraq, 1918-1932*, Department of Middle East and Islamic Studies, University of Toronto, 409.
- ¹² Ali, Othman. 1993. *British Policy and the Kurdish Question in 'Iraq, 1918-1932*, Department of Middle East and Islamic Studies, University of Toronto, 409.
- ¹³ Ali, Othman. 1993. *British Policy and the Kurdish Question in 'Iraq, 1918-1932*, Department of Middle East and Islamic Studies, University of Toronto, 409.
- ¹⁴ Ali, Othman. 1993. *British Policy and the Kurdish Question in 'Iraq, 1918-1932*, Department of Middle East and Islamic Studies, University of Toronto, 409.
- ¹⁵ Ali, Othman. 1993. *British Policy and the Kurdish Question in 'Iraq, 1918-1932*, Department of Middle East and Islamic Studies, University of Toronto, 410.
- ¹⁶ Dastani, Bejtullah, ed. 2006. CO730/157/6 in *Minorities in the Middle East: Kurdish Communities, 1918-1974. Vol. 1: 1918-1930*. Chippenham, United Kingdom: Archive Editions, 366-367.
- ¹⁷ Dastani, Bejtullah, ed. 2006. CO730/157/6 in *Minorities in the Middle East: Kurdish Communities, 1918-1974. Vol. 1: 1918-1930*. Chippenham, United Kingdom: Archive Editions, 366-367.
- ¹⁸ Dastani, Bejtullah, ed. 2006. CO730/157/6 in *Minorities in the Middle East: Kurdish Communities, 1918-1974. Vol. 1: 1918-1930*. Chippenham, United Kingdom: Archive Editions, 419.
- ¹⁹ Dastani, Bejtullah, ed. 2006. CO730/157/6 in *Minorities in the Middle East: Kurdish Communities, 1918-1974. Vol. 1: 1918-1930*. Chippenham, United Kingdom: Archive Editions, 431-432.
- ²⁰ Dastani, Bejtullah, ed. 2006. CO730/157/6 in *Minorities in the Middle East: Kurdish Communities, 1918-1974. Vol. 1: 1918-1930*. Chippenham, United Kingdom: Archive Editions, 431-432.
- ²¹ Bidwell, Robin, ed. 1985. Doc. 101 15796/29 Despatch Sir Maurice Peterson 9 July 1938 Kurdistan, In *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print. Vol. 13 Eastern Affairs, Dec. 1937-Sept. 1939, Pt. II Series B. Turkey, Iran, and the Middle East*. Frederick, Maryland: University Publications of America, 138.

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- ²² Dastani, Bejtullah, ed. 2006. CO730/157/7 in *Minorities in the Middle East: Kurdish Communities, 1918-1974. Vol. 1: 1918-1930*. Chippenham, United Kingdom: Archive Editions, 447.
- ²³ Dastani, Bejtullah, ed. 2006. CO730/157/7 in *Minorities in the Middle East: Kurdish Communities, 1918-1974. Vol. 1: 1918-1930*. Chippenham, United Kingdom: Archive Editions, 448.
- ²⁴ Dastani, Bejtullah, ed. 2006. CO730/157/8 in *Minorities in the Middle East: Kurdish Communities, 1918-1974. Vol. 1: 1918-1930*. Chippenham, United Kingdom: Archive Editions, 452-454.
- ²⁵ Dastani, Bejtullah, ed. 2006. CO730/157/8 in *Minorities in the Middle East: Kurdish Communities, 1918-1974. Vol. 1: 1918-1930*. Chippenham, United Kingdom: Archive Editions, 452-454.
- ²⁶ Dastani, Bejtullah, ed. 2006. CO730/157/8 in *Minorities in the Middle East: Kurdish Communities, 1918-1974. Vol. 1: 1918-1930*. Chippenham, United Kingdom: Archive Editions, 452-454.
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- ²⁸ Dastani, Bejtullah, ed. 2006. CO730/157/8 in *Minorities in the Middle East: Kurdish Communities, 1918-1974. Vol. 1: 1918-1930*. Chippenham, United Kingdom: Archive Editions, 457.
- ²⁹ Dastani, Bejtullah, ed. 2006. CO730/157/8 in *Minorities in the Middle East: Kurdish Communities, 1918-1974. Vol. 1: 1918-1930*. Chippenham, United Kingdom: Archive Editions, 473.
- ³⁰ Dastani, Bejtullah, ed. 2006. CO730/161/2 in *Minorities in the Middle East: Kurdish Communities, 1918-1974. Vol. 2: 1931-1940*. Chippenham, United Kingdom: Archive Editions, 6.
- ³¹ Dastani, Bejtullah, ed. 2006. CO730/161/2 in *Minorities in the Middle East: Kurdish Communities, 1918-1974. Vol. 2: 1931-1940*. Chippenham, United Kingdom: Archive Editions, 66-68.
- ³² Ali, Othman. 1993. *British Policy and the Kurdish Question in 'Iraq, 1918-1932*, Department of Middle East and Islamic Studies, University of Toronto, 427.
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CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This research has demonstrated that the geopolitical problems the Kurds faced in seeking Kurdish unity and independence were in large part encapsulated by the maneuvers of the British Empire and the Republic of Turkey and both states' perception of threats from the Soviet Union. The Kurds had not been and were not united at the end of World War I, and the actions by the British and the Turks further complicated Kurdish convergence. Had it not been for the Sublime Porte's maneuvering to begin with, the Ottoman Empire would not likely have thrown its lot with Germany against the Russian Empire and against the British Empire encroaching upon Egypt and Arabia. The Sublime Porte might have avoided the conflict altogether, thus putting off the question of Kurdish independence for the more distant future.

