Reactive Nationalism in a Homogenizing State: The Kurdish Nationalism Movement in
Ba'thist Iraq, 1963 – 2003

Submitted by Shorsh Mustafa Resool to the University of Exeter for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy in Arab & Islamic Studies by research in January 2012

Abstract

The thesis analyzes the Kurdish nationalism movement as a reaction to the homogenization process by successive Iraqi governments since the establishment of the current state of Iraq. The case study for the thesis is Kurdish reactive nationalism and the Ba'th party from 1963 - 2003. The Ba'th Party came to power in 1963 then again in 1968 through two co-de-ta until their fall in 2003. The Ba'th Party tried to homogenize the state of Iraq and impose a Sunni-Arab identity to Iraq through centralized education and administration system. The Sunni Arabs are a minority group within the boundary of Iraq but had been the dominant group since 1921 until 2003. The Kurds refused such identity and demanded for their national rights to be recognized. The Ba'th Party excluded the Kurds from holding senior or sensitive posts within education, administration and military posts. Having the control over the judicial system, the Ba'th Party labeled the Kurds as traitors, which legitimize their extermination. Subsequently, they were subjected to genocide under the hands of the Ba'th party. Despite all this, the Kurds continued in their struggle for their national rights. With every step by the Ba'th party to exterminate them the Kurds reacted by organizing themselves and adapted themselves to the new situation. They also seized every opportunity that had arisen to enhance their position. The Kurdish nationalism blossomed after the 1991 uprising following the second gulf war in March 1991. The Kurds managed to run a general election for Kurdistan Parliament; established the Kurdistan Regional Government; improved the education and administration system; improved schools, universities, art and economy. The fall of Saddam on 9th April 2003 was another golden opportunity that the Kurds seized pretty well. They contributed in writing Iraq's constitution and managed to achieve most of their national demands within the federal state of Iraq. Hence, Kurdish nationalism has blossomed.

Content

Acknowledgments

First, I would like to thank my wife, Payman, who urged me to do this study in the first place. She continued with her support throughout these years and undertook extra responsibilities to look after our children. A special thank you goes to my children, who also supported me in that regard. Without their support, I would not have been able to complete the work.

My brilliant supervisor, Professor Gareth Stansfield deserves a big thank you. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to him for his continued support and his patience with me. His deep knowledge about the history of the Kurds and the development of Kurdish nationalism encouraged me follow every piece of his advice and feedback with admiration and without hesitation.

As part of my research I interviewed a number of individuals whose answers and information helped make this piece of work informative, realistic and useful to other people. I would like particularly to thank Mr Noshirwan Mustafa Amin, the leader of the Change Movement in Iraqi Kurdistan and one of the founders of Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), who gave me information about Kurdish nationalism and the contribution that Kurdish movement made to Kurdish nationalism. A special thank goes to President Jalal Talabani who gave me his personal view not only about Kurdish nationalism but also about the intimate details of Kurdistan Democratic Party's (KDP) division in 1964 for which he was one of the leaders of the Kurdish movement at the time, and about the formation of the PUK.

I also interviewed the legendary Kurdish poet, Sherko Bekas; Mr Falakadin Kakayee, a former Minister of Culture and Media in Kurdistan Regional Government; Dr Sa'ad

Jawad, the writer of Iraq & the Kurdish Question 1958-1970; Mr. Omer Shekhmus, a Syrian Kurdish scholar and one of the founders of the PUK as well as a number of other writers, university professors, students, and ordinary people. I owe all of them a big thank you and wish them all the best.

For my research I required a lot of Kurdish and Arabic sources, newspapers, Kurdish parties' statements and press release and I am grateful to all those who helped me find these materials.

Finally, I would like to thank Mr. Daniel Smith and Mr. Chia Mustafa who volunteered to conduct the language and grammar check of the final version of this thesis.

هەوەڵنامەی کتێب

1. Introduction

Kurdish nationalism has received a reasonable amount of attention from scholars, academics, and social scientists. However, academics and scholars have different views when it comes to the definition of nationalism, nation and state as well as the relationship between the three. The differences widen if one tries to fit the concept of Kurdish nationalism into one of the various schools of nationalism.

The central thesis of this study is reactive nationalism in a homogenizing state in relation to the Kurdish nationalist movement in Ba'thist Iraq (1963 – 2003). Therefore, it is important to study and analyze how a scholar like Heather Rae argues about dominant nationalism and homogenization of the state. Rae argues that a dominant nationalism takes hold of the state and attempts to homogenize all others to it. These concepts readily apply to Iraq where, as Andreas Wimmer argues, it is the Arab Sunni who are the dominant group. This thesis argues that in the case of Iraq under the Ba'th Party, a reactive nationalism developed as a result of attempts by the dominant nationalism to homogenize all other subordinate groups – including the Kurds - to it. This thesis takes a chronological approach to the events for the period in question by demonstrating and analyzing the policies and strategies adapted by the Ba'th Party in that regard along with subsequent actions taken by the Kurds.

It is beyond question that different scholars have various views on the definition of nationalism and its forms. Anthony Smith argues that "nationalism comes in many forms and degrees."[1] Smith elaborates on his argument by defining nationalism as an "ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute a nation."[2] Based on Smith's definition, Kurdish nationalism, with its unique characters and special circumstances, can be defined as the Kurdish people's feeling

---

[1] Anthony Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 151.
[2] Smith, *Nations and Nationalism,* 150.

of belonging to the Kurdish nation and to being proud of one's Kurdishness as well as the will and readiness to participate in the struggle of the Kurds in any suitable form to achieve their national rights – including establishment of an independent state of Kurdistan. This definition was echoed in the interviews I conducted with some prominent figures of the Kurdish nationalism movement as the movement adapted the very same concept in defining Kurdish nationalism in the past century.

Iraq was founded at the will of the victorious allies following the fall of Ottoman Empire after WWI and not through a referendum or the will of its citizens to create a nation state. The Kurds of Iraq were forced to live within the boundaries of Iraq against their will. The forceful amalgamation of different ethnic and religious groups into the boundaries of modern Iraq made it appear a mosaic in the region, with the Arabs constituting the majority of its population. Ironically, the Sunni Arabs, who are a minority within the Arab composition of Iraq, were made the ruler of the newly created state. It stayed so for the following eighty years until the fall of Ba'th Party in 2003.

Sunni Arabs controlled the affairs of the state. They tried to homogenize the state and give it an Arabic identity through centralized education and administration systems, similar to what was adopted by the European nation-states in the nineteenth and twentieth century. According to Amir Hassanpour, "The post-war modern states of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria were strongly centralized in all aspects of national life: economics, politics, language, and culture. The integration of ethnic minorities through linguistic and cultural assimilation was a primary objective of these states. Their ideal models were the developed 'nation-states' of Europe with one language and culture and one centre of political power."[3] Such a trend led to the development of Arab nationalism throughout the state. They continued in their efforts to monopolize all senior posts while excluding subordinate groups, including the Kurds. According to Andreas Wimmer, "the proportion of Kurdish-speaking officials in the higher echelons of the administration amounted to 15 percent and at

---

[3] Amir Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan, 1918-1985* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992), 59.

lower levels, 23 percent, during the time of the monarchy. In the decade after 1958, however, this was reduced to 5 percent and 13 percent, respectively."[4] The Sunni Arabs tried to homogenize the Kurds into the new state's identity, but the latter rejected these efforts.

The formation of the state of Iraq was, in part, a copy of the new Turkish state following WWI in terms of its centralized administration and education systems. The Sunni Arabs tried to impose the Arabic language on all ethnic minorities that lived within the boundaries of Iraq. Wimmer states that "Immediately after the granting of independence, a centralized public school system controlled from Baghdad was installed. Arabic was made the first language in all secondary schools and only one secondary school was established in the Kurdish-speaking North."[5]

This thesis argues that the aforementioned tendency by Sunni Arabs created a new dynamic. The Kurds not only rejected the homogenization of a state with an Arabic identity but also demanded their national rights to be recognized. Furthermore, the dominant Sunni Arabs were able to exclude the Kurds and often accused them of treason, because the dominant group enjoyed the legitimacy through the state's judicial and administrative structure. According to Rae's argument, the dominant group often uses force and violence against the subordinate group who rejects the proposed homogeneous state. In the case of Iraq, throughout the twentieth century – as Wimmer confirms - it was the Sunni Arabs who were the dominant group, and the Kurds, as subordinate group, were at the receiving end of the violence and force.

This thesis demonstrates that Iraq was an Arab majority dominant state for more than eighty years. It was a majority dominant state based on ethnicity, since the Arabs ran the affairs of the state and controlled almost all of the state's apparatuses and administration. It was a minority dominant state in terms of religious doctrine by virtue of it having been run by the Sunni-Arab minority, who sidelined the Shiite

---

[4] Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict - Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 179.
[5] Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and,* 173.

11

Arabs in running the affairs of state. They intended to create a nation-state and impose homogenous Sunni-Arab identity on all. Not surprisingly, the Kurds reacted by demanding recognition of their national rights within the boundaries of Iraq or a separate entity. Subsequently, Iraq's history became a litany of conflicts, clashes, uprisings and armed struggle since its foundation, largely due to the fact that the people of modern Iraq were divided along ethnic and religious lines and were forced to live in an ethnically heterogeneous sate. Andreas Wimmer states that "Its history illustrates how introducing the nation-state model into an ethnically heterogeneous society politicizes notions of ethnic belonging in a pervasive and divisive way leading to a compartmentalization of the policy along ethnic lines."[6]

For every step the dominant Arab group took to homogenize Iraq, the Kurds reacted by developing new methods to protect their identity and demanded recognition of their national rights. All of the successive regimes since the foundation of Iraq followed the same trend of homogenization of the state. As a result of that trend, a number of Kurdish political groups and parties were set up in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. They all demanded recognition of Kurdish national rights through the establishment of an independent state. A number of Kurdish newspapers and journals were published and the Kurds demanded the education system in Kurdistan to be in Kurdish as opposed to the centralized Arabic education system.

The initial move by Abdulkarim Qasem following the end of the monarchy to declare that Iraq was shared by Kurds and Arabs was welcomed by the Kurds. This decision was interpreted in the new constitution of 1959. However, after he backed down from his promise and tried to follow the same path as his predecessors, the Kurds turned against him and the KDP led an armed Kurdish nationalism movement in 1961.

The seizure of power by the Ba'th Party in 1963 and again in 1968 was a turning point for Kurdish nationalism in Iraq. The Ba'th Party is one of the most chauvinist

---

[6] Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict - Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 178.

Arab Party that has emerged, and a key element of its philosophy is that it considers Arabs as 'chosen people' in the region. Its founders admired the Fascists in Italy and the Nazis in Germany. Ba'th Party doctrine considers any non-Arab living in any Arab country as a guest or migrant on Arab land, providing many Arabs with a ready justification to monopolize all senior posts in the education and administrative system, army, security and intelligence apparatus. They excluded the Kurds from running the affairs of the state. This era was characterized by many seizures of power and other such dramatic events, all variations on the same theme.

Arabization was at the core of Ba'th Party's policy against the Kurds. Deportation, village destruction, mass killing and forced party membership were a few of the brutal Ba'thist practices. Kurds were labeled as traitors and 'collaborators with Iraq's enemies' and were regularly and enthusiastically punished. The Ba'th Party also committed genocide against the Kurds in an effort to eradicate them and eliminate the 'main obstacle' in front of their single-minded effort to force an Arabic identity on all of Iraq.

None of the policies implemented by the Ba'th Party made the Kurds give up, but rather, they became more adamant in their demands for their national rights. Wimmer argues that such policies create a reaction amongst the Kurds. He states that:

> "The systematic repression directed against the Kurdish population, which included the organized slaughter of between 50000 and 200000 people contributed to the further spread of nationalist feelings. A state that was capable of gassing some of its people, arbitrary selected from among Kurdish inhabitants, was surely not and institution with which one could easily identify and to which feelings of belonging and political loyalty could develop."[7]

Ba'th Party policies against the Kurds created a fertile ground for Kurdish nationalists to mobilize more people into their movement. With each additional denial of a subordinate ethnic group's rights, the stronger that group's feeling of

---

[7] Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict - Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 192.

secession from such state becomes. Anthony Smith justifies such a reaction by the oppressed groups around the globe. He notes that,

> "In many cases from the Philippines and Sri Lanka to Iraq, Ethiopia and Angola, there has been not the fusion of ethnies through a territorial national identity but the persistence of deep cleavages and ethnic antagonisms that threaten the very existence of the state. In yet other cases, attempted fusion has been seen, often with reason, as ethnocide (if not genocide), and the victimized people or region has turned on mass resistance and protest, if not outright revolt and secession."[8]

Following the destruction of every village in Iraqi Kurdistan by the Ba'th regime, a large number of villagers refused to accompany the Iraqi army and move to their complexes but were instead spurned on to join the Kurdish armed resistance movement. The Kurds of Kirkuk and other Arabized areas had become amongst the most fanatic Kurdish nationalists because they witnessed Ba'th Party's policies. Families and relatives of executed Kurds made contacts with the Peshmerga[9] forces immediately after the loss of their loved ones, expressing their support of Kurdish nationalism.

This thesis will take a chronological approach with respect to the emergence of reactive nationalism in Iraqi Kurdistan as a result of Ba'th Party's policies. However, there are four important points in the history of the Ba'th Party and Kurdish nationalism that deserve some attention because they demonstrate the development of Kurdish nationalism as a reaction to the policy and practices of the Ba'th Party. These are:

1. **March 1974:** The Ba'th Party announced its version of the March agreement, which fell short of the original Kurdish demands to grant the Kurds their national rights by establishing an autonomous region with an effective partnership in Baghdad. The government threatened to use force against anyone rejecting the new offer. The Kurds completed rejected this stipulation and created an atmosphere for Kurdish nationalism to show its

---

[8] Anthony Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 39.
[9] A phrase used since the mid of the last century to describe Kurdish freedom fighters.

strength. Tens of thousands of Kurds left their jobs and their families and joined the Kurdish armed movement. The KDP managed to recruit and organize the massive number of people in the Peshmerga force units and other administrative services – such as schools, hospitals, courts, municipal services, mosques and universities. The Kurdish movement started logistic and military preparation for resisting the Ba'thist's mighty army, which was then advancing toward the liberated areas of Kurdistan.

2. **March 1975:** Saddam Hussein signed an agreement with the Shah of Iran to settle the land, water and boundary dispute between Iran and Iraq in favor of Iran in return for Iran terminating its support for the Kurdish armed movement. Mustafa Barzani decided to dissolve the KDP and end the Kurdish armed struggle. Tens of thousands of Peshmerga surrendered to the Iraqi authorities. The Ba'th Party tried to capitalize on this victory by implementing a series of policies to end the Kurdish nationalism movement. It deported thousands of Kurds to the south of Iraq, destroyed 1242 villages on its borders with Iran and Turkey, started a vicious Arabization campaign in and around the city of Kirkuk, opened Ba'th Party headquarters in every Kurdish town and city and forced Kurds to join the Ba'th Party, and dismissed hundreds of Kurdish army officers. A number of Arabic schools in Kurdish towns and cities were also opened and Kurdish people were encouraged and in some places forced to enroll their children. As a response to those measures, some Kurdish intellectuals formed the PUK and a number of former KDP leaders announced the establishment of KDP's Provisional Leadership. Soon after that, 'Peshmerga' forces were stationed in the mountains and plains of Kurdistan. Kurdish parties started mobilizing people into the Kurdish nationalism movement. Hence, as a reaction to the chauvinist measures implemented by the Ba'th Party, Kurdish nationalism had flourished once again.

3. **March 1991:** The Ba'th Party managed to rally enough international support in its war against Iran to force Iran agree to a ceasefire. They also

implemented their decision to eradicate the rural Kurds through the infamous Anfal campaign that resulted in the destruction of the entire rural area of Iraqi Kurdistan and killed more than 100,000 men, women and children. During this campaign, the Ba'th Party used chemical weapons against civilians, killing more than 6000 people and maiming thousands more. Furthermore, they drove all Peshmerga forces out of Iraqi Kurdistan and accomplished Arabization of Kirkuk and many other regions in Iraqi Kurdistan. During these difficult circumstances, the Kurds did not give in to Ba'th Party's policy. On the contrary, the Kurdish nationalism movement reorganized itself and Kurdish parties revived the role of the Iraqi Kurdistan Front (IKF) and started mobilizing people in the towns and cities of Kurdistan as well as lobbying in the international arena and specifically with relevant American and European officials. As soon as Iraq was defeated in Kuwait, the IKF led a massive uprising which resulted in the liberation of the entirety of Iraqi Kurdistan. Following the exodus and the establishment of a safe haven and no-fly zone by the Allies, the Kurds managed to run a general election and establish a parliament and a local government to run the affairs of Kurdistan after the administrative vacuum resulted in the withdrawal of Baghdad's administration from the Kurdistan Region. Hence, Kurdish nationalism blossomed and seized the opportunity by achieving some of their national goals in establishing a semi-independent state in Kurdistan.

4. **April 2003:** Despite all of the difficulties that the Kurds had endured during the 1990s and the shortcomings of the two local Kurdish administrations, they managed to run the affairs of the region. Internal in-fighting, the international sanctions against Iraq, and the internal economic embargo by Saddam Hussein's regime against Kurdistan were a few of the big problems that faced the Kurdish leadership – mainly the PUK and KDP. Despite all of that, they managed to develop the economy, improve services and the education system and gained some international recognition. They rebuilt -

with help from some international NGOs - some of the villages that were
destroyed by the Ba'th regime in the eighties. According to Stansfield,

"Between 1997 (the year of the last major round of PUK-KDP fighting) and mid 2002, Iraqi Kurdistan has enjoyed a period of enhanced political stability, economic development and growing international recognition. It has further benefitted from the preservation of sterile US containment policy against Saddam and the de facto state position it found itself in."[10]

As the USA-led coalition ousted the Ba'th regime, the Kurds participated in the process and were the most organized opposition group which contributed in rebuilding Iraq's political system. They effectively contributed in the draft constitution that guaranteed the Kurdish national rights in a federal Iraq.

---

[10] Gareth Stansfield, *Iraqi Kurdistan – Political Development and Emergent Democracy* (London & New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 1.

Main Stations	Events	Ba'th Action	Kurdish Reaction
March 1974	Announcement of March Agreement	- Commence of Arabization campaign - Vicious military attack on Kurdistan - Scorched Earth Policy	- Tens of thousands left their jobs and joined the Kurdish movement - Organized the movement and set up administration - Strong resistance and fighting of Iraq's troops
March 1975	Algiers Treaty between Iraq & Iran	- Arabization campaign - Deportation of thousands of Kurds to the South - Destruction of 1,242 villages - Forced education in Arabic	- Formation of PUK and KDP-Provisional Leadership - Resurgence of Armed Struggle - Peshmerga - Recruitment of more people in sleeper-cells in villages, towns & cities
March 1991	Iraq's Defeat in Kuwait	- Anfal Campaign - Chemical weapons - Disappearance of more than 100,000 men, women and children - Destruction of Kurdistan's rural areas - Completion of Arabization Campaign	- Activated the Kurdistan Front - Mass uprising - Held general election - Established Kurdistan parliament & regional government
April 2003	Fall of Ba'th Regime	- Administration withdrawal - International Blockade - Internal Embargo	- Active involvement in Baghdad and drafted Iraq's new Constitution - Developed economy, education and re-built Kurdistan

Structure of This Thesis

In order to test this hypothesis, I found it necessary to analyze the situation in Iraqi Kurdistan and study the Kurdish nationalism from a theoretical and practical perspective. Having witnessed most of the events of the seventies, eighties and nineties of the last century I found the subject very interesting and motivating.

Chapter 2 is the main theoretical and methodological part of the work. I begin with Heather Rae's argument that a state homogenizes its citizens. Rae argues that it is the dominant nationalism that takes hold of the state and controls the administration and education through a centralized system and tries to homogenize all other groups to it. In the case of Iraq, the dominant group is the Sunni Arabs, as Andreas Wimmer argues, and the Kurds are categorized as a subordinate group that rejected the homogenization of Iraq with an Arabic identity. The founders of Iraq, who were from the dominant group, began this trend and then the successive regimes – including the Ba'th Party from 1963 – 2003 followed the same path. The dominant group excluded the subordinate groups and labeled them with treason, as they have the authority to do so. The Kurds reacted to the homogenization by demanding their national rights to be recognized through any necessary means or approach. Hence, a reactive nationalism emerged. Although the main focus of the theory is about the reactive nationalism in a homogenizing state centered on Rae and Wimmer's argument, I found it necessary to touch briefly on the theories of nationalism in general and to consider the most likely theory that applies to Kurdish nationalism.

Chapter 3 takes the reader to the origins of Kurdish nationalism. This chapter can be considered as a textual chapter. The origin of Kurdish nationalism goes back many centuries to when the Kurdish poet, Ahmadi Khani (1650-1707), wrote in the introduction of his love story, Memu Zin, on how the Kurds required an independent state of their own, similar to the Turks, Arabs and Persians. He called for an independent state to run the affairs of the Kurds and protect their identity. It also highlights the importance of the content of Shrafnama by Sharafkhani Betlisi (1543-1603), which illustrates the history of the Kurds. The chapter includes a short

history of the Kurdish semi-independent emirates that were controlled by Kurdish princes in the eighteenth and nineteenth century as evidence of the tendency for self-rule by the Kurds, culminating with Sheikh Mahmoud's kingdom in Suleimanyeh.

Chapter 4 addresses the history of foundation of Iraq and how the Kurds reacted to the forceful amalgamation within the boundaries of Iraq against their will. It also highlights the Kurds' bitter disappointment with the Lausanne Treaty that replaced the Sevres Treaty and denied the Kurds their right of self-determination and establishment of an independent state, similar to other nations within the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire. This chapter elaborates the foundation of Kurdish national groups, associations and parties in the first half of the last century as well as the overthrow of the monarchy in 1958 culminating with the start of Kurdish nationalist armed movement in 1961. A good part of this chapter is dedicated to the goals and agenda of the Kurdish nationalist parties and the impact of the Kurdish armed movement on development of Kurdish nationalism as a reaction to the actions of the rulers of Iraq, the Sunni Arabs.

Chapter 5 analyzes the Ba'th Party ideology and origin. It highlights the fact that Ba'th Party was one the most chauvinist Arab parties in recent history of the Arabs and how they viewed the Arabs and non-Arabs who lived within the boundaries of "Arab countries". The Ba'th Party considered any non-Arab ethnic group living in the Arab countries as migrants and guests. Any rights they were given by the Arabs was a favor from the God's chosen nation, the Arabs. The period when they seized power in Iraq in 1963 was one of the bloodiest periods since the foundation of modern Iraq. They implemented a scorched earth policy in Kurdistan; they also started an Arabization campaign in Kirkuk and in other areas in Kurdistan. The chapter covers the split that occurred within the KDP between Mustafa Barzani and most of the Politburo members in 1964 and the negative impacts it left on the Kurdish nationalism movement in subsequent decades.

Chapter 6 builds on the analysis of the previous chapter and the policies implemented by the Ba'th Party and resurgence of Kurdish nationalism as a reaction to such policies. The period covered in this chapter includes the 1970-1974 peace agreement between the Kurds and the Ba'th Party and how this period was considered a golden age for Kurdish nationalism in Iraqi Kurdistan. The Ba'th Party is the only Arab Party that officially recognized some of the national rights of the Kurds, and the true reason behind such recognition is analyzed. Ironically, fourteen years later, the very same party committed genocide against the Kurds. A substantial amount of particular analysis has been reserved for the year of fierce fighting between the Ba'th regime and the Kurdish armed movement, particularly the period of March 1975 when Saddam Hussein signed the Algiers Treaty with the Shah of Iran that resulted in the collapse of the Kurdish movement.

Chapter 7 is dedicated to explicating Ba'th Party policies directed against the Kurds and how they tried to capitalize on the collapse of the Kurdish movement. They continued with an intensive Arabization campaign, deportation and village destruction as well as dismissing hundreds of Kurdish army officers and encouraging people to send their children to Arabic schools. The Kurds reacted to such policies and practices by establishing the PUK and KDP-PL, some other national parties and the re-emergence of Peshmerga. The Iran-Iraq War and its impact on Kurdish nationalism are also analyzed. The massive anti-government demonstration of 1982 and the start of negotiation between the Ba'th Party and the PUK is analyzed in this chapter, as well as the reasons for the start of the negotiations and ultimately what led to its failure.

Chapter 8 includes and analyzes some of the major events in terms of the policy and practice of Ba'th Party to homogenize Iraq in order to give it an Arabic identity, thus excluding the Kurds. It demonstrates the Ba'th Party's determination to eradicate the Kurds as well as the impact and implication of those policies and practices in developing a reactive Kurdish nationalism. A number of significant developments occurred during the period from 1985–1991. The negotiation between the PUK and the regime was terminated. The IKF that embraced all Kurdish parties

was founded. The PUK established a relationship with Iran. Ali Hassan al-Majid was appointed as the General Secretary of Northern Bureau (NB) of the Ba'th Party in Kirkuk. An intensive Arabization process continued. The general census of 1987 was carried out and the villagers in Iraqi Kurdistan were excluded from being registered. Iraq used chemical weapons against civilians and resulted in the killing of more than 6,000 people. The Anfal campaign was carried out and resulted in the killing of more than 100,000 men, women and children. Iran agreed to a ceasefire in its war with Iraq, ending the Iran-Iraq War. Iraq invaded Kuwait and the American-led coalition liberated Kuwait, defeating Iraqi Army. The IKF began lobbying in international arenas. A massive uprising was sparked in Iraqi Kurdistan and all the towns and cities of Iraqi Kurdistan were liberated, culminating with the massive exodus of two million Kurds to the mountains along the borders of Iraq-Iran and Iraq-Turkey.

Chapter 9 addresses the events following the establishment of a safe haven and no-fly zone until the B'ath Party regime was ousted in April 2003. Saddam Hussein withdrew his administration from the Kurdistan region, hoping that it would create chaos and deprives the region of resources. He expected or rather hoped that the Kurds would be desperate for his intervention and the return of his authority. The IKF managed to fill the vacuum and run a general election for the first time in Kurdish history that resulted in the establishment of the Kurdistan Parliament and Kurdistan Regional Government. Hence, Kurdish nationalism was able to flourish. Despite the very difficult living conditions, the Kurds not only survived, but managed to run their own affairs albeit with some problems by modern international standards. Internal fighting and conflict between the Kurdish parties, especially between the PUK and KDP, is afforded a considerable amount of analysis in this chapter, as is its impact on the state of Kurdish nationalism. Despite the inevitable clash between two local administrations in Suleimanyeh and Erbil, run by the PUK and KDP respectively, they managed to run the affairs of people, safeguard security, develop the economy, improve the education system and gain some international

recognition, hence building a stable foundation for Kurdish nationalism to blossom and to safeguard a sustainable Kurdish entity in the region.

Chapter 10 is dedicated to drawing a conclusion to the whole study. It concludes with a brief reminder about the origin of Kurdish nationalism and the foundation of modern Iraq. It analyzes the situation from the early foundations of Iraq and how the Sunni Arabs tried to take hold of the state and make it a homogeneous one with a clear Arabic identity, attempting to homogenize subordinate groups to it. This created a reactive nationalism by the Kurds who rejected such homogenization and were subjected to exclusion and genocide. It culminates with the events just prior to 2003 and its impact on the development of Kurdish nationalism.

Throughout all the chapters I discuss the relevant theories related to state formation and development of nationalism. The issue of state formation, and how a dominant group takes hold of the state and imposes a homogeneous state on the others has been analyzed whenever necessary. The main point remains throughout the theoretical analysis of state formation and the development of Kurdish nationalism, in the case of Iraq, to be that the Sunni Arabs have been the dominant group from the founding of Iraq until 2003. They tried to impose an Arabic identity on Iraq's Kurds, who in turn rejected this attempt and demanded that their rights to be recognized. Hence, it is proved that such tendencies by the dominant group will lead to the emergence of reactive nationalism by the subordinate groups.

2.   Theory and Methodology

Scholars and academics have different views about nations and nationalism. The central portion of this thesis about reactive nationalism in a homogenizing state is based upon Heather Rae and Andreas Wimmer's arguments and theories about homogenizing states and how a dominant group tries to impose its identity on subordinate groups within the state and to exclude anyone who rejects such an identity. Nevertheless, it is useful to review some theories related to nations and nationalism of different schools in this field.

Nationalists see nations as timeless phenomena while postmodernists argue that nations are modern and constructed. Regardless of the different definitions by different scholars, nations and nationalism have been around for a period of time and have taken different shapes at different periods of human history.

Although definitions of nations and nationalism and the relationship between nation and state by different schools in that regard are beyond the scope of this study, it is necessary to at least briefly look at a few competing definitions of nations and nationalism. Ernest Gellner notes that there is a close link between nation and state. He considers both of them as contingency. Gellner stated that nation and state can emerge independent from each other. He also argues that nationalism does not raise the awareness of belonging of people to a nation, but it helps create a nation-state and that nationalism must pre-date the creation of a nation-state. Feelings of belonging and culture are two factors of a nation, Gellner argues:

> "In fact, nations, like states, are a contingency, and not a universal necessity. Neither nations nor states exist at all times and in all circumstances. Moreover, nations and states are not the same contingency. Nationalism holds that they were destined for each other; that either without the other is incomplete, and constitutes a tragedy. But before they could become intended for each other, each of them had to emerge, and their emergence was independent and contingent. The state has certainly emerged without the help of the nation. Some nations have certainly emerged without the blessings of their own state. It is more

debatable whether the normative idea of the nation, in its modern sense, did not presuppose the prior existence of the state."[1]

Gellner defines nationalism as a "political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent… In brief, nationalism is a theory of political legitimacy."[2] He confirms that "it is nationalism which engenders nations, and not the other way round"[3] and that "two men are of the same nation if and only if they share the same culture and if they recognize each other as belonging to the same nation"[4].