The convergence of events that occurred following the war doomed a Kurdish state from becoming a reality by overtaking the issue as it had been presented at Sèvres. The document resulting from the Paris Peace Conference and maps associated with its idea of Kurdistan were symbolic in recognizing the Kurds as a people with a right to a homeland. The treaty was used as a rallying point for future Kurdish nationalist movements by reinforcing ideas of nationalism and territoriality. The sense of betrayal attached to the Treaty of Sèvres

was profound, though at the time not all Kurds were concerned with obtaining independence. The interwar period was a time for mythology building for the Kurds. Stories of rebellions fought and foiled became inspirations for future political and armed struggles.

Disunity among Kurds because of competing locally oriented loyalties, in part a result of centuries of limited interaction among the pockets of Kurdish populations throughout the mountainous region, prevented a united front from emerging to accept the responsibility of a nation-state. The fast-paced geopolitical events in the region and in Europe closed the window on both the Kurds and other peoples from obtaining statehood, or even autonomy. Turkey's reemergence as a regional player helped turn away the minds of the European powers and the League of Nations from sponsoring Kurdistan. Under British and French mandate systems the region was carved up among multiple new Arab majority states, but a landlocked Kurdish state became an unappealing prospect. Another important reason Kurdistan failed to become a state was the renewal of the Great Game between the British and the Soviets. Sir Halford Mackinder's thesis regarding the potential power from the Heartland alarmed many British officials, notably Lord George Nathaniel Curzon, into a policy of containment toward communism and the spread of Soviet territorial projection toward warm water ports and resources of the coastal fringes of Asia, what Spykman later named the Rimland. Negative perceptions of the Soviets by London and Ankara factored heavily in their actions within the region. Both governments sensed that Moscow was undermining their authority among the general populations. The

Kurds themselves were divided, and efforts to create a united movement among the various groups were halting and short-lived. The British and the Turks took advantage of divisions among the Kurds to advance their agendas.

Kurdistan's location in a strategic corridor of the Middle East was important during the early twentieth century and remains so today. The land holds the headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers as well as agriculturally productive lands. The oilfields around Kirkuk are important to global petroleum consumers. However, Kurdistan is a landlocked area, despite propagandist cartographic attempts to give it outlets to the Mediterranean Sea and Persian Gulf.

The Great Game had been resolved when Britain reached détente with the Russian Empire in 1907, but Britain had no such agreement with the Soviet Union. Prior to the First World War, the British feared a repeat of the Indian Mutiny, this time instigated by German agitation of Muslims there. When the Ottoman Empire sided with Germany in the war, the British feared a proclamation of jihad by the Ottoman Sultan in Constantinople would lead to a Pan-Islamic insurrection that would bring the British Empire to its knees. Though a number of such plots were attempted, the cataclysm never materialized. When the Bolsheviks took power in Russia and began campaigns of influence in the Caucasus and in the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, the British fear of mass insurgency quickly rematerialized. This motivated the British to reexamine their geopolitical position and security. The Caucasus was a flashpoint and a gateway from Russia into Anatolia and the Middle East. Further aggravation of the British

came when Kemal Atatürk began accepting aid from the Soviets. British fears were somewhat misplaced because Atatürk did not support the Soviets or their ideology, but he was more than happy to accept monetary and material assistance in his nationalist dreams for a Turkish republic when no other assistance was forthcoming. Kurdish leaders sought to be a bulwark against the Soviets in return for support of Kurdish nationalist aspirations against the Turks. Though this was an appealing idea to the British, they pursued a policy of non-interference in Turkey's internal issues. British support of the Greeks advancing from Smyrna (Izmir) had embarrassingly backfired and was on the minds of British decision makers. The stated British policy toward the Kurds was for an autonomous Kurdistan severed from Turkey. How this was to be achieved was vague; therefore, it was not a realistic policy but one of ideals.

Turkey provided the right balance for the region to keep the Soviet Union in check. The Turks controlled the Straits allowing the Soviets access to the Mediterranean and beyond when their ports outside the Black Sea were frozen. Ankara's go between status would prove satisfactory to both the British and the Soviets, thus preventing unnecessary escalations in their rivalry in the region. Turkey would not become a Soviet adversary until after World War II. This was a long-term goal of the British to bring the Turks over to their side.