Benedict Anderson defines nation as an imagined political community. Anderson calls the nation imagined because he argues that the members of a particular nation will never have a chance to know their fellow nation-members. He also argues that, despite the disparities among the members of a nation, at the end they share the experience of living together in the same community:

> "It is **imagined** because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined. The nation is imagined as **limited** because even the largest of them encompassing perhaps a billion of living human beings, has finite, if elastic boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. It is imagined as **sovereign** because the concept was born in an age in which enlightenment and revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm. Finally, it is imagined as a **community**, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship."[5]

Nationalism, according to Anderson's view, "has to be understood by aligning it, not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural

---

[1] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 6-7.

[2] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Malden & Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 1.
[3] Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism,* 54.
[4] Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism,* 6-7.
[5] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Community* (London & New York: Verso, 2006), 7.

systems that preceded it, out of which – as well as against which – it came into being."[6]

Anthony Smith pays particular attention to the past and the history of nations. To him, one must establish an accurate relationship between the ethnic past and the modern state. He argues that nations cannot disregard part of their history for the sake of a modern nation. Despite the fact that some scholars, social scientists and historians argue that state is a crucial factor in defining and the existence of nations and nationalism, Smith argues that "history is no sweetshop in which its children may 'pick and mix'; but neither is it an unchanging essence or succession of superimposed strata. Nor can history be simply disregarded, as more than one nationalism, has found to its cost. The challenge for scholars as well as nations is to represent the relationship of ethnic past to modem nation more accurately and convincingly."[7]

Smith defines the concept of nation that "it will be coextensive with every larger territorial and cultural identity in any epoch. The nation cannot be distinguished from the ethnic community or indeed from any collective cultural identity and community."[8] He argues that symbols, myths, memories and values are revealed in the formation and character of a nation. Smith defines nationalism as "an ideology of a historic territory and it concentrates the energies of individuals and groups within a clearly demarcated homeland, in which all citizens are deemed to be brothers and sisters and to which they therefore belong."[9]

However, as far as a Kurdish nation and Kurdish nationalism are concerned, they have a unique case. The Kurds are considered a nation – as they have a distinctive language, culture, distinctive social structure and a land/territory where they have lived for thousands of years. They share a common history as well as memories of

---

[6] Anderson, *Imagined Community,* 12.
[7] Anthony D. Smith, "Gastronomy or Geology? The role of nationalism in the reconstruction of nations" Nations and Nationalism 1, no. 1 (1994): 3-23, pp18-19.
[8] Anthony D. Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (Malden: Polity Press, 2007), 54.
[9] Smith, *Nations and*, 155.

joy and grief. The Kurds have been struggling to run their own affairs for more than a century and have paid an enormous price for that.

The focus of this study will be reactive Kurdish nationalism as a result of homogenization of the state in Ba'thist Iraq 1963 – 2003, and the attempts by the dominant group, Sunni-Arabs, to homogenize the Kurds. Iraq is a unique state in terms of the composition of its ethnic and religious groups. The Arabs in Iraq are the majority ethnic group, but the Sunni-Arabs who ruled Iraq and ran its affairs for nearly eighty years are a minority group within the Arabs of Iraq. The emergence and development of Kurdish nationalism in Iraq is a unique case too. Kurds live in Iraq but are also scattered in three other countries in the region and do not have a state of their own. In 1988, Kurds in Iraq were subjected to genocide at the hands of the Ba'th regime.

2.1 State Formation and Nation-State

The Ottoman Empire, unlike European Empires, embraced different ethnic groups under the name of religion. Although the empire's central affairs were run mainly by the Turkish elite until the end of the twentieth century, the empire itself did not reflect a distinctive Turkish culture. Religion acted as a force of cohesion between different ethnic groups under the umbrella of the empire. Non-Turkish ethnic groups, within the boundaries of the empire, including Kurds, had local administrations to run their own affairs as, emirates. Only after the blossoming of European nationalism did Turkish nationalism emerge. Turkish nationalism arose relatively late in the nineteenth century in response to the nationalist claims that had been sweeping across Europe and across much of the Ottoman Empire. As Anthony Smith notes, "Turks in Anatolia before 1900 were largely unaware of a separate "Turkish" identity – separate from the dominant Ottomans or the overarching

Islamic identities – and besides local identities of kin, village, or region were often more important."[10]

The emergence of Turkish nationalism followed the rise of European nationalism. According to Rae, "Turkish nationalism, as it developed in the second half of the nineteenth century, was largely a response to the nationalist claims that had swept across the Empire."[11] Terms used by European nationalists soon found receptive ears amongst the Turkish elite. Rae notes that, "From the first half of the nineteenth, however, the Western European concepts, such as 'nation, freedom, homeland and equality', began to filter through to some members of the elite. Turkish nationalism was also in no small part, a response to the national claims of subject peoples in Ottoman's Empire."[12] Turkish nationalists tried to homogenize the state and give it a Turkish identity and homogenize all non-Turks to it.

Rulers of the newly-founded states in the Middle East following World War I tried to copy the trend of the European monarchs in running the affairs of their countries. King Faisal, the first king of Iraq, adopted a centralized administrative and education systems as well as taking control of the army in order to create a homogenous state of Iraq from north to the south, assigning Iraq an Arab-state identity without any consideration to the other ethnic groups. This was the initial ascension of the Sunni Arabs as the dominant group that controlled the running of Iraq's affairs. It remained so from the day Iraq was founded until April 2003.

In the new centralized Iraq, non-Arabs were left with two options: either accept a homogenous state or be excluded. Again, this was the case from the very foundation of Iraq until the fall of Ba'th Party in April of 2003. The dominant group had the power to use Iraq's resources, military and security apparatus to impose such an identity. Thus, the history of Iraq in terms of its policy, the identity of its rulers and the means used to implement its policy were all indicative of the philosophy and

---

[10] Heather Rae, *State Identities and the Homogenization of People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 52.
[11] Rae, *State Identities and*, 125.
[12] Rae, *State Identities and,* 144-145.

28

characteristics of such a state. As Rae argues, "As long as the basic functions of statehood are performed – a central government that has control over the means of violence, over a defined population and over a defined territory – then a state is a state."[13]

Despite the fact that the composition of the Iraqi population has been a mosaic of ethnicities, religions and doctrines, the Sunni-Arab minority attempted to give Iraq a single identity in defiance of objections from the other minorities and even the majority. Promoting a united Arab state has been one of the main pillars of Ba'th ideology since its inception. Iraqi Ba'th leaders intended to launch their tireless effort and campaign from Iraq to create such a state and impose such an identity on anyone living within the geographic boundaries of Arab countries, regardless of their ethnic or national background or identity. Obviously, anyone accepted such efforts stood to benefit substantially and whomever opposed this effort could expect to pay a hefty price.

History and the repeated catastrophes that faced the Kurds in the previous century, in particular at the hand of its rulers, taught the Kurds that for them to remain stateless is a crucial factor of their continued suffering. Rae confirms that "statelessness is a condition of infinite danger."[14] The Kurds' problem in Iraq was not only that they did not have a state of their own, but also that they were confronted with a regime that tried to impose an Arabic identity on them. They recognized the danger they would face by refusing such policies, as such rulers could exclude and eradicate those who reject such identity.

The Ba'th Party, since its seizure of power in Iraq in 1963 and again in 1968 until 2003, tried to create a homogenous state with clear Arabic identity. It used all the available state facilities such as administration, economy, army, security apparatus

---

[13] Heather Rae, *State Identities and the Homogenization of People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 16.
[14] Heather Rae, *State Identities and Homogenization of People,* 20, from Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defence of Pluralism and Equality* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 32.

and administration bureaucracy to impose such homogenization on all non-Arabs. It also used all available tools to exclude any group refusing to accept this tendency.

2.2   Homogenization and State-Building

Nationalists of a dominant ethnic group in a multi-ethnic state or empire often begin advocating for a homogenous state with a hope that other ethnic minorities within the state would accept such an effort and therefore work for a homogenous state as defined by the dominant group. Turkish nationalists first set out to create a homogenous Turkish state under the name of Ottomanization to include all ethnic groups within the boundaries of the old Ottoman Empire. Rae argues that "When this group used the term 'ottomanization' they meant homogenization process by which all Ottomans would become Turks."[15]

The Young Turks intended to use the Ottomanization agenda to impose Turkification on the non-Turk subjects of Ottoman Empire. Rae concludes that "Even in the era when a program of ottomanization was put forward, what the Young Turks meant by this was not an acceptance of a super national identification of all subjects with the Ottoman Empire in a manner consistent with diverse national identifications. On the contrary, their interpretation of Ottomanization came close to Turkification of the non-Turkish elements."[16]

Many key events in history introduced new social, political and economic relations and thus led to the opening of new eras. World War II and the collapse of Communist regimes many years later were not exceptions to this rule. The latter was a historic landmark event which brought new outcomes. According to Rae, 'After the demise of Communism and the reorganization of politics on the basis of principles of the modern-state, old 'national' memories were revived, forgotten graves were reopened, and a new wave of wars of 'national liberation', of 'ethnic cleansing' and of mass evictions of 'the enemy within' the new national borders

---

[15] Heather Rae, *State Identities and the Homogenization of People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 146.
[16] Rae, *State Identities and,* 133.

swept over the Balkans.'[17] So, the end of World War I, World War II, and the Cold War marked the foundation of many new states that can be categorized as nation-states.

Nationalists who sought to establish a homogenous state from a multi-ethnic society initiated their efforts by imposing a centralized education and cultural system on all. The rulers of such a state turn to the use of violence against any ethnic minority refusing to abide by their policies. The case of the Armenian massacre in the second decade of the twentieth century is clear evidence of such practices. As Andreas Wimmer notes,

> "Although state builders sought to destroy the collective identity of the targeted minority, and caused great suffering in the process, they were not intent on the physical destruction of all members of the targeted group. This was, however, the intention of those responsible for the Armenian genocide of 1915-1916. The Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) that came to power in the Ottoman Empire in the revolution of 1908 was animated by a chauvinist strand of Turkish nationalism, and was intent on building a rationalised and homogeneous Turkish national state. Accordingly, minority groups, of whom the Armenians were the largest and most vulnerable, were to be removed from Turkey… This carving out of a homogeneous national state from the remains of multinational Empire was to have a tragic impact on the Armenian people, who in the early twentieth century were still subjects of Ottoman Empire."[18]

According to Rae, "Hardin begins from the assumption that individuals make a rational choice to join ethnic groups in order to gain access to resources which, he argues, one group usually gains at the expense of another."[19] This model is appropriate in Iraq where the Ba'th regime went even further than the Turks in imposing homogenization process. The Ba'th regime implemented an Arabization policy. One of the methods of the Arabization campaign was to force non-Arabs in general and the Kurds in particular, to change their ethnicity to Arab during the

---

[17] Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict - Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 166.
[18] Heather Rae, *State Identities and the Homogenization of People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 124.
[19] Rae, *State Identities and*, 39.

general census or through application to registration offices. Anyone who accepted this idea was rewarded and spared punishment that was planned against his fellow group members. One of the effective benefits was to be allowed to stay in his area of residence and would be spared deportation, in addition to financial rewards.

Anthony Smith analyzed the impact of nation-state building on the population of the state by stating that

> "Nation-building has proved elusive. Too often, the construction of nations has been equated with state-building. But state-building, though it may foster a strong nationalism (whether loyal or resistant to the state in question), is not to be confused with the forging of a national culture and a political identity among often culturally heterogeneous population. The establishment of incorporating state institutions is no guarantee of a population's cultural identification with the state, or acceptance of the national myth of the dominant ethnie."[20]

Building a single identity state or homogenous state out of a mixture of ethnic and religious communities comes at a price. The group that tries to impose such an identity will eventually use every necessary mean to fulfill its goals, even if this attempt requires a violent and aggressive stand. Naturally, other minorities will pick up the bill. Rae argues that "Genocide is one, extreme, strategy of pathological homogenization through which state-builders seek to construct a unitary corporate identity."[21]

The Ba'th Party followed the same path that the Young Turks pursued in the early years of twentieth century in Turkey. The Ba'th Party worked to establish a homogenous Arab-state in Iraq. As the Kurds refused to accept such a homogenous state in Iraq, the use of extreme violence by the Ba'thists became the response. Extermination of the Kurds through the Anfal campaign in 1988 was a huge price paid by Kurds for refusing to accept a homogenous Arab state in Iraq.

---

[20] Anthony Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 38.
[21] Heather Rae*, State Identities and the Homogenization of People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 126.

Similar measures and atrocities can be committed by different groups in different places at different periods. The genocide of Armenians at the hands of the Young Turks and the Anfal campaign against the Kurds by the Ba'th regime has a number of similarities. Both crimes were the outcome of two regimes that intended to build homogeneous national states and the subsequent refusal of such policies by the two ethnic minorities they sought to repress. Rae argues that "the genocide was aimed at fundamentally reshaping the remains of the Empire into a homogeneous national state… The genocide occurred during World War I, which presented the regime with an opportunity to put into action, their plans to solve the 'Armenian question' by casting the Armenians as an internal security threat."[22]

The Ba'th Party's policy in Iraq was divided along ethnic lines. They justified and legitimized the massacre of Kurds during the infamous Anfal campaign by accusing them of treason. The true reason behind such an accusation was the Kurds' refusal to accept a homogenous Iraqi state with an Arab identity and their logistical and financial support of Kurdish nationalism movement. Eric Kaufmann has similar view when he declares that

> "The policy was more and more divided along ethnic lines, the ruling regime ever more exclusive with regard to its social bases of recruitment, and 'minorities' more and more estranged from the regime. At the end of this process was a systematic attack on the Kurdish population by the Iraqi army (during the so-called Anfal operation of 1988). The Kurdish populations were no longer considered part of citizenry of the state, but an enemy population to be held in check by means of terror and force."[23]

2.3   State building - Subordinate group's exclusion by dominant group

Since the foundation of Iraq until the fall of the Ba'th regime in April 2003, the country was run by a dominant Arab majority. Political opportunity for Kurds was

---

[22] Heather Rae, *State Identities and the Homogenization of People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 127.