Kurdish efforts to secure an independent Kurdistan failed because of their lack of cohesion and the overwhelming geopolitical forces surrounding the rise of Kurdish nationalism and territoriality. Kurdish movements and rebellions were fractious affairs that gained no serious momentum throughout Kurdistan. The

geopolitical setting involved a renewal of the Anglo-Russian competition known as the Great Game and the creation of Arab states and the rise of the Republic of Turkey from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire. Kurdistan, like Afghanistan, is a region that has been swept through by numerous invasions, but that no single force could maintain a hold upon. The Kurds had traditionally been able to defend mountainous strongholds through superior guerilla fighting methods. The introduction of the airplane against Kurdish rebellions enabled both the British and the Turks to quickly put down revolts that would have otherwise been costly to the governments in Iraq and Turkey and may ultimately have led to Kurdish independence.

The 1920 Treaty of Sèvres had a significant impact on Kurdish identity and political cohesion, but it was a constant theme among the political movements. The treaty became a symbol for Kurdish nationalists to remember and to denounce the powers involved as promise breakers. However, Kurdish nationalism was hampered by a lack of a clear direction. Had an agreed upon course been determined among Kurds, leadership would have emerged to unite a following moored together in confidence and purpose. Vague notions of an independent Kurdistan were enough to ignite rebellions, but how the rebels would obtain independence and build a state proved elusive. In the case of Kurdistan and several neighboring states, governments had been built atop previous governments or on institutions established by the British and the French, and backed by their militaries. The Kurds had no such sponsor. The French had no interest in the Kurds, as Syria and Lebanon only included small

Kurdish populations, and the British felt a Kurdish state would be more troublesome than to simply include Kurdish territory in Iraq.

Kurdish political nationalism springs from several sources. The nations surrounding the Kurds such as the Armenians, Arabs, and Turks inspired the Kurds with their own movements. These movements had been inspired by European encouragement, and the Kurds had their own interactions with the British to lead them toward a nationalist path. Another source influencing nationalism was from the diaspora of Kurdish elite, especially from Paris and Istanbul. This last influence is demonstrated by the foundation of the Khoybun political party. The Kurds also had native sources for nationalism, what Smith calls ethnics and Hobsbawm calls proto-nationalism. These are elements of culture and history that provide feelings of kinship among a population. Prior to revolutions in communication these roots of Kurdish nationalism were limited. After World War I, these elements were enhanced by mythology to promote a greater sense of Kurdish identity among a wide group of Kurds. The sense of struggle was a powerful connection for Kurds divided among empires and, later, states. This helped Kurds define themselves by who they were not.

Fragmentation of Kurdish identity existed prior to World War I, but was enhanced by the political and territorial divisions instated following the Treaty of Lausanne. In many cases around the world, borders mean very little, and people are largely free to move back and forth between states. In the case of Turkey and Iraq, the physical geography precluded very much movement to begin with. Movement of pastoral Kurds between Turkey and Iran, however, was more

prevalent. The Kurds have been both blessed and cursed by the land they inhabit. Kurdistan was for centuries a place where armies passed through rather than occupied. Invaders found themselves at the mercy of Kurdish guerilla warfare if they stayed too long. The saying that the Kurds have “no friends but the mountains” rings true in this sense; they could rely on the terrain and their highly adapted mountain fighting skills to preserve their livelihoods for centuries. The terrain had proven an ally to the Kurds when they were threatened by outsiders, but it was a curse when the opportunity for independence came because the rugged mountains divided the Kurds into various groups with little communication among them. This lack of contact, along with differences in religious interaction, dialect, and tribal affiliations, crippled attempts to unite all corners of Kurdistan. Disunity prevented the Kurds from seizing their claim to independence, and led powers to abandon the Treaty of Sèvres’s provision for a Kurdistan as unpractical. Many including British Prime Minister David Lloyd-George and American geographer Isaiah Bowman believed the Kurds were incapable of governing themselves. True or not, the perceptions of decision makers shaped the future of the region.

In Iraq, two Kurdish groups emerged to promote the nationalist cause, with one based out of the area of Sulaymaniyah and the other from the area of Arbil. These divisions endure to the present, though their rivalry is more a product of the 1970s than the interwar period. In both Turkey and Iraq, Kurdish nationalism contained an Islamic element, but as influence flowed from urban elites and the diaspora a more secular appeal emerged. Kurds involved in nationalist

movements in Turkey also realized they could not be overly selective of which Kurds were welcome and which were not. Desperation tended to create a cooperative environment among Kurdish nationalists, be they religious or not.

Kurds in both countries understood the Islamic tradition among the majority of their people, but also came to recognize the older religious traditions and the fact that the Kurdish people had held out against Arab-driven attempts at Islamic conquest for centuries. In their mountain strongholds the Kurds had been reluctant to adopt Islam.

The differences that emerged between competing Kurdish factions in Iraq and Turkey led to many differences in nationalism expressed by the groups. Efforts to bring as many people as could be defined as Kurds into a Kurdish identity resonated well with some but not with others. The different nationalisms are not based on country affiliation. In both Iraq and Turkey, there arose different movements often at odds with each other. The rival movements of Mahmoud and Ahmed demonstrate this type of competing nationalism.

The fragile armistice with the Ottoman Empire led to negotiation of the Treaty of Sèvres. The Ottoman authorities were in no condition to bargain with the Allies, and the treaty's conditions left very little territory for the Turkish people. The new maps of the region were devised to give the Ottoman Empire's minorities states of their own. The Allied powers decided the Kurds were one of the larger minorities, and resided in a geopolitically strategic corridor in the empire's east. Because the Kurds were legendary mountain fighters, the British viewed them as a valuable frontier buffer against Russia. The British viewed the

Armenians similarly, but realized Russian influence was greater among them. These plans were the ideals, not the practical solution to the postwar landscape. London thought it understood, through realism, what the best solution was for handling the postwar geopolitical reorganization of the region. They viewed the issue in the context of the Great Game and the continued economic success of their empire. Countering Soviet ambitions was more important to the British than providing a state where the Kurds would be free to rule themselves.

Another problem contributing to Kurdish independence was that their demands were not fully articulated in the matter of the peace process. Only one delegate claiming to represent the Kurdish people was present at the Paris Peace Conference. Sharif Pasha was a Kurdish exile living in Paris, but he held limited influence in Kurdistan's urbanites. However, he was favored by the Allies at the beginning of negotiations. The favor quickly waned, and Sharif lost his ability to influence decisions being made by the Allies. As a result, the status of Kurdistan was left to the Allies. The British, in particular, misunderstood the problems emerging from including multiple peoples in states where one people was to dominate. The cosmopolitanism of the Ottoman Empire, in which multiple peoples lived in relative peace, was dead. Both Iraq and Turkey embodied new, exclusionary states. Identities apart from that of those in power were either accorded a diminished role or none at all.

The 1920 Treaty of Sèvres impacted the Kurds by putting the concept of Kurdistan as a nation-state into the minds of Kurdish nationalists. The problem with this concept was that there was no strong unified movement by the Kurds

with this end in mind. The Kurds were fractured and often at odds with one another. Many Kurdish leaders may have believed that the idea presented by the Great Powers was set in stone and left to be executed by the Kurds. Agreements are not absolute and are especially problematic when they must overcome conflicting territorial claims and strategic concerns.

Despite the failure of a Kurdish state, the idea remained within the minds of various Kurdish leaders as a goal and a motivation for their struggles and abilities to rally followers. Evolution of Kurdish tribal politics into a party system came at a later period than the focus of this study, but the difficulties faced by Kurdish nationalists between world wars made the pursuit of a Kurdish state a worthwhile and honorable cause given the sacrifices made.

It is not likely that a single source sparked Kurdish nationalism, and it is more appropriate to declare that the combination of forces served as a catalyst for the movements that followed World War I. Though the movements were unsuccessful at uniting the Kurdish people and in obtaining an independent homeland, these movements inspired later efforts that persist to the present. Perhaps it will be the case that these early efforts demonstrate to the present and future nationalists how to learn from past mistakes and how to finesse rights and territory in the future.

The reason why the British disallowed an independent Kurdistan was that circumstances changed regarding British relations with Turkey. The Turks had been quick to rise and reassert their control of the eastern reaches of Anatolia. This unexpected event was coupled with a Turkish alliance with the Soviet Union,

and ultimately led the British to reconsider Kurdistan. The Kurds living in the Mosul vilayet were disconnected from those in Anatolia geographically and economically. These factors led influential British figures such as Sir Percy Cox and Gertrude Bell to advocate southern Kurdistan's attachment to Iraq. Cox was able to convince Winston Churchill to make it so. As noted in a later article on the potential of the Middle East to splinter along ethnolinguistic lines in the coming decades, Winston Churchill recognized that including the Kurds in Iraq was one of his "worst mistakes."¹ By the time the mistake of disallowing Kurdish statehood was realized, it was far too late for the British to change course.

The Turks disallowed Kurdish statehood because they believed the Kurds to be essential to their new Turkish republic. The Kurds are a largely Islamic people, provided large numbers of laborers and soldiers, and possessed lands rich in resources and important to the political security of Turkey. Some within the Turkish government attempted a new identity for the Kurds as "Mountain Turks" in an effort to cloud the past and recast the Kurds as Turks, thus making Turkey a solid nation-state. The Turks used the Soviet Union as a financial ally in the absence of other friends. Once the West seemed ready to welcome Turkey into its midst, Turkey began to detach itself from Moscow's orbit. Another factor motivating Ankara was Moscow's clandestine activities among Turkey's worker populations.