[23] Eric P. Kaufmann, *Rethinking Ethnicity* (London & New York: Routledge, 2004), 50.

non-existent. Although the ruling elite for most of the past century had been Sunni Arabs, the Shiite Arabs are the majority ethnic group. According to Kaufman,

> "Two variants of this process of political closure along ethnic lines may be distinguished: dominant majority and dominant minority. In the first case, the elite of the most powerful ethnic group takes over the new state apparatus after the end of empire, while the subordinated groups continue to remain on the margin of political life and public culture. As part of the nation-building project, the state aims at assimilating these 'minorities' through education and language training and thus realizing the vision of a unified citizenry, nation and sovereignty. Resulting from these endeavors, educational elite of previously marginalized groups may emerge."[24]

Kurds in Iraq were labeled as an "ethnic minority" in official documents. This terminology has been widely used by the Ba'th Party to imply that the Kurds are first of all, not the major ethnic group on their land, secondly, are of a different ethnicity than the ruling dominant national group and cannot be the dominant ethnic group and thirdly, do not have the characteristics of being a nation. Hence, this definition was intended to pave the way for the dominant group which ran the affairs of state to impose a homogeneous state through any mean possible. According to Kaufmann, "The term 'ethnic' was reserved, in common parlance as much as in the social science, for those that were not seen as the legitimate owners of a national state but as political, if not demographic, minorities (Williams 1989)."[25]

During the period when Ba'th Party ruled Iraq, Kurds were prevented from occupying senior and sensitive posts in running the affairs of the country because in the Ba'th Party's eyes 'belonging to a specific national or ethnic group determines access to the rights and services the modern state is supposed to guarantee.'[26] Kurds were not only prevented from getting such posts but also not allowed to join the air force, attend military academies, and other diplomatic trainings. As Kaufman notes, "By contrast pre-modern empires integrated ethnic differences under the umbrella

---

[24] Eric P. Kaufmann, *Rethinking Ethnicity* (London & New York: Routledge, 2004), 45.
[25] Kaufmann, *Rethinking Ethnicity*, 40.
[26] Kaufmann, *Rethinking Ethnicity*, 42-43.

of a hierarchical, yet universalistic and genuinely non-ethnic political order, in which every group should have its properly defined place. This pyramidal mosaic was broken up when societies underwent nationalization and ethnic membership became a question of central importance in determining political loyalty and disloyalty towards the state."[27]

 Few Kurds held senior and sensitive posts in Iraq before the coup d'état of 1958. With the arrival of the Ba'th Party, this slim tolerance, too, had vanished altogether.

The Kurds were subjected to various forms of injustice during the stage of nation-state formation in Iraq. Arabization, mass deportation of Kurds from their towns and villages and settling Arabs in their place were some of the methods implemented by successive regimes in Iraq, particularly the Ba'th Party regime, to form an Arab-state in Iraq, impose their vision under the umbrella of homogenization and Iraqi identity, enhance their grip on power and control all the state's tools. Kaufmann elaborates on this subject and states that

> "Forced assimilation or the physical expulsion of those who have now become ethnic minorities' and are thus perceived as politically unreliable; the conquest of territories inhabited by 'one's own people'; encouraging the return migration of dispersed co-nationals living outside the national home – these are some of the techniques employed in all the waves of nation-state formation that the modern world has seen so far. What we now call ethnic cleansing or ethnocide and observe with disgust in the ever 'troublesome Balkans' or in 'tribalistic Africa' have in fact been constants of the European history of nation-building and state formation, from the expulsion of the Gypsies under Henry VIII or of the Muslims and Jews under Fernando and Isabella to Ptolemy's night in France or the people's exchange."[28]

Kaufmann continues in his argument by declaring

> "We find the most extreme case of dominance in authoritarian regimes where the elite are recruited from one single ethnic group, or most often even from one of its subgroups. Given the obvious break with the modern ideal of 'representing nation', the ruler can only rely upon a

---

[27] Eric P. Kaufmann, *Rethinking Ethnicity* (London & New York: Routledge, 2004), 42-43.
[28] Kaufmann, *Rethinking Ethnicity*, 44.

narrow circle of relatives or ethnic acquaintances, which even further reduces his legitimacy and enhances the need for relying on 'his own' people. And so, often in a round dance of coups and palace revolts, ever smaller and more closely knit groups assert themselves."[29]

There is no better example than the Ba'th Party for such a practice. The vast majority of senior army positions, members of Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) and members of the Regional Command of Ba'th Party were from Tikrit area and Al-bu Nasir tribe of Tikrit, specifically, from Saddam Hussein's clan in the village of Uoja. The composition of Ba'th Party founders and Iraq's Regional Command was a mixture of Sunni and Shiite Arabs and Christian before 1963. Once they seized power in Iraq the number of non Sunni Arabs in Regional Leadership had changed dramatically. Andreas Wimmer tries to prove his case by saying that "While from 1952 to 1963 there were still 54 percent Shiite among the members of the command of Ba'th Party, their share was reduced to 6 percent during the period from 1963 to 1970…At the end of this process of endless purges, executions, secret murders and forced exile, members of the al-Begat section of the Al-bu Nasir tribe of the Sunni town of Tekrit had the reins of power completely in their hands."[30]

The Kurds were under represented in the senior military, government, diplomatic, administration and other sensitive posts. The Kurds were also prevented from entering the Air Force and Military academies and Kurdish graduates were not given equal opportunities for postgraduate and other educational scholarships. These were restricted to Arabs, in general, and the Sunni-Arabs in particular. Kaufmann strengthen his argument and says "This is even more the case in dominant ethnic minority situations where the state apparatus is controlled by a group that is obviously not representative of the majority of the national population such that one of the fundamental principles of modern nation-states is violated."[31] He continues and argues that "Shiite Arabs and Sunni Kurds long contested the

[29] Eric P.Kaufmann, *Rethinking Ethnicity* (London & New York: Routledge, 2004), 46.
[30] Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict - Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 179-180.
[31] Eric P.Kaufmann, *Rethinking Ethnicity* (London & New York: Routledge, 2004), 48.

hegemony of Sunni Arabs in Iraq in vain – an example of a dominant ethnic minority."[32]

As a result of Kurdish refusal to accept Arabic identity and the growth of awareness amongst the Kurds to demand recognition of their national rights the Ba'th Party spared no method to portray the Kurds as traitors, collaborators with the enemies of Iraq, and agents of Iran and Israel. The Party also argued that the Arabs were the only ethnic group who has defended Iraq and were the only contributors to creating a glorious history of Iraq. Kaufmann argues that "in countries with a dominant ethnic majority, sovereignty and citizenry are not fully congruent with the nation, since the nation comprises majority thought of as the true Staatsvolk and the ethnic minorities who contributed less to the heroic history of national liberation. Sometimes, as in the more exclusivist variants of dominant majoritarianism, they are barely tolerated and openly treated as guests rather than full residents of the national home."[33]

In the manifesto of the Ba'th Party Kurds are described as guests on Arab land. Subsequently, any recognition of their rights is portrayed as a favor from the ruling Party and the Arabs. Moreover, the Kurds were considered as one of the main perils to the Arab national security – similar to Iran and Israel. These three perils were taught as part of the curriculum in the Army academies and senior Ba'th Party cadres' trainings.[34]

Saddam Hussein and Ba'th Party initially identified some groups of Kurdish origin who at the establishment of the state of Iraq would not accept a homogenous Sunni Arab nation state of Iraq. The regime then identified more and more groups in Iraq. Faili Kurds, who were Shiite Muslims, were the first targeted group to be eradicated, in the eyes of Ba'th Party. In the early seventies of the last century many thousands of them were killed by the regime and tens of thousands more were

---

[32] Eric P.Kaufmann, *Rethinking Ethnicity* (London & New York: Routledge, 2004), 48-49.
[33] Kaufmann, *Rethinking Ethnicity*, 47.
[34] Read *Nidhal al-Ba'th -Struggle of Ba'th* (Beirut: Dar al-Talia' Leltibaa' Wal-nashr, 1969).

stripped of their Iraqi citizenship and were deported to Iran. Other similar regimes implemented such policy against subordinate groups. Wimmer affirmed this case be stating that "countless episodes of 'ethnic cleansing', and millions of refugees expelled from states where they were suddenly considered as 'foreigners' although they had been living there for centuries."[35]

The Ba'th Party represented the dominant group and considered non-Arabs as a second-class citizen, but the Ba'th leadership did not publicly announce such a view. However, in the content of the amnesty of 6 and 8 September 1988, following the Anfal campaign, there was more than one occasion where it was clearly stated that those Kurds who would surrender to the Iraqi authorities were to be regarded as second-class citizen. The returnees were prevented from serving in the army, barred from living in their towns and cities and were not given a chance to be re-employed in civil services.

Once the Ba'th Party realized that the Kurds refused a homogenous state with an Arabic identity in Iraq they decided to remove this obstacle. In 1987, Iraq's Revolutionary Command Council and the Regional Leadership of the Ba'th Party decided to identify and punish another Kurdish group for refusing to accept Iraq's Arab identity. The regime started with the rural Kurds in the 'prohibited areas'.[36] The regime used their refusal of such identity and their support of the Kurdish nationalism movement as an excuse to exclude and then exterminate them under the name of treason, alliance with the enemy and supporting insurgents. Rae analyzed this case and argues that "the decision to forcibly assimilate, expel or exterminate certain groups in the name of homogenized identity cannot be explained purely in terms of pursuit of material benefits. In all the cases examined in this study,

---

[35] Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict - Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 166.
[36] "Prohibited areas" is a term used since the establishment of Northern Bureau of Ba'th Party in 1982 by the Ba'th regime in Kirkuk and later also used by Ali Hassan al-Majid to punish the villagers. The regime considered all the villages and rural areas of Iraqi Kurdistan outside the cities and towns and were not under the direct control of the regime as "prohibited areas". Presence of any individuals in those areas was prohibited. Travelling to and from these areas was prohibited. Farmers were not allowed to sell their products or buy food, gas and oil from the towns.

decisions were made to target groups for expulsion or extermination in the knowledge that this would entail economic, and certainly in the later cases, political costs."[37]

In some cases, individuals from a minority ethnic group who accepted the ideology of Ba'th Party, worked towards achieving its goals, and proved to be loyal to its leader had been allowed to take senior positions within the Ba'th Party's apparatus and the government. Nevertheless, they never managed to have the same status of the individuals of the dominant group. Naturally, the more they inclined towards serving the Ba'th Party the more they distanced themselves from their ethnic roots. This category of Kurds would be labeled as traitors by their own ethnic group. Subsequently, they would work harder to prove their loyalty to their new masters and secure their trust. Two examples of Kurds who fell under such category were Taha Yasin Ramadan and Taha Mehieddin Marouf, who became the vice-chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council and the vice President respectively. This should not divert attention from the fact that a sense of blatant rejection developed within their ethnic groups towards such individuals. It also created extremely harsh reactions among the minority groups towards such attempts by the dominant ethnic group to eradicate any hope of the minority group for a nation-building project.

2.4   Reactive Nationalism in Homogenous State

The Ottoman Empire was based on religion rather than ethnicity for most of its history. The style in which the affairs of the empire were carried out reflected the very same notion. Therefore, nationalism did not blossom amongst the majority of the empire's citizens, who came from different ethnic backgrounds until the second half of nineteenth century. The Kurds tried to gain more autonomy from Ottoman's rulers within the boundaries of the empire. This could be interpreted as a degree of nationalist feeling and nationalism awareness amongst them. The will to gain additional national rights amongst the elite changed soon after the emergence of the

---

[37] Heather Rae, *State Identities and the Homogenization of People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 26.

CUP and the Young Turks' movement to control the affairs of the empire. Once it became clear that there was a tendency and real attempts to Turkisize the empire, the non-Turkish Muslim nations, including the Kurds, reacted by calling for their rights to be recognized and demanded self-rule on their lands. Formation of Kurdish associations, groups and clubs during that time by some Kurdish intellectuals and army officers demonstrated their degree of national awareness at that time. Andreas Wimmer argues that the Arabs followed the same pattern.

> "The Arabs remained firmly tied to the ideal of a trans-ethnic Islamic empire, although some of them dreamed of an Arab caliph or looked towards the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy as a new model for the Ottoman state. Nevertheless the gradual abolition of a system of mass education, and the introduction of popular representation in politics had led to a first wave of the politicization of ethnicity, which had been absent from the political realm of the pre-modern Ottoman empire for more than a millennium."[38]

Any attempt by a dominant ethnic group towards establishment of its rule – through imposing a centralized cultural and educational system - faces a reaction by non-dominant groups. The Young Turk's policy in that direction created awareness and reaction amongst the Kurdish elite, writers and intelligentsia at the end of nineteenth century. Anthony Smith pays attention to the importance of language by stating that "The outstanding role played by philologists, grammarians, and lexicographers in so many nationalisms indicates the importance so often attached to language as an authentic symbolic code embodying the unique inner experiences of the ethnie."[39]

At the time when the Young Turks tried to impose Turkish culture and language on the Kurds, a number of Kurdish newspapers were published for the first time in Cairo, Istanbul and Suleimanyeh. The Kurdish elites, intellectuals, notables and sheikhs played a significant role in publishing those newspapers. Andreas Wimmer argues that "The first signs of ethnic awareness with clear political implications can be traced to the end of the nineteenth century... Kurdish grievances and demands

---

[38] Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict - Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 165.
[39] Anthony Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 66.

were reactions to the language issues raised by the educational policy of the Young Turks, to the move towards centralization and to the replacement of indirect rule through notables, sheikhs and tribal leaders."[40]

The Kurdish elite responded to the Young Turks' movement by establishing a number of political Kurdish groups that called for their national rights to be recognized and to set up a nation-state for the Kurds. Kurdish demands for independence emerged when they started losing their semi-autonomous status in the form of emirates within the empire. This happened after the Young Turks implemented a centralized educational and administrative system in running the affairs of the empire. The rulers of Iraq in the early 1920s repeated what the Young Turks did in Turkey after 1908. They implemented a centralized education system with the Arabic language at its core.

In the same vein, the Kurds did not accept the foundation of Iraq and the abandonment of the Sevres treaty from the start. In the early twentieth century, Sheikh Mahmud reacted to this by declaring himself the King of Kurdistan. The Kurds' demands had been proportionate to the counter policies implemented by the rulers of Iraq since the foundation of modern Iraq until the end of the last century. More pressure put upon the Kurds to accept a homogenous Arab state in Iraq resulted in them raising their demands for autonomy and self-rule. Those in the Kurdish nationalism movement in Iraq, following the fall of the monarchy began demanding non-centralization of the administration, and then their demand rose to autonomy before demanding and finally gaining federalism. The Kurds showed more resilience every time the rulers of Iraq used more violence against them. The use of chemical weapons and genocide created a sentiment of complete rejection to Ba'th regime's attempt to homogenize the Kurds to the Arab state of Iraq.

The introduction of a newly-founded Sunni Arab dominated Iraq was not the outcome of the ever-growing Arab nationalism amongst all the different sectors of

---

[40] Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict - Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 166-167.

Iraq's population. Arab nationalists supported this trend but other ethnic components of Iraq not only did not support it but also found themselves excluded. Since the formation of the modern Iraq the Kurds in Iraq have never developed a feeling of being included and belonging to the state. The reaction came swiftly at the beginning and grew stronger as the Ba'thists tried to impose a homogenous Arab state on them. Arab nationalists planned carefully to create such homogenous state. They started with centralized education, administration and culture system and monopoly of all senior and sensitive posts of the state.