The Kurds were left with few options given the turn of events. International recognition of the Kurds as a people deserving of a state of their own died with the Treaty of Sèvres. Though some Kurdish representation sought forum with the

League of Nations, the two most immediate courses of action were rebellion or participation in politics. The latter option involved pretense of being a Turk in the case of Turkey. Kurds there were not excluded from politics, but the Kurdish identity was. The Turkish government attempted to deny the existence of the Kurds by creating an improbable history that Kurds are really wayward Turks. This scheme was attacked in the West, especially by the British, as shameful and amateurish. One of the most biting critics of the Turkish policy on Kurdish identity was Lord Curzon, who at the Lausanne Conference chided the Turkish representatives on their “discoveries.”² Ankara’s denial of Kurdish identity would haunt the Kurds until the early 1990s when Turkish President Turgut Özal, himself of partial Kurdish descent,³ publicly stated that the Kurds were one of Turkey’s peoples.⁴

The Kurds of Iraq and Turkey have endured difficult times under hostile governments. The situation has changed dramatically for what seems the better for Kurdish people in Iraq over the past two decades. In Turkey as well, the situation has changed from denial to hesitant recognition. Some authorities there still fear that any reconciliation between Ankara and Kurdish identity will unravel the republic. In both countries, the Kurds are well aware of the sacrifices, missteps, and legends born of the ashes of the Ottoman Empire. Kurdish dreams of independence will likely persist through the twenty-first century, and may eventually begat a reality.

¹ Goldberg, Jeffrey. 2008. After Iraq. *The Atlantic* 301 (1): 71-72.

² Ali, Othman. 1997. The Kurds and the Lausanne Peace Negotiations, 1922-23. *Middle Eastern Studies* 33 (3): 521-522.

³ Randal, Jonathan C. 1997. *After Such Knowledge, What Forgiveness?: My Encounters with Kurdistan*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 281-282.

⁴ Aral, Berdal. 2001. Dispensing with Tradition? Turkish Politics and International Society during the Özal Decade, 1983-1993. *Middle Eastern Studies* 37 (1):72-88.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Excerpts from THE TREATY OF PEACE BETWEEN THE ALLIED AND
ASSOCIATED POWERS
AND TURKEY
SIGNED AT SÈVRES
AUGUST 10, 1920

THE BRITISH EMPIRE, FRANCE, ITALY AND JAPAN,

These Powers being described in the present Treaty as the Principal Allied
Powers;

ARMENIA, BELGIUM, GREECE, THE HEDJAZ, POLAND, PORTUGAL,
ROUMANIA, THE SERB-CROAT-SLOVENE STATE AND CZECHO-SLOVAKIA,

These Powers constituting, with the Principal Powers mentioned above, the
Allied Powers, of the one part;

AND TURKEY,

of the other part;

Whereas on the request of the Imperial Ottoman Government an Armistice was
granted to Turkey on October 30, 1918, by the Principal Allied Powers in order
that a Treaty of Peace might be concluded, and

Whereas the Allied Powers are equally desirous that the war in which certain
among them were successively involved, directly or indirectly, against Turkey,
and which originated in the declaration of war against Serbia on July 28, 1914, by
the former Imperial and Royal Austro-Hungarian Government, and in the
hostilities opened by Turkey against the Allied Powers on October 29, 1914, and
conducted by Germany in alliance with Turkey, should be replaced by a firm, just
and durable Peace,

SECTION III. KURDISTAN. ARTICLE 62.

A Commission sitting at Constantinople and composed of three members
appointed by the British, French and Italian Governments respectively shall draft
within six months from the coming into force of the present Treaty a scheme of
local autonomy for the predominantly Kurdish areas lying east of the Euphrates,

south of the southern boundary of Armenia as it may be hereafter determined, and north of the frontier of Turkey with Syria and Mesopotamia, as defined in Article 27, II (2) and (3). If unanimity cannot be secured on any question, it will be referred by the members of the Commission to their respective Governments. The scheme shall contain full safeguards for the protection of the Assyro-Chaldeans and other racial or religious minorities within these areas, and with this object a Commission composed of British, French, Italian, Persian and Kurdish representatives shall visit the spot to examine and decide what rectifications, if any, should be made in the Turkish frontier where, under the provisions of the present Treaty, that frontier coincides with that of Persia.

ARTICLE 63.

The Turkish Government hereby agrees to accept and execute the decisions of both the Commissions mentioned in Article 62 within three months from their communication to the said Government.

ARTICLE 64.

If within one year from the coming into force of the present Treaty the Kurdish peoples within the areas defined in Article 62 shall address themselves to the Council of the League of Nations in such a manner as to show that a majority of the population of these areas desires independence from Turkey, and if the Council then considers that these peoples are capable of such independence and recommends that it should be granted to them, Turkey hereby agrees to execute such a recommendation, and to renounce all rights and title over these areas.

The detailed provisions for such renunciation will form the subject of a separate agreement between the Principal Allied Powers and Turkey.

If and when such renunciation takes place, no objection will be raised by the Principal Allied Powers to the voluntary adhesion to such an independent Kurdish State of the Kurds inhabiting that part of Kurdistan which has hitherto been included in the Mosul vilayet.