Many Arab fanatics believed that they would force all subordinate groups to accept the homogeneous Arab state, but it never happened. Wimmer states that "the new Sunni Arab elite acknowledged that feelings of national solidarity were completely absent in Iraq during the 1920's and the notion of an Arab nation was hardly known even among the Arab-speaking population of the country. According to the elite's view, the country's mosaic structure should gradually be overcome and the different pieces melded into a conscious Arab nation."[41]

The Sunni Arabs, who were made the rulers of Iraq and controlled the state's army and administration apparatus tried to glorify their rule by advocating for national identity and Pan-Arabism. The new trend led to a fierce objection by non-Arabs in general and the Kurds in particular. This continued to be the case as long as the Arab fanatics continued their policy of Arabization to give Iraq Arabic identity and homogenize others to it. Wimmer analyzes the situation in Iraq by stating that "the rise of Pan-Arabism to the status of national ideology and the Arabization of Army, the education system and the administrative apparatus were contested right from the beginning by those who suddenly found themselves in the position of a 'minority' vis-à-vis a new state and military elite. These elite, installed by a foreign power,

---

[41] Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict - Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 175.

declared their own cultural background and ethnic characteristics as an ideal for the nation as a whole."[42]

The Kurds did not give in and continued in their efforts to show their Kurdish identity. After the collapse of Sheikh Mahmoud's rule in Suleimanyeh, Kurdish nationalism took other forms. The Kurds demanded use of the Kurdish language for studying in schools in Kurdistan as opposed to the centralized Arabic education system imposed by Baghdad. A group of Suleimanyeh intellectuals went even further and set up a centre to purify Kurdish language by purging foreign words (mainly Arabic and Turkish). A number of Kurdish newspapers were published in Suleimanyeh and Erbil following the new wave of publishing Arabic newspapers and journals in Baghdad. Poets and writers mobilized Kurdish people through their poems and writings to support Kurdish nationalism.

A number of Kurdish political groups had emerged from the early 1920s through the 1930s. The nationalist goals and agenda of the emerging political groups was a reaction to the attempts by Sunni Arabs who controlled the affairs of the newly created state of Iraq and worked towards giving Iraq an Arabic identity and homogenize others to it. Wimmer admits the development of Kurdish nationalism in the first half of last century when he says "from the 1920s onward, and especially during the thirties and forties, however, a genuine Kurdish nationalism developed. The concept of a Kurdish nation, united by the bonds of language and a common history and culture, and the ideal of political autonomy or even independence for this entity, was gaining more and more followers among the urban sectors of population. The spread of these ideas was closely linked to the Arabization of state and army."[43]

Pan-Arabism grew among the Sunni Arabs in Iraq from the early to the mid-twentieth century. The first step of the proponents of Pan-Arabism was to gain

---

[42] Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict - Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 180.
[43] Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and*, 185.

control of the state of Iraq through centralized education and administrative systems and staffing all of the senior posts for themselves. They tried to homogenize Iraq through the creation of a feeling of belonging and pride towards the nation-state among all ethnic and religious components of Iraqi society. A homogeneous Iraq, in their view, must have an Arab identity. They made every effort to control the state – the army, administrative apparatus and education system - so as to make it a platform from which they could launch their more ambitious nationalist manifesto. They not only failed in rallying subordinate groups for their cause but were confronted with a fierce reaction and resistance, notably from the Kurds. Arab nationalism did not gain sympathy or solidarity amongst the Kurds as it failed to include them. In contrast, Kurdish nationalism grew stronger as a reaction to what were perceived as Arab chauvinist policies.

The Ba'th Party had excluded the Kurds from running the affairs of Iraq. This policy harmed and weakened any hope for establishing a homogeneous nation-state by alienating many components of the state. The Kurds in particular, as a reaction to such policy, not only felt excluded but also lost any feeling of belonging to Iraq and became more eager to participate in Kurdish struggle for their national rights to be recognized. A minority's feeling of exclusion in a multi-ethnic state could lead to a reaction expressed in the form of violence towards the state rulers who represent the dominant-ethnic group and rejection of the state's status, sovereignty and therefore, its progress.

The policy of exclusion by the dominant ethnic group creates a feeling of rejection towards anything related to the state that they live in as they are barred from participating in the running of its affairs. The Kurds and any other subordinate group would have developed feeling of belonging to the state if they were included and their rights recognized. Wimmer declares that "When ruling elites are not prepared to include the entire population of the country into the state-embodying nation, those who thereby become 'minorities' are excluded from the benefits of political modernity and do not feel inclined to embrace the project of nation-building through assimilation and passing. This in turn led to the technocrats to rely

on terror and pure force in order to control the many, which in turn further alienates the 'minorities' from the state and so on."[44]

With every new measure against the Kurds enacted by the Ba'thists since their assumption to power, the Kurdish nationalism movement was given further opportunity to mobilize additional members. Although the Ba'th Party managed to clear Iraq's state apparatus of non-Arabs, the future of the state became more vulnerable. Minority groups that were excluded from participating in running the affairs of Iraq lost any feeling of belonging to the state that had existed. Hence, anti-state sentiment had increased and Kurdish national awareness rose among ordinary people, peasants, workers, students and civil servants. Subsequently, more people joined the Kurdish nationalism movement. Kaufmann describes the situation in Iraq as follows,

> "In post-independence Iraq, the new elites narrowed their concept of the nation to those sharing their own background, i.e. to the Sunni Arab population. Accordingly, political closure quickly proceeded along ethno-religious lines. Exclusion from access to the increasingly Arabized state gave rise to a strong and militant Kurdish nationalist movement, which at various points in post-war history was able to secure control over large parts of the Northern territories. The Iraqi state was neither willing nor able to respond to the rise of Kurdish nationalism."[45]

Forceful amalgamation of different ethnicities and religions into one state in Iraq did not bring those groups into one nation-state with an Arabic identity, as the Ba'th Party wished and planned. The Ba'th Party managed to run Iraq for a period of time but only through the use of force. The dominant group defined the terms of citizenship to the nation-state and loyalty to the nation in a way that best served its purpose in imposing a homogeneous state's identity on all. Naturally, this did not develop or enhance feeling of belonging to the state by non-dominant groups. On the contrary, it estranged them from the state. Subsequently, the dominant group in

---

[44] Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict - Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 194.

[45] Eric P.Kaufmann, *Rethinking Ethnicity* (London & New York: Routledge, 2004), 50.

control of the state labeled them with treason. This policy led to massacres, ethnic cleansing and genocide. Hence, it divided the population even further. Andreas Wimmer argues that "The introduction of the principles of the modern nation-state, with its ideal of congruence between citizenry, sovereign and nation, into a mosaic society with a wide variety of religious communities of varied origin, led to the well-known catastrophe of endless wars in the name of national unification."[46]

Any demand for autonomy and special status or secession by an ethnic group within a state is a clear indication of its refusal of an imposed identity based on political and cultural homogenization. In 1958 Abdulkarim Qasem recognized Kurdish rights in the constitution and declared that the Kurds and Arabs would share Iraq. Kurds agreed with this move and supported Qasem and his government and were ready to defend it against its enemies. As soon as Qasem backed down from his promises, the Kurds turned against him and demanded autonomy. They refused to accept a homogeneous Arab state of Iraq where their rights and identity would fade. It was during Qasem's rule when the Kurdish nationalism armed struggle started. The same action was repeated in 1974 when the Ba'th Party backed down from the 1970's March agreement. The Kurds refused to accept anything less than recognition of their national rights. Hence, the vast majority of the Kurds joined the Kurdish nationalism movement led by the KDP. The foundation of the PUK and resumption of armed struggle in Iraqi Kurdistan in 1976 following the collapse of the Kurdish movement was another reaction to the Ba'th Party's policy against the Kurds. The Ba'th Party tried to capitalize on its victory and the collapse of Barzani's movement to impose a homogeneous state on the Kurds with a clear Arabic identity. The Ba'th regime started a vicious deportation and Arabization campaign, dismissed Kurdish army officers from their posts, forced people to join the Ba'th Party and to send their children to newly opened Arabic schools. It also censored Kurdish publications from publishing anything that hinted of Kurdish nationalism, and encouraged those Kurds who cooperated with them to glorify

---

[46] Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict - Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 166.

Saddam Hussein and the Ba'th Party's achievements in print. The 1991 uprising which led to the liberation of Iraqi Kurdistan, the establishment of Kurdistan Regional Government and the election of the Kurdistan Parliament in 1992 was a strong example of the Kurds' reaction to the Ba'th Party's plan to impose an Arabic homogeneous state on the Kurds.

Once the Ba'th Party realized that non-dominant groups, namely the Kurds, did not accept such a trend of homogenization, they excluded them and made plans to eradicate them. One of the most necessary components for implementing such a policy by the political leaders of Iraq consisted of two factors; 1) to have a strong army, 2) to control the military through a centralized system. Amir Hassanpour states that 'The system of political power has been equally centralized leaving no space for opposition of any form. This type of despotic rule has required the militarization of the entire country, especially politically sensitive areas such as Kurdistan.'[47] The dominant group, the Sunni Arabs, did not hesitate to commit genocide against subordinate groups that refused to accept the homogeneous state with an Arab identity if such action was required. The Anfal campaign was the last act by the Ba'th Party to eradicate the Kurds after accusing them of treason. The rural Kurds were stripped of their Iraqi citizenship during the 1987 general census, just before the start of the campaign.

The Arab nationalists and the Ba'th Party used every possible means to Arabize the state through a number of measures such as: the introduction of centralized educational and administrative systems, controlling the state's military, security and intelligence apparatus, deportation and a vicious Arabization campaign including implementing a scorched earth policy and committing genocide. This policy not only failed to make the Kurds accept the Arabic identity of the state of Iraq but caused a strong reactive nationalism to blossom and for their demands to increase. The Kurdish nationalism movement was enhanced and its proponents managed to mobilize increasing numbers of Kurds under the banner of Kurdish nationalism.

---

[47] Amir Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan 1918-1985* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992), 61.

Thus, the Ba'th Party - through their ideology and practice - created a fertile environment for Kurdish nationalism to blossom. Andreas Wimmer states that

> "The new regime envisioned the compulsory assimilation of the different minorities into the main stream of Arabism…. The rounds of coups and counter-coups, palace intrigues and foreign interventions, of civil wars and conflicts with neighboring states that characterize the history of Iraqi state is at the same time a history of the steady Pan-Arabism…During this ascent to power, Pan-Arabism became radicalized and finally took on a fascist hue under the rule of Ba'th from 1968 onwards…The more the regime tried to enforce its vision of society, the fiercer resistance became, giving rise to ever higher levels of repression and domination. This in turn nourished feelings of being ruled and dominated by 'ethnic others' among those who refused to meld into the great Arab nation and who were more and more excluded from state power."[48]

The Kurdish nationalist movement mobilized Kurds to work towards the creation of a nation-state and inspired them to struggle toward this end. Mariwan Wria Qani uses Gellner's view when he states that 'Ernest Gellner identifies a very important point when it comes to the relationship between nation and nationalism. His sociological and political argument is relevant to our discussion. He argues that nationalism is not there to raise the awareness of belonging to a nation, but it rather creates the nation-state where it does not exist. The creation of nation, however, requires a number of different factors to start working on it. M Qnia states that "Hobsbawm agrees with Gellner's definition and argues that nationalism exist prior to the nation. In fact, it is not the nation that creates a state and nationalism; it is rather the opposite."[49] George Santayana wrote in his introduction to Gellner's book, Nations and Nationalism, that "nationalism is not a sentiment expressed by pre-existing nations; rather it creates nation where they did not previously exist."[50] Where Gellner describes nationalism as a "very strong force, but not the awakening

---

[48] Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict - Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 175.

[49] Mariwan W Qani', *Nasionalizm u Safer (Kurdish), Nationalism and Migration – The Kurds in Diaspora* (Suleimaniyeh: Rehend Centre, 2002) 53.

[50] John Breuilly, introduction to *Nations and Nationalism*, by Ernest Gellner (Malden & Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), xxv.

of an old, latent, dormant force…it is in reality the consequence of a new form of social organization, based on deeply internalized, education dependent high cultures, each protected by its own state."[51]

Every attempt by the Ba'thists to impose an Arabic identity on Iraq and to create a homogeneous state raised the level of the Kurds' demands. The Ba'th Party used force and violence to impose one identity on the whole population of Iraq. The Kurds refused and reacted by demanding autonomy and self-rule as an act of opposition to the complete integration of the Iraqi state. Such reaction by the Kurds led to more violence against them by the regime. The more pressure against the Kurds by the Ba'th Party, the less they felt as though they belonged to the state of Iraq. Subsequently, the Kurds felt little or no connection to of modern Iraq – to its land, history, integrity, military, culture, its industrial and agricultural products, or even its football team. This was a pure rejection of the imposed identity and the efforts by the Ba'th Party to homogenize the state. The fragile state disintegrated immediately when the state's weakness became visible following the second Gulf war when the Kurds stormed Iraq's military and security headquarters in all Kurdish cities and towns, thus liberating Iraqi Kurdistan. Heather Rae argues that "Ethnic conflict is most likely to occur under conditions of state weakness and loss of legitimacy."[52]

Despite all the attempts by Ba'th Party to create an Arab nation-state in Iraq at the cost of Kurds' national aspirations, they could not eliminate the will of the Kurds for their own self-rule. This policy forced the Kurds to look for any opportunity to achieve their national goals and take advantage of Iraq's weakness. Wimmer states that "After the end of the second Gulf war, when the allied forces installed a zone of protection there, the Kurdish guerrilla forces had embarked on a project of state-building amidst an atmosphere of nationalist euphoria. A Kurdish army had been

---

[51] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Malden & Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 46.
[52] Heather Rae*, State Identities and the Homogenization of People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 41.

formed out of the different guerrilla forces, a government set up with ministries and cabinet meetings, and customs taken at the borders."[53]

In 2003, following the fall of Ba'th Party, a vibrant and powerful Kurdish nationalism emerged as a result of a cumulative reactions by Kurds to the attempts by the Ba'th Party to impose a homogenous Arab state on them. The Kurds managed to establish their own semi-state with all the necessary components and infrastructure of a nation-state in Iraqi Kurdistan. The Kurdish nation will become the focus of political loyalty and identity only when a state-building process is consolidated. Kurdish nationalism will flourish when the Kurds run their own affairs through establishing a modern administration, respecting its judicial system, protecting human rights and running a modern national education system. Since 1991, despite shortcomings and internal fighting, the Kurds in most areas of Iraqi Kurdistan have been enjoying such a status.

2.5   Methodology

The methodology that I use in my study is the interpretative group method. I gathered data from available literature, archived data and through personal observation throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. I analyzed the data from an academic analytical angle. I conducted a number of interviews mainly with those who played important roles in the Kurdish nationalist movement combining their analysis with my own observations.

As part of gathering my data, I interviewed a number of Kurdish leaders and personnel who played significant role in the Kurdish nationalist movement in the past half-century in order to to compare their understanding of Kurdish nationalism with the available literature and studies on the subject by social scientists and other scholars. I also interviewed Arab writers who study Kurdish nationalism from a different angle, in addition to normal Kurds, writers, poets and students. The views

---

[53] Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict - Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 156.

and analysis of people such as President Talabani, President Barzani, Noshirwan Mustafa, Sherko Bekas and Falakadin Kakayee have certainly enriched this study. I tried to encourage interviewees to effectively articulate their views about and definitions of Kurdish nationalism as well as the effect they believe their parties or views had on the development of Kurdish nationalism. It must be said that their definition for Kurdish nationalism does not always fit the standards articulated by some European and American social scientists. Rather, they often emphasized the political component of Kurdish nationalism.

The views of those that I interviewed regarding the shape that Kurdish nationalism took in the last half century as a result of the actions and ideology of Ba'th Party substantiated and reinforced the theory of this dissertation.

I tried to build my thesis around a theoretical and conceptual base in order to show how I treat the available materials with respect to a broad scope of literature on reactive nationalism.