APPENDIX B

Excerpts from TREATY OF PEACE WITH TURKEY SIGNED AT LAUSANNE
JULY 24, 1923

THE CONVENTION RESPECTING THE REGIME OF THE STRAITS AND
OTHER INSTRUMENTS SIGNED AT LAUSANNE

THE BRITISH EMPIRE, FRANCE, ITALY, JAPAN, GREECE, ROUMANIA and
the SERB-CROAT-SLOVENE STATE,

of the one part,

and TURKEY,

of the other part; Being united in the desire to bring to a final close the state of
war which has existed in the East since 1914,

Being anxious to re-establish the relations of friendship and commerce which are
essential to the mutual well-being of their respective peoples,

And considering that these relations must be based on respect for the
independence and sovereignty of States,

Have decided to conclude a Treaty for this purpose, and have appointed as their
Plenipotentiaries:

HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND IRELAND AND OF THE BRITISH DOMINIONS BEYOND THE SEAS,
EMPEROR OF INDIA:

The Right Honourable Sir Horace George Montagu Rumbold, Baronet, G.C.M.G.,
High Commissioner at Constantinople;

THE PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC:

General Maurice Pelle, Ambassador of France, High Commissioner of the
Republic in the East, Grand Officer of the National Order of the Legion of
Honour;

HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF ITALY:

The Honourable Marquis Camillo Garroni, Senator of the Kingdom, Ambassador
of Italy, High Commissioner at Constantinople, Grand Cross of the Orders of
Saints Maurice and Lazarus, and of the Crown of Italy;

M. Giulio Cesare Montagna, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary at
Athens, Commander of the Orders of Saints Maurice and Lazarus, Grand Officer
of the Crown of Italy;

HIS MAJESTY THE EMPEROR OF JAPAN:

Mr. Kentaro Otchiai, Jusammi, First Class of the Order of the Rising Sun,
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary at Rome;

HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF THE HELLENES:

M. Eleftherios K. Veniselos, formerly President of the Council of Ministers, Grand
Cross of the Order of the Saviour;

M. Demetrios Caclamanos, Minister Plenipotentiary at London, Commander of
the Order of the Saviour;

HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF ROUMANIA:

M. Constantine I. Diamandy, Minister Plenipotentiary;

M. Constantine Contzesco, Minister Plenipotentiary;

HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF THE SERBS, THE CROATS AND THE
SLOVENES:

Dr. Miloutine Yovanovitch, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary at
Berne;

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE GRAND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF TURKEY:

Ismet Pasha, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Deputy for Adrianople; Dr. Riza Nour
Bey, Minister for Health and for Public Assistance, Deputy for Sinope; Hassan
Bey, formerly Minister, Deputy for Trebizond;

Who, having produced their full powers, found in good and due form, have agreed
as follows:

SECTION I.

I. TERRITORIAL CLAUSES.

ARTICLE 3.

From the Mediterranean to the frontier of Persia, the frontier of Turkey is laid
down as follows:

(1) With Syria:

The frontier described in Article 8 of the Franco-Turkish Agreement of the 20th
October, 1921

(2) With Iraq:

The frontier between Turkey and Iraq shall be laid down in friendly arrangement to be concluded between Turkey and Great Britain within nine months.

In the event of no agreement being reached between the two Governments within the time mentioned, the dispute shall be referred to the Council of the League of Nations.

The Turkish and British Governments reciprocally undertake that, pending the decision to be reached on the subject of the frontier, no military or other movement shall take place which might modify in any way the present state of the territories of which the final fate will depend upon that decision.

SECTION II .
NATIONALITY.
ARTICLE 30.

Turkish subjects habitually resident in territory which in accordance with the provisions of the present Treaty is detached from Turkey will become ipso facto, in the conditions laid down by the local law, nationals of the State to which such territory is transferred.

ARTICLE 31.

Persons over eighteen years of age, losing their Turkish nationality and obtaining ipso facto a new nationality under Article 30, shall be entitled within a period of two years from the coming into force of the present Treaty to opt for Turkish nationality.

ARTICLE 32.

Persons over eighteen years of age, habitually resident in territory detached from Turkey in accordance with the present Treaty, and differing in race from the majority of the population of such territory shall, within two years from the coming into force of the present Treaty, be entitled to opt for the nationality of one of the States in which the majority of the population is of the same race as the person exercising the right to opt, subject to the consent of that State.

ARTICLE 33.

Persons who have exercised the right to opt in accordance with the provisions of Articles 31 and 32 must, within the succeeding twelve months, transfer their place of residence to the State for which they have opted.

They will be entitled to retain their immovable property in the territory of the other State where they had their place of residence before exercising their right to opt.

They may carry with them their movable property of every description. No export or import duties may be imposed upon them in connection with the removal of such property.

ARTICLE 34.

Subject to any agreements which it may be necessary to conclude between the Governments exercising authority in the countries detached from Turkey and the Governments of the countries where the persons concerned are resident, Turkish nationals of over eighteen years of age who are natives of a territory detached from Turkey under the present Treaty, and who on its coming into force are habitually resident abroad, may opt for the nationality of the territory of which they are natives, if they belong by race to the majority of the population of that territory, and subject to the consent of the Government exercising authority therein. This right of option must be exercised within two years from the coming into force of the present Treaty.

ARTICLE 35.

The Contracting Powers undertake to put no hindrance in the way of the exercise of the right which the persons concerned have under the present Treaty, or under the Treaties of Peace concluded with Germany, Austria, Bulgaria or Hungary, or under any Treaty concluded by the said Powers, other than Turkey, or any of them, with Russia, or between themselves, to choose any other nationality which may be open to them.

ARTICLE 36.

For the purposes of the provisions of this Section, the status of a married woman will be governed by that of her husband, and the status of children under eighteen years of age by that of their parents.

SECTION III.

PROTECTION OF MINORITIES.

ARTICLE 37.

Turkey undertakes that the stipulations contained in Articles 38 to 44 shall be recognised as fundamental laws, and that no law, no regulation, nor official action shall conflict or interfere with these stipulations, nor shall any law, regulation, nor official action prevail over them.

ARTICLE 38.

The Turkish Government undertakes to assure full and complete protection of life and liberty to all inhabitants of Turkey without distinction of birth, nationality, language, race or religion.

All inhabitants of Turkey shall be entitled to free exercise, whether in public or private, of any creed, religion or belief, the observance of which shall not be incompatible with public order and good morals.

Non-Moslem minorities will enjoy full freedom of movement and of emigration, subject to the measures applied, on the whole or on part of the territory, to all Turkish nationals, and which may be taken by the Turkish Government for national defence, or for the maintenance of public order.

ARTICLE 39.

Turkish nationals belonging to non-Moslem minorities will enjoy the same civil and political rights as Moslems.

All the inhabitants of Turkey, without distinction of religion, shall be equal before the law.

Differences of religion, creed or confession shall not prejudice any Turkish national in matters relating to the enjoyment of civil or political rights, as, for instance, admission to public employments, functions and honours, or the exercise of professions and industries.

No restrictions shall be imposed on the free use by any Turkish national of any language in private intercourse, in commerce, religion, in the press, or in publications of any kind or at public meetings.

Notwithstanding the existence of the official language, adequate facilities shall be given to Turkish nationals of non-Turkish speech for the oral use of their own language before the Courts.

ARTICLE 40.

Turkish nationals belonging to non-Moslem minorities shall enjoy the same treatment and security in law and in fact as other Turkish nationals. In particular, they shall have an equal right to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institutions, any schools and other establishments for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely therein.

ARTICLE 41.

As regards public instruction, the Turkish Government will grant in those towns and districts, where a considerable proportion of non-Moslem nationals are resident, adequate facilities for ensuring that in the primary schools the instruction shall be given to the children of such Turkish nationals through the medium of their own language. This provision will not prevent the Turkish Government from making the teaching of the Turkish language obligatory in the said schools.

In towns and districts where there is a considerable proportion of Turkish nationals belonging to non-Moslem minorities, these minorities shall be assured an equitable share in the enjoyment and application of the sums which may be provided out of public funds under the State, municipal or other budgets for educational, religious, or charitable purposes.

The sums in question shall be paid to the qualified representatives of the establishments and institutions concerned.

ARTICLE 42.

The Turkish Government undertakes to take, as regards non-Moslem minorities, in so far as concerns their family law or personal status, measures permitting the settlement of these questions in accordance with the customs of those minorities.

These measures will be elaborated by special Commissions composed of representatives of the Turkish Government and of representatives of each of the minorities concerned in equal number. In case of divergence, the Turkish Government and the Council of the League of Nations will appoint in agreement an umpire chosen from amongst European lawyers.

The Turkish Government undertakes to grant full protection to the churches, synagogues, cemeteries, and other religious establishments of the above-mentioned minorities. All facilities and authorisation will be granted to the pious foundations, and to the religious and charitable institutions of the said minorities at present existing in Turkey, and the Turkish Government will not refuse, for the formation of new religious and charitable institutions, any of the necessary facilities which are guaranteed to other private institutions of that nature.

ARTICLE 43.

Turkish nationals belonging to non-Moslem minorities shall not be compelled to perform any act which constitutes a violation of their faith or religious observances, and shall not be placed under any disability by reason of their refusal to attend Courts of Law or to perform any legal business on their weekly day of rest.

This provision, however, shall not exempt such Turkish nationals from such obligations as shall be imposed upon all other Turkish nationals for the preservation of public order.

ARTICLE 44.

Turkey agrees that, in so far as the preceding Articles of this Section affect non-Moslem nationals of Turkey, these provisions constitute obligations of international concern and shall be placed under the guarantee of the League of Nations. They shall not be modified without the assent of the majority of the Council of the League of Nations. The British Empire, France, Italy and Japan hereby agree not to withhold their assent to any modification in these Articles which is in due form assented to by a majority of the Council of the League of Nations.

Turkey agrees that any Member of the Council of the League of Nations shall have the right to bring to the attention of the Council any infraction or danger of infraction of any of these obligations, and that the Council may thereupon take such action and give such directions as it may deem proper and effective in the circumstances.