I undertook the gathering of data, observation, and analysis in a chronological manner. It is obvious from the breakdown of this thesis that I started (excluding the theoretical chapter) chronologically, from the origin of Kurdish nationalism a few centuries ago to the foundation of contemporary Iraq, then the period between World War I and World War II and the end of the monarchy. The main focus of the study has been the period from 1963 -2003, which has been broken down into five different periods, in chronological order. It must be said that the analysis of each period builds on the analysis of the previous chapter. A large part of this study and analysis is derived from personal experience, as well as the available literature on the subject. Having served as Peshmerga for more than a decade before 1991, and subsequently working closely with the KRG after 1991, I was given an insider's perspective of the rise of Kurdish nationalism. After living in Britain for more than fifteen years, I was able to combine the knowledge I had gained regarding the subject matter through experience with an outsiders' perspective. In addition to this, I worked with Human Rights Watch for several years, permitting me access to 18

metric tons of captured Iraqi documents containing in-depth information regarding Ba'thist policies and ideology. This comprised a large portion of the research I conducted.

Although beyond the parameters of this dissertation, it would be interesting to further study the logic behind the change in Kurdish demands through their negotiations with the Iraqi regimes in the second half of the twentieth century and to examine the factors that determined the limits and changes of their demands.

2.6   Application to Iraqi Kurdistan

I hope that this piece of work will fill a gap in the study and analysis of the recent history of Kurdish nationalism. This study will enrich the theoretical material related to the state of nationalism and the role of the dominant and subordinate groups in an ethnically heterogeneous state. Once a dominant group tries to homogenize the state and give it an identity to which all subordinate groups must assume, a new situation emerges. The reactive nationalism that emerges and develops by subordinate groups is a response to the efforts by the dominant group to homogenize the state. The Kurds, being the subordinate group in this case, rejected a homogenous Iraqi state with an Arabic identity imposed on them by the dominant Sunni-Arabs. They reacted by looking to other means to protect their identity and demanded their national rights to be recognized. Hence, during those very difficult circumstances, Kurdish nationalism emerged and developed.

I tried to relate all the practices of the Ba'th Party and their predecessors to Kurdish nationalism. The main focus, though, has been the impact of the Ba'th Party as a political entity and as an ideology, and the effect of its policies, through the measures it implemented in Iraqi Kurdistan, on Kurdish nationalism. This study also attempts to show that the Kurds paid a huge price for their refusal to accept a homogenous Arabic state in Iraq. The Ba'th Party, being the rulers of Iraq, had the legal ability to define Iraq's citizens, and label the Kurds as treasonous. Moreover, they decided to exclude rural Kurds during the October 1987 general census and

prevented them from registering their names. Subsequently, according to one of the Revolutionary Command Council's decrees, they were stripped of their citizenship. However, with every measure, practice and strategy the Ba'th Party made to consolidate their view of Iraq's Arab identity; the Kurds reacted by preparing themselves through any necessary means to confront the Ba'th Party and became increasingly adamant in their demands for their national rights to be recognized.

3.   The Origins of Kurdish Nationalism

3.1   Kurds' Origin & Status

One of the main issues surrounding definition of the Kurds is to categorize them so that they are properly defined. One wonders if the Kurds fall under the category of a nation, ethnicity or a group of people that lived and mixed with other nations in the region. Nations come in different shapes at different stages of human history and in different places where people live. According to Anthony Smith "The world is divided into nations, each with its own character and destiny."[1] It might be easier for a western researcher/scholar to define the above mentioned categories but would be difficult to define such terms in the Middle East and most of other developing countries. This is because developing countries have gone through different stages in their development, especially when it comes to nationalism and establishment of nation-states, in comparison to those of developed countries. Jamal Nabaz defines the Kurds by stating "So, when we talk about the Kurds we mean a group of people who have distinguished characteristics. The effect of this objective uniqueness makes them unique and different from the others."[2]

Kurds are one of the ancient nations of Middle East. They have been living on their land, Kurdistan, for thousands of years. There is not enough concrete evidence about the origin of the Kurds to speak with absolute authority on the subject, but almost all historians and scholars agree that the Kurd's origin is linked to the Indo-Europeans. A reasonable explanation to the origin of the Kurds is that modern Kurds are the outcome of a mixture between two categories of people: indigenous people who lived in the Zagros Mountains and those tribes and groups who moved from the Central Asia and other regions to the Zagros Mountains. These two groups of people mixed and lived with each other for thousands of years and became what are known today as Kurds. The prominent Kurdish historian, Mohammed Amin Zeki has a similar view and declares that "the origin of

---

[1] Anthony Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 149.
[2] Jamal Nabaz, *Nasnama u keshai Nasionali Kurd (Kurdish) - The Kurdish Identity and National Question of Kurdistan* (London: Bnkay Kurdnama, 2002), 10.

Kurds comes from a mixture between a number of nations and groups of people whose language and customs were close from each other and were living in the same area or a neighboring area. They were (Kutu, Jutu), (Kasai, Kashar), Shubari, Nairi, (Mad, Med) and Lulu."[3]

Many scholars and historians have tried to locate the ancestors of the Kurds from the nations, empires and civilizations that have left impacts on the history of the region. Many argue that the Kurds are the descendants of the Medes. Amir Hassanpour put his view and says "It is often argued, on the basis of geographical and historical evidence, that the Kurds are descendents of the Medes who were, together with the Persians, part of the migrating peoples and who established the Median Empire (728-550 B.C.) in Western Iran."[4]

Due to the lack of concrete evidence about the origin of the Kurds, different scholars have different views on their origin. Jonathan Randal refers to some other scholers and states that "William Lynn Westermann half a century ago, noting that the Kurds had been nomads and herdsmen since 2400 B.C, argued that 'the Kurds can present a better claim to 'race purity', meaning ethnic purity, and to a continuity of their cultural pattern for much longer period that can any people now living in Europe."[5]

Different empires and various nations have referred to the Kurds by different names. These names were used in different periods of the history of the region. Aziz Shamzini believes that "The Sumurians and Babylons knew the Kurds as Guti, Juti, Kurts, Kardo. The Assyrians and Arammians called the Kurds Guti, Karti, Kurti, Kardo, Kardaka and Kardak. The Iranians knew the Kurds as Sirti, Kurti, Kurdiu, Kurdraha and Kurds. The

---

[3] Mohammad Amin Zeki, *Khulasat Ta'reekh al-Kurd Wa Kurdistan (Arabic) - Summary of the History of Kurds and Kurdistan* (Cairo: Matbaat al-Saada, 1939), 81.

[4] Amir Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan, 1918-1985* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992), 49.

[5] Jonathan C. Randal, *Kurdistan After Such Knowledge, What Forgiveness?* (London: Bloomsbury, 1998),19.

Romans and the Greek knew the Kurds as Kardosui, Kardxoi, Kurdutu, Kurdin, Kardoti, Kurdons and Kardwai."[6]

Although it is hard to establish the exact origin of the Kurds, there is some level of consensus amongst many scholars that the Kurds originated from Aryan roots. Sa'ad Jawad, who is an Arab scholar, concludes that "Most of the scholars consider the Kurds to be Aryans, but it is difficult to obtain a unanimous view of their origin. As long ago as 400 BC Xenophon, in the Anabasis, mentions Khardukhi or Kardukai, a mountain people who harassed his march towards the sea. The Kurdish language belongs to the Indo-European family."[7]

That being said, there is not enough written or documented eviridence or reliable archaeological findings to sufficiently prove the origin of the Kurds. Gareth Stansfield states that

> "The origins of the Kurds are unclear, but there is common consent within the academic literature that they are an Indo-European people, descended from waves of migrations originating on the Indian subcontinent and spreading across the mountains of Turkey, Iraq and Iran, and into Europe, a migration occurring several thousand years ago. Kurds believe themselves to be the direct descendants of the Medes, who secured their autonomy from the neo-Assyrian empire and established their own empire centered in the Zagros Mountains."[8]

One can argue that Kurdistan was not a land without inhabitants when other groups travelled to or settled on this land. The migrants of various tribes from Central Asia to the land of the Kurds stayed and mixed with the indigenous people. Therefore, it is logical to argue that the current Kurds are a mix of tribes and groups who travelled or migrated from India and Central Asia to Zagros mountains with the indigenous people of the land, which is currently located to the north and north east of Iraq, north-west of Iran, south-east of Turkey and north-west of Syria and is called Kurdistan. Dr. Shaker Khasbak ends

---

[6] Dr. Aziz Shamzini, *Joolanawai Rezgari Nishtmani Kurdistan (Kurdish) - The National Liberation Movement of Kurdistan* (Slemani: Santary Lekolinaway Stratizhi Kurdistan, 2006), 40.

[7] Sa'ad Jawad, *Iraq & the Kurdish Question 1958-1970* (London: Ithaca Press, 1981), 1.

[8] Gareth Stansfield, *Iraq – People, History, Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 64.

his conclusion and declares that "We can conclude from the evidence that is available to date that the Kurds are the descendents of the Kuts, who were originated from the mix between the original inhabitants of Zagros Mountains and the waves of the Aryans that dwelled in their region."[9]

The Kurds insist that all historical and archeological findings prove beyond any reasonable doubt that the Kurds have been living on this land for thousands of years. Many other nations and tribes migrated to the same lands and mixed with them, but the Kurds did not lose their identity. Jalal Talabani writes about the origin of Kurds and admits that

> "The current Kurdish nation has its roots in this land, Kurdistan for thousands and even tens of thousands of years. The latest archeological findings in the caves of Shanadari, Chami Rezan (Zarzi) show that the land of the Kurds, Kurdistan, was inhabited for tens of thousands of years. This means that there were groups of people living in Kurdistan before the migration periods that Mr. Mohammed Zeki mentioned in his book. Obviously, the waves of people and groups that arrived in Kurdistan mixed with the original inhabitants throughout time. Therefore, the original tribes and clans merged together to create the current Kurdish nation."[10]

The Kurds claim that they are the descendents of the Medes who established an empire in the Middle East many thousands of years ago. Many scholars share this view. According to C J Edmonds "In general one would assume, based on geographical, linguistic and historic evidence, that the Kurds are descendents of the 3rd greatest Kings of the Medes, in the same way that we assume that the current Iranians to the east and southern east of the Kurds are the descendents of the 5th greatest kings of the Persians."[11]

---

[9] Dr. Shaker Khasbak, *Al-kurd Walmasa'la Alkurdyiah (Arabic) – The Kurds and the Kurdish Problem* (Baghdad: al-Thaqafa al-Jadida, 1959), 13.

[10] Jalal Talabani, *Kurdistan Walharaka Alqawmyiah Alkurdyiah (Arabic), Kurdistan and the Kurdish National Movement* (Baghdad: Manshurat al-Nur, 1971), 28-29.

[11] C.J. Edmonds, *Kurds Turks and Arabs*, translated, Georgis Fat-Hullah (Baghdad, Maktabat al-Sharq al-Jadid, 1971), 12.

Finally, is it fair to say that the Kurds are people without past? Are they a nation without history? Nashirwan Amin put a number of questions regarding the origin of the Kurds and asks

> "Is it possible that the Kurds fell from the sky and settled here? To whom do these bones and remains that were found in the caves of Kurdistan dating back to thousands of years belong to? Who carved on the stones of Bestun, Zinanay Hawraman, Paikuli, Darbandi Gawr, Piramagroun, Betwata, Sarpuli Zahaw and Belula? Who built the castle of Erbil, Kirkuk, Sharazur and Bitwen? Are all of these remaining stones and marks found in Kurdistan and those which will be found in the future built and left by the invaders and occupiers of Kurdistan to mark their victory on its people?"[12]

3.2   The Origins of Kurdish Nationalism

The definition of terms such as nation, nationalism, nation-state and state-nation varies between developed countries and developing countries at different periods of history. These variances are due to economic, political, social and geopolitical differences and the shape of the state and its components/citizens and state of stability in those countries. The establishment of nations and states throughout the history of mankind has been a very complicated process. Ernest Gellner argues that "the state has certainly emerged without the help of the nation. Some nations have certainly emerged without the blessing of their own state."[13] Gellner elaborates that "the number of potential nations is probably much, much larger than that of possible viable states."[14]

There are a number of factors that play significant roles in the shaping and timing of the completion of such processes. Therefore, a generalization of the definition of such terms for those two categories of people/nations and states will be misleading. According to Martin van Bruinessen "The concept of the nation as we know it in Europe was foreign to

---

[12] Nawshirwan Mustafa Amin, *Badam Regawa Gul Chnin (Kurdish), Along the Way Picking Flowers* (Beirut: Arab Scientific Publishers, 2012), 61-62.
[13] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Malden & Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 6.
[14] Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism,* 2.

the Middle East. The only solidarity group wider than the family or tribe that is recognized in Islamic doctrine is the Umma, the community of Muslims."[15]

The term nation may mean a group of people who share the same language, culture and history and are living within a defined geographical area of a state in Europe, but this is not necessarily the case in the Middle East, Africa, Asia or Latin America. In the Middle East, where the Kurds live, there are states that contain more than one nation such as Iran. There are also nations that have more than one state of their own such as Arabs while there are other nations that live within the boundaries of a number of states but do not have any state of their own, such as the Kurds. Bruinessen elaborates on this and states that "More than the concept of the nation was that of the nation-state. All Middle-Eastern states were multi-ethnic, while several peoples such as the Kurds, the Armenians (and the Jews, if these may properly called a nation) were represented in more than one state. Another characteristic of the Middle East was that often more than one ethnic group inhabited the same territory."[16]

According to Nowshirwan Amin "If the definition of a nation is linked to the existence of a state of their own, then there will be a number of nations in the Middle East that will not fall under that category. Hence, they consider themselves nations."[17] Jamal Nabaz states that 'The Kurds as a nation can be of three different groups: 1) those who are born as Kurds, 2) those who feel as Kurds, 3) those who consider themselves Kurds and work for the national rights of the Kurds. "A Le Monde journalist once asked Mustapha Barzani a question about the identity of Kurds. He asked Barzani: who is a Kurd? He replied: anyone who considers himself a Kurd."[18]

---

[15] Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State* (London: Zed Books, 1992), 268.

[16] Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State* (London: Zed Books, 1992), 298-269.

[17] Noshirwan Amin, *Kurdu Ajam- Mejooi Syiasi Kurdakani Iran (Kurdish) – Kurds & Ajem-The Political History of Iranian Kurds* (Slemani: Santari Lekolinaway Stratizhi, 2005), 149.

[18] Jamal Nabaz, *Nasnama u keshai Nasionali Kurd (Kurdish) - The Kurdish Identity and National Question of Kurdistan* (London: Bnkay Kurdnama, 2002), 35.

Anyone who feels that s/he belongs to a group of people called the Kurds is a Kurd. So, according to this definition, it is the feeling of belonging that determines the definition of one's Kurdishness. Bruinessen argues that "The concept of Kurdishness has never had an unambiguous denotation. Depending on the context and the speaker, it could refer to groups differently demarcated."[19]

Kurdish intellectuals, nationalist leaders and poets have defined one's Kurdish identity in different ways. Jamal Nabz defines Kurdishness as "Anyone who is considered to be a Kurd must be born in Kurdistan or abroad from Kurdish parents and speak the Kurdish language and follow the culture and customs of the Kurds. There are a number of people within this group who do not necessarily feel that they are Kurds and they do not necessarily have a very strong bond with the ethos of Kurdish nationalism. They were born as Kurds and they did not choose their identity/nationality but fall under this category."[20]

The feeling of belonging to the Kurds and readiness to show such feeling is the key characteristic of one's Kurdishness. It is possible to find someone who has a speaking and/or hearing impairment, but still consider him/herself as a Kurd. In 1979, the Ba'ath Party dismissed the Chairman of the Association of the Deaf & Mute, Mr. Mohammed Aqrawi, in the city of Mosul because he was Kurd and they appointed an Arab in his place. Mr. Aqrawi had joined the Kurdish movement in 1974-1975. Although Mr. Aqrawi never heard or spoke a Kurdish word, he had a very strong Kurdish sensibility and was a fanatic Kurdish nationalist.

Kurdish nationalism, in its simplest terms, is a Kurd's belief in his feeling of belonging to the Kurdish nation and his pride in his Kurdishness and the will and readiness to participate in the struggle of the Kurds in any suitable form or shape to achieve national rights – including the establishment of an independent state of Kurdistan. This nationalism includes the feeling of belonging, the pride of being a Kurd, and the

---

[19] Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and*, 268.

[20] Jamal Nabaz, *Nasnama u keshai Nasionali Kurd (Kurdish) - The Kurdish Identity and National Question of Kurdistan* (London: Bnkay Kurdnama, 2002), 34.

readiness to participate and make personal sacrifices for the Kurdish struggle for national rights. The legendary Kurdish poet Sherko Bekas has a similar definition for Kurdish nationalism. He stated that: "It is love and feeling of a person towards a land called Kurdistan and a nation called Kurds. Kurdish nationalism has deep historic roots. It is affected by the level of consciousness and awareness. In the absence of consciousness there will be no Kurdish nationalism. It is a duty and is achievement of a goal. This makes the whole concept relative. It is possible to find a Kurd who cannot speak Kurdish but has a strong feeling towards Kurdish nationalism."[21]

Ideology and movement combined with will creates a combination for nationalism to flourish and achieve its goals. It requires sacrifice though. Anthony Smith highlights the degree of sacrifice nationalism receives beyond some peoples' thinking, Anthony Smith states that "Millions of men and women have sacrificed themselves, even their lives, for the fatherland, for 'la partie', for France, for Italy, for Israel, for Vietnam."[22]

An individual's feeling of belonging and willingness to sacrifice for the Kurdish cause are widely considered as two significant factors for the definition of Kurdish nationalism – at least by Kurdish leaders who participated in the struggle of the Kurds for decades. President Jalal Talabani, one such participant, describes Kurdish nationalism in almost the same way as most theorists in this field. He does not specify the date when Kurdish nationalism emerged. Talabani defines nationalism as an "individual's feeling towards his nation and his homeland. One must also be proud of his/her nation's glories and must care about the nation's interests. One must be ready to participate in the struggle of the nation to achieve its national goals."[23]

Kurdish nationalism, as well as Arab and Turkish nationalism, may not fall completely under a standard definition of nationalism by European standards. Michael Gunter believes that nationalism is new to the Middle East, and its nations emerged when the

---

[21] Interview with legendary Kurdish Poet, Sherko Bekas. 18/8/2006 6:30 pm, Suleimanyeh, Iraq.

[22] Anthony Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 39.

[23] Jalal Talabani, *Kurdistan Walharaka Alqawmyiah Alkurdyiah (Arabic), Kurdistan and the Kurdish National Movement* (Baghdad: Manshurat al-Nur, 1971), 68.

rulers of Ottoman Empire abandoned the religious form of their empire without a fair explanation to Sheikh Ubeidullai Nahri's revolution for an independent state of Kurdistan in the second half of the nineteenth century. He did not study nor analyze the self-rule of the emirates of Soran, Ardalan, Baban and others well before the last years of Ottoman Empire's reign in the beginning of twentieth century, not to mention Ahmadi Khani's Mem u Zin and Sharafnama. Gunter argues that

> "Despite these primordial or essentialist arguments for the antiquity of Kurdish nationalism, such interpretations can be challenged for a number of very solid reasons. In the first place, of course, the very concept of the nation and nationalism being the focus of one's supreme loyalty is relatively new even in the West, where many would argue that it only began to develop in the latter part of 18th century and specifically during the French Revolution which began in 1789. The concept is even newer in the Middle East. Turkish, Iranian, and even Arab nationalism largely emerged only after World War I following the demise of Ottoman Empire and its emphasis on Islam as the supreme focus of one's loyalty."[24]

Kurdish nationalism is a political phrase and it has a political meaning. An ordinary Kurd sees Kurdish nationalism as the awareness of Kurds' ethnic existence and the struggle of the Kurdish people for freedom and self-determination, with an aspiration for the establishment of an independent nation-state for the Kurds. Kurdish nationalists argue their case on the basis of having a distinctive language, culture, common history and a homeland where they have lived for thousands of years. This fits with the definition of many, if not all, schools in this field. The Kurds received brutal treatment by the rulers of the countries they lived in as a result of their demands. The more violence they faced at the hands of their rulers, the more resolute they became to continue their demands for national rights. Continual violence against Kurds and continual denials of Kurdish rights by successive Iraqi regimes created fertile ground for the development and advancement of Kurdish nationalism.

Amir Hassanpour has a similar, though rather more sophisticated definition of Kurdish nationalism. He uses the Kurdish term, *Kurdayeti,* for his definition. He argues that "by

---

[24] Michael Gunter, *The Modern Origins of Kurdish Nationalism - The Evolution of Kurdish Nationalism* (California: MAZDA Publishers, 2007), 7.

the 1960s, the modern nationalist ideas had developed into a coherent system of thought that was named *Kurdayeti*. This term means the idea of and struggle for relieving the Kurds from national oppression by uniting all parts of Kurdistan under the rule of an independent Kurdish state."[25] Hassanpour emphasizes other components of nationalism too such as language and education. According to Hassanpour "most of the studies on Kurdish nationalism fail to account for the social, economic and cultural components of Kurdish nationalism- detribalization, urbanization, the decline of feudalism, the rise of capitalist relations, linguistic consciousness and literary creation, journalism, education, and mass communication."[26]

It is important to note that the concept of nationalism did not come only from nationalists inside Kurdistan. The Kurdish Diaspora played a significant role in transferring the concept of nationalism into the elite circles of Kurdish tribal chiefs, sheikhs and intellectuals. The role of those Kurds who lived in the capital of the Ottoman Empire was vital. Istanbul, for obvious reasons, was considered close to Europe and was influenced by the emergence of brands of European nationalism. The emergence of Turkish nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, greatly influenced by the developments in Europe, gave the emergence and development of Kurdish nationalism a boost. The most prominent Kurdish nationalist poet of the nineteenth century, Haji Qaderi Koyee (1817-1897), developed a modern vision of nationalism while he was staying in Istanbul. Mariwan elaborates on this subject and states that

> "It is clear that the role of migrating Kurds in the development of Kurdish
> Nationalism since the end of the nineteenth century is vital. Kurdish
> nationalism is similar to the other nationalisms in the region in that it is not
> the product of internal sociological development of those nations. It has rather
> come into the Kurdish society from outside. We can only understand it
> through its arrival into the socio-political structure of Ottomans
> Empire…Kurdish nationalism and the process of development of the Kurds
> as a nation are continuing. This does not mean that the Kurds are not a nation.
> Anyone who says that is making a big political and ideological mistake and to

---

[25] Amir Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan, 1918-1985* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992), 62.
[26] Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language,* 29.

me is committing a sin. Kurdish Nationalism, however, does not carry a unified national commitment in presenting itself to the outside world."[27]

The legendary nationalist poet of nineteenth century, Haji Qaderi Koyee, in his last years living in Istanbul, urged Kurds to look to European nations and neighboring nations of Persia and Turkey and mobilize their resources to set up a Kurdish state. He acted as an ideologist and analyzed the situation and focused on the reasons that prevented the Kurds from having their own sovereign national state. Anderson highlights the role of intelligentsia and declares that "it is generally recognized that the intelligentsias were central to the rise of nationalism in the colonial territories."[28] Haji highlighted a number of problems facing the Kurds in achieving their national goals and urged them to remedy those problems. He focused on two necessary tools in that regard, arguing that 'the Kurds could achieve national sovereignty only if they were armed with two weapons. According to Hassanpour, "Haji focused on 'pen' (literary language and literature culture) and the 'sword' (state power)."[29] His later poems, written in Istanbul, demonstrate what a major influence the emergence and development of European and Turkish nationalism had on his views and analysis.

A significant number of Arab scholars, historians, academics and politicians agree that the Kurds have all the characteristics of a nation. They state that the Kurds fall into the same category of Arabs, Iranians and European nations as far as the definition of a nation is concerned. The strength of Kurdish nationalism amongst Kurds played no small part in the resistance to all attempts by various rulers, regimes, and other powers that wanted the Kurdish nation to vanish or dissolve into various ruling nations and powers throughout nineteenth and twentieth century. Munther al-Mosuli states that

> "The original heroic spirit, the ability to resist, and the strong desire for freedom are the main characteristics of the Kurdish people and the main pillars of its existence. Vladimir Minorsky (1870-1966), who is a Russian

---

[27] Mariwan W Qani', *Nasionalizm u Safer (Kurdish), Nationalism and Migration – The Kurds in Diaspora* (Suleimaniyeh: Rehend Centre, 2006), 62.

[28] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Community* (London & New York: Verso, 2006), 116.

[29] Amir Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan, 1918-1985* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992), 29.

researcher, says this about the Kurds: The Kurds have a very strong feeling for freedom and liberation. This is one of the main characteristics of the Kurds and is reflected in the history of the Kurdish movement…These ingredients clearly prove the existence of a Kurdish nation that recognizes its characteristics and are very keen to affirm that to the world. We find the Kurds have a strong feeling of belonging to their nation and their homeland and they feel that have a glorious history."[30]

The origin of Kurdish nationalism goes back to the period when the Kurds were ruled by the two main empires in the region, the Ottomans and Persians, which were at war for many years. Hassanpour states that

"The wars and division of Kurdistan had two contradictory effects on the national development of the Kurds. On the one hand, they retarded the growth of the Kurds as a unified nation and inhibited the formation of a united Kurdish state. On the other hand, the enormous destruction and suffering caused by foreign domination resulted in the genesis of national awakening in a feudally organized society…The idea of nation and nationalism, an apparent anachronism in this part of the world in the seventeenth century, did in fact develop in the particular circumstances of Kurdistan at this time. This national feeling, distinct from tribal and local attachments, was voiced by both individuals and the masses of the people."[31]

Kurdish princes, poets, army officers and tribal leaders who spoke and wrote about past Kurdish glories had in mind of regaining those glorious days when the Kurds had ruled their own lands. The Sharafnama, which is composed of five books and are safely kept in Oxford, completed by Prince Sharafaddin Betlisi (1543-1603) on 14 August 1597, can be considered a pure historical document on the Kurdish nation. This authentic piece of writing stands as a good example of, and convincing evidence to support the Kurds as, a nation with a unique culture, history, language and a land of their own. According to Hassanpour "the prince of Betlis, Sharaf al-Din Bitlisi, wrote the first history of the

---

[30] Munther al-Mosuli, *Alhayat al-Syasia Walhizbiya Fi Kurdistan (Arabic) – The Political Life in Kurdistan - An Arab View of the Kurdish Problem* (London: Raid El-Rayyes Books, 1991), 185-186.

[31] Amir Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan, 1918-1985* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992), 55-56.

Kurds in 1597. His purpose, he noted in the introduction, was to save the story of the lives of great princes from oblivion."[32]

The Sharafnama shows that, despite differences among Kurds that lived in different locations within Kurdistan, all of the diversities among the Kurds cannot conceal the fact that the Kurds are of one origin, which can be called the Kurdish nation. Jonathan Randal believes that "only fragments of written literature before the sixteenth century have survived the upheavals of the ages. The Sharafnama, written by Prince Sharaf al-Din of Betlis, is considered the first pan-Kurdish history."[33]

Importance of Sharafnama comes from the invaluable information about the history of Kurds as a nation that ruled themselves through semi-independent emirates. Jalal Talabani explores the significance of Sharafnama and states that

> "Sharafnama is another perfect example of the existence of Kurdish nationalism. You must distinguish between relationship and difference. There is a great link between to be a Kurd, to feel as a Kurd and struggle for the rights of the Kurds (Kurdayeti). The struggle for the rights of the Kurds is a task, is a mission, and is the action while the other one is the feeling. The liberation movement of the Kurdish people is Kurdayeti and is Kurdish nationalism. If you look for concrete evidence in writing, one can take Sharafnama, the poems of Ahmadi Khani and those of Haji Qaderi Koyee as the feeling of being Kurds and that they knew they were oppressed. It must have existed before but these are written ones. Movements start with ideology- the ideology must develop before the movement emerges."[34]

The Sharafnama also elaborates on the administrative systems adapted by the Kurdish princes and the geographical area of each emirate. According to Gunter, "in 1597, the Kurdish Mir (prince) Sharaf Khan Betlisi (1543 – 1603) published the Sharafnama, an erudite history of the semi-independent Kurdish emirates, some of which continued to exist into the middle of nineteenth century. The first part of this impressive history

---

[32] Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language*, 56.

[33] Jonathan C. Randal, *Kurdistan After Such Knowledge, What Forgiveness?*, (London: Bloomsbury, 1998), 22.

[34] Interview with Jalal Talabani, the President of Iraq and the General Secretary of PUK, on 28th March 2005 -10:00 – 11:30 am, in Qalachwalan-Suleimanyeh, Iraq.

written in Persian and dealt with five Kurdish dynasties that had enjoyed status as royalty or what might be interpreted as independence."[35]

Another piece of writing that left significant marks on Kurdish nationalism is Mem u Zin, the impressive love story written by Kurdish legendary poet of seventeenth century, Ahmadi Khani (1650-1707). In the introduction of Mem u Zin, Ahmadi Khani decried the absence of a national leader who could unify the Kurds in a nation-state similar to those of the Persians and the Turks in the region. Gunter writes about Mem u Zin and states that "Ahmadi Khani composed Mem u Zin, a tragic love poem universally hailed as the Kurdish national epic because of its obvious reference to Kurdish nationalist beliefs. If only there were harmony among us, if we were to obey a single one of us, he would reduce to vassalage Turks, Arabs and Persians, all of them. We would perfect our religion, our state, and would educate ourselves in learning and wisdom."[36] After more than one hundred years, Haji Qaderi Koyee came and completed the work of Sharaf Khan Betlisi and Ahmadi Khani by expressing his own nationalist views in his poems.

Geographical location and division of Kurdistan between the two empires, Ottoman and Iranian, had its own impact on the view of the Kurdish nationalism legends, Ahmadi Khani and Haji Qaderi Koyee. They realized the dangers coming from that situation and were reflected in their poems. According to Hassanpour, "the impact of the division on Kurdish society was analyzed by the seventeenth century poet Ahmadi Khani, who wrote:

> Look, from the Arabs to the Georgians,
>
> The Kurds have become like towers.
>
> The Turks and Persians are surrounded by them
>
> The Kurds are on all four corners

---

[35] Michael Gunter, *The Modern Origins of Kurdish Nationalism, The Evolution of Kurdish Nationalism* (California: MAZDA Publishers, 2007), 4.