Turkey further agrees that any difference of opinion as to questions of law or of fact arising out of these Articles between the Turkish Government and any one of the other Signatory Powers or any other Power, a member of the Council of the League of Nations, shall be held to be a dispute of an international character under Article 14 of the Covenant of the League of Nations. The Turkish Government hereby consents that any such dispute shall, if the other party thereto demands, be referred to the Permanent Court of International Justice. The decision of the Permanent Court shall be final and shall have the same force and effect as an award under Article 13 of the Covenant.

ARTICLE 45.

The rights conferred by the provisions of the present Section on the non-Moslem minorities of Turkey will be similarly conferred by Greece on the Moslem minority in her territory.

APPENDIX C

List of Kurdish Grievances Presented to the Iraqi Government, March 1935

1. Improvement of the administration of the northern areas and abolishment of the Regulations for Selection of Administrative Officials as regards the north.
2. Enforcement of the Local Languages Law and its amendment as recommended by Amin Zaki Beg.
3. Unification of education in Kurdish areas and the grant of greater authority to the Mudir education in the north and a share of the education budget in proportion to the population.
4. Opening of a secondary school, teachers' training college and a technical school in the northern area.
5. Granting a fair share of educational missions to the Kurds.
6. Allotment of a share of night schools, as in the capital, to Kurds in proportion to their numbers.
7. Reappointment of a Kurdish Assistant Director-General of Interior, who should be a capable Kurd and should be granted wide powers by special regulations.
8. Granting to the Kurds of a share in proportion with their numbers of appointments in headquarters of Ministries, central offices and the Palace.
9. Formation of a liwa from the Kurdish qadhas in the liwa of Mosul with its headquarters at Dohuk.
10. Granting of opportunity to the inhabitants of the northern areas for the election of Deputies who have true connexion with the district and are natives of it.
11. Instructions in Kurdish history in Kurdish schools.
12. Improvement in afforestation, fruit culture and tobacco cultivation by the appointment of specialists and the opening of foreign markets, such arrangements not to be detrimental to merchants or cultivators.
13. Amendment of the capital works programme to include the following projects:--
 - (a) Water project Qarajun and Gopal in the Liwa of Arbil.
 - (b) The Zab project in the Liwa of Kirkuk.
 - (c) Artesian well projects in the Kirkuk and Arbil Liwas.
 - (d) Prolongation of the road from Penjwin to the Persian frontier and arrangements of transit trade thereby.
 - (e) Opening of a road between headquarters of Sulaimani Liwa and that of Sharbazher Qadha.
 - (f) Completion of the road Surdash-Rania.
 - (g) Improvement of the road Arbil-Koi Sanjak and its extension to Rania.
 - (h) Opening of a road from Kirkuk to Koi-Sanjak via Shuan.
 - (j) Opening of a road from Sulaimani to Qara Dagh via Qara Dagh.
 - (k) Opening of a road between Aqra and Barzan and its extension to meet the Arbil-Rowanduz road.
14. Preparation for settlement of the Jaf, Herki and other nomad tribes.
15. Appointment of doctors to headquarters of qadhas and important nahiyas and increase dispensaries, permanent and mobile."¹

¹ Bidwell, Robin, ed. 1985. Doc. 273 14806/122(i) Petition Kurdish Leaders n.d. Reforms, In *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print. Vol. 10 Eastern Affairs, Dec. 1933-June 1935, Pt. II Series B. Turkey, Iran, and the Middle East*. Frederick, Maryland: University Publications of America, 431.

VITA

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Scope and Method of Study:

This dissertation is an examination of the rise and fracturing of Kurdish nationalism and territoriality in the context of the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres and the division of the defeated Ottoman Empire, and of the ensuing British and Turkish policies toward the Kurds in Iraq and Turkey during the period between world wars. The primary sources used in this study are declassified British diplomatic and intelligence documents. The analysis focuses on the Kurdish struggle through the lenses of nationalism, territoriality, and political geography, particularly Mackinder's Geographical Pivot/Heartland Theory and Spykman's Rimland Theory.

Findings and Conclusions:

The convergence of events that occurred following the war prevented a Kurdish state from becoming a reality by overtaking the issue as it had been presented at Sèvres. The document resulting from the Paris Peace Conference and maps associated with its idea of Kurdistan were symbolic in recognizing the Kurds as a people with a right to a homeland. The treaty was used as a rallying point for future Kurdish nationalist movements by reinforcing ideas of nationalism and territoriality. Kurdish efforts to secure an independent Kurdistan failed because of their lack of cohesion and the overwhelming geopolitical forces surrounding them. The British disallowed an independent Kurdistan because circumstances changed regarding British relations with Turkey. To the British, Turkey provided the right balance for the region to keep the Soviet Union in check in the region. The Turks disallowed Kurdish statehood because they believed the Kurds to be essential to their new Turkish republic as citizens, soldiers, and laborers with a recast Turkish civic identity.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Reuel R. Hanks