[36] Gunter, *The Modern Origins of*, 4.

Both sides have made the Kurdish people,

Targets for arrows of fate

Similarly, in the last decade of nineteenth century, Haji Qader Koyi wrote:

Trapped between Red-hats (Ottoman Turks) and Black-hats (Persians)

We are wrecked, and will be like branded cattle"[37]

Some scholars argue that there are three factors which play significant roles in the emergence and development of nationalism. They are recognition, oppression and opportunity. The Kurds in the early twentieth century had all three and this continued to be so, especially in the case of the Iraqi Kurds. Their right of existence and their identity were recognized by the League of Nations after World War I. They were also subjected to oppression by Iraqi rulers who tried to impose an Arab identity upon them as the Arabs are the majority of population. Furthermore, they also had opportunities following World War I and II and on many other occasions to push for their national rights to be recognized. Gunter refers to other scholars on this subject and states

"M. Hakan Yavus elaborates on the modern origins of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey when he declares: The state's [Turkey's] policies are the determinant factors in the evolution and modulation of Kurdish nationalism. The major reason for the politicization reform of Kurdish cultural identity is the shift from multi-ethnic, multi-cultural realities of the Ottoman Empire to the nation-state model. The Kemalist reforms, which aimed to create a modern Turkish nation-state, resulted in the construction of Kurdish ethno-nationalism… Since Kurdish nationalism in Turkey, Iraq and Iran evolved in response to modernizing nation-state it constantly stresses its ethnic difference, sometimes even evoking racism to historicize itself."[38]

The same scenario was repeated in Iraq after World War I. The Iraqi Arabs started imposing an Arab identity in the newly founded Iraq through centralized education and

---

[37] Amir Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan, 1918-1985* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992), 54-55.
[38] Michael Gunter, *The Modern Origins of Kurdish Nationalism, The Evolution of Kurdish Nationalism*, (California: MAZDA Publishers, 2007), 9.

administrative systems, which would ultimately diminish all Kurdish hopes for an independent, semi-independent or even an autonomous region of their own. This evoked a nationalist feeling amongst the Kurds. Thus, the Arabs' approach resulted in the further evolution of Kurdish nationalism. It reached its peak following the defeat of Iraq in Kuwait (second Gulf war) before magnificently taking advantage of the o the fall of Saddam in 2003. According to Gunter, "in Iraq, Kurdish nationalism only began to develop after World War I in response to attempts to build a modern Arab state that would permit no more than a minimal amount of Kurdish autonomy. Thus the revolts of Sheikh Mahmud Barzinji in the 1920s and Mullah Mustafa Barzani beginning in the 1930s were mainly tribal affairs at times opposed by Kurdish jash (literally, little donkey or Kurds who supported the Iraqi government in Baghdad) than been supported."[39]

Almost all Kurdish politicians, nationalists and elite intellectuals have the same definition of Kurdish nationalism, which is the feeling of belonging and readiness to participate in the struggle of Kurds to achieve their national rights. Talabani explains the meaning of Kurdish nationalism by saying "Kurdish nationalism means (Kurdayeti) – struggle to achieve the national rights of Kurds. The definition of Kurdayeti in my book is still what I believe to be the definition of Kurdish nationalism."[40]

Noshirwan Amin has his own definition to Kurdish nationalism and states "Kurdish nationalism is the feeling and belief amongst the Kurds that they have distinctive language, history and culture and live on their own land and they must be recognized as a nation and must rule themselves."[41]

Sherko Bekas gives details of Kurdish nationalism by saying "Kurdish nationalism is love and feeling of a person towards a land called Kurdistan and a nation called Kurds. It

[39] Michael Gunter, *The Modern Origins of Kurdish Nationalism, The Evolution of Kurdish Nationalism*, (California: MAZDA Publishers, 2007), 10.

[40] Interview with Jalal Talabani, the President of Iraq and General Secretary of PUK, on 28th March 2005, 10:00 – 12:00 am in Qalachwalan – Suleimanyeh, Iraq.

[41] Interview with Nowshirwan Mustafa Amin, the Deputy- General Secretary of PUK at the time of interview – currently Leader of Change Movement, on 29th March 2005, 14:00-16:00 – Suleimanyeh, Iraq.

is a duty and is achievement of a goal. Life without a goal is an empty desert. That's why Kurdish nationalism gives hope to a Kurd. It is also affected by education. It is different from a family to a family – from time to time. This makes the whole concept relative."[42]

Falakadeen Kakayee believes that "Kurdish Nationalism is self awareness, to go back to yourself and see who you are. We the Kurds still do not know ourselves, our national, social and cultural status."[43]

Noshirwan Amin, who himself is a Kurdish nationalist, defines the Kurdish nationalism as one's feeling towards the Kurdish people and the homeland of the Kurds. He also gives a few examples about the strength of Kurdish nationalism.

> "Kurdish nationalism is the feeling amongst the Kurds that they have distinctive language, history and culture and live on their own land and they must be recognized as a nation and must rule themselves. The Kurdish elite played significant role in developing Kurdish nationalism. So did art and poems. Sharafnama of Sharafkhani Bitlisi and poets such as Ahmadi Khani and Haji Qaderi Koyee played significant roles in developing and enhancing Kurdish nationalism. The emirates of Baban, Botan, Ardalan and Soran are all good examples of the existence and strength of Kurdish nationalism. Kurdish newspapers in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century not only played a significant role in that aspect but also proved that the Kurdish nationalism was well spread across all Kurdistan and beyond it. Look, from Cairo to Istanbul, Suleimanyeh, Baghdad and Raza'yeh. The newspapers were: Kurdistan (Cairo - 1898), Kurd Ta'ali u Taraqi (Istanbul - 1908), Bangi Kurd (Baghdad – 1914), Hatawi Kurd (Turkey), Semko's newspaper in Iran. Sheikh Ubaidullai Shamzini was the first Kurdish nationalist strategist in 1880 who wanted to establish a Kurdish state that covers all Kurdistan. He says: 'We are about 500,000 families who want to live side by side with Arabs, Turks and Iranians but independently on our land, Kurdistan.' What happened? All the mighty forces of Iran and Turkey joined forces and destroyed his movement."[44]

---

[42] Interview with legendary Kurdish poet, Sherko Bekas. 18/8/2006 6:30 pm. Suleimanyeh, Iraq.

[43] Interview with Falakadeen Kakayee, Minister of Culture and Media, Kurdish Regional Government, on 21/8/2006 – 12:00, Erbil, Iraq.

[44] Interview with Noshirwan Amin, Analyst and writer and director of Wsha Company for Media, on 29/3/2005 – 2:00pm, Suleimanyeh, Iraq.

One can argue that awareness of the concept of Kurdish nationalism was first reflected in the content of Sharafnama which was written by Sharafkhani Bitlisi. One hundred years later, this concept was clearly described in the introduction to Ahmadi Khani's marvelous love story, Mem u Zin. Haji Qaderi Koyee appeared in the late nineteenth century to fly modern Kurdish nationalism's flag high with his nationalist poems. Gunter refers to Hassanpour's work and states that

> "Amir Hassanpour argues that Sharafnama and Mem u Zin mark the historical origin of Kurdish nationalism: Sharafkhan's work demonstrates a conscious effort to assert Kurdish statehood. Interestingly, Hassanpour views the development of Kurdish nationalism through a Marxist lens of social classes progressing through what he terms feudal and bourgeois nationalism. He also emphasizes the importance of Kurdish emirates, some of which existed up to the middle of the 19th century as autonomous political entities. In addition, he refers to the 19th century's Kurdish patriotic poet Haji Qader Koyee as 'next to Ahmadi Khani', the second apostle of Kurdayeti (Kurdish nationalism)."[45]

Kurdish nationalism in the twentieth century emerged more clearly as a response to growing nationalist feelings amongst Arabs, Turks, and Iranians. The end of World War I had seen the emergence of nationalist movements amongst nations which were denied national rights of their territories under the reign of the Ottoman Empire. Kurdish intellectuals, tribal leaders, army officers and poets realized that it was their duty to advocate for Kurdish rights and ask for Kurdish national rights similar to other nations' elites. According to Martin van Bruinessen "the nationalism of the other Muslim nationalities emerged largely as a response and reaction to the increasing prominence of Turkish nationalism and Pan-Turk aspiration."[46]

Kurdish nationalists started advocating for their national beliefs after they realized that the Turkish nationalists grouped and organized themselves. They called for recognition of their rights in an independent state of their own after it became clear that the Ottoman Empire was about to vanish. While the Ottoman Empire's composition and

---

[45] Michael Gunter, *The Modern Origins of Kurdish Nationalism, The Evolution of Kurdish Nationalism* (California: MAZDA Publishers, 2007), 5.

[46] Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State* (London: Zed Books, 1992), 270.

administration system was based on loyalty to the Caliph and not to the Turkish nation, the subjects of non-Turkish origins did not clearly demonstrate nationalist sentiments. However, this trend changed once Turkish nationalists started working towards the establishment of a Turkish state to replace Ottoman Empire's capital. Martin van Bruinessen elaborates by saying:

> "This is illustrated by a passage from the memories of the Kurdish nationalist Qedri Beg. His nationalism had been awakened or strengthened during his study in Istanbul. In 1914 he was drafted into the army and assigned to a brigade that, to his great pleasure, consisted almost entirely of Kurdish tribesmen of the Hesinan and Jibran tribes. He expected to be able to discuss Kurdish national ideas with the Kurdish officers, but was disappointed. Alas, these tribal officers, because they had strong ties of loyalty to the Caliph of Islam, did not want to hear anything about the national problems of the Kurds. Not all tribal chieftains were averse to nationalism in this period, but it was not until the caliphate was abolished by Mustafa Kamal (Ataturk) in 1924 that a wave of more or less nationalist-inspired revolts erupted in Kurdistan."[47]

Although the Ottoman Empire was largely religiously oriented, Kurdish identities were visible in Iraq and Turkey. This was also influenced by the Western concept of the nation-state in the twentieth century. According to Gareth Stansfield, "in the twentieth century, ethnicity assumed a prominent place as an identity marker not only in Iraq, but across the region. With the introduction of the Western concept of nation-state, it now mattered which ethnic groups lived within the boundaries of the state, and nationalism formed both because of the internal developments within groups and the reactions of groups towards the policies of the new state."[48]

Kurdish elites were first to advocate for nationalism. They had done so many centuries ago, at least in regard to Kurds as an ethnic group with a distinctive language, culture and social structure. They urged their people to follow a path to realize that their rights were not recognized. Kurdish elites and intellectuals had a difficult task in transferring Kurdish

---

[47] Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State* (London: Zed Books, 1992), 269.

[48] Gareth Stansfield, *Iraq – People, History, Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 63.

national awareness into a social force to alter the political and power equations in the region. According to van Bruinessen,

> "Kurdish nationalism as socially significant force is a recent phenomenon. That is not to say that, in the past, no Kurdish 'national' awareness existed. The linguistic differences between the Kurds and their neighbors were obvious, and there are quite early indications that Kurds saw themselves different from Turks, Arabs and Persians in another sense. Thus the seventeenth-century Kurdish poet Ahmadi Khani prefaced his epic poem Mem u Zin with a section entitled 'Derde Meh' (our illness), in which he lamented the Kurds' division, which caused them to be under the rule of the Ottomans and Safavids, or previous empires. His hopes were for a king to arise from amidst the Kurds.

> > If only there was harmony among us,
> >
> > If we were to obey a single one of us,
> >
> > He would reduce to vassalage
> >
> > Turks, Arabs and Persians, all of them
> >
> > We would perfect our religion, our state,
> >
> > And would reduce ourselves in learning and wisdom

> Khani was, and still is, widely read in Kurdistan. Manuscripts were copied and kept by Mullahs (village priests); students would learn fragments of Khani by heart."[49]

Kurdish nationalism in the twentieth century had emerged as a popular movement advocated by poets, elite urban intellectuals, and nationalist political parties. It created a new atmosphere that altered social relations and the social structure in both rural and urban areas of Kurdistan. Some tribal leaders, influential tribal figures and influential religious figures wanted to lead such movement and give it a different dimension, while many urban intellectuals tried to be part of the movement's leadership. Baxtiar Ali states that

---

[49] Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Sheikh and State* (London: Zed Books, 1992), 267.

"Kurdish nationalism in the twenties century was a popular movement. It led up to the breakup of the internal social boundaries of the Kurdish society. The Morales of Kurdish nationalism was to denounce the terms of Kurdish aristocrats and replace it with a call to unify people's aims and goals and to request the unity of Kurds and to call for the national interests to be above all other interests. The Kurdish aristocrats wanted to play the leading role in such a movement. The Kurdish nationalist movement grew amongst the poor classes of the society."[50]

The location of Kurdistan has had a clear impact on the history and developing status of the Kurds. The two strongest rival empires in the Middle East, Ottomans and Persian (Safawai), had carved Kurdistan between themselves. Both empires seek the loyalty of the Kurds to control and use them for its own benefits. Moreover, Kurdistan had become the battlefield for almost all the wars that the two empires fought against each other. According to David Romano, "the Kurdish homeland's location at the meeting point of Ottoman and Persian empires also meant that various Kurdish principalities (with varying degrees of attachment to the Ottomans and Persians) were used as buffer and battleground between these empires."[51]

Ahmadi Khani (1650-1707) fully understood the difficulty facing the Kurds as a result of Kurdistan's geographical location. He tried to analyze the situation through his poems and rally his people under Kurdish nationalism's banner. Romano continues in his argument and states that

"In the seventieth century, Kurdish poet Ahmedi Khani had already lamented the situation of the Kurds:

I leave it to God's wisdom

The Kurds in this world's state

Why are they deprived of their rights?

Why are they all doomed?

See, from the Arabs to the Georgians

---

[50] Baxtiar Ali, "Kurdish Aristocrats – Dissolution and Re-emergence," (Kurdish), *Hawlati*, April 4, 2007.

[51] David Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 3.

Everything is Kurdish and, as with a citadel,

The Turks and the Persians besiege them

From four sides at once

And the both make the Kurdish people

Into a target for Fate's arrow

Of course, Khani's nationalist view of the Kurds was at least three hundred years ahead of most of his countrymen. It was only around World War I, as the break-up of the Ottoman Empire loomed on the horizon that Kurdish nationalist movements emerged in significant form."[52]

This is how Ahmadi Khani analyzed the situation and cried out for a Kurdish nationalist leader to end his people's centuries-long suffering in his famous poem, Our Trouble.

Let there emerge from within us, too, one to shoulder the earth,
Let there be a king of our own, too.
Let his sword attest to our might,
Let it be known the power of our pen,
Let there be an answer to our trouble,
Let there be a demand for our knowledge.
If we had an exalted leader,
A do-gooder wanting a poem,
Our bullion, too, would be stamped;
It wouldn't be so unwanted and suspect.
However pure and clean they may be,
Value is added to gold and silver with a stamp.
If we had a king,
If God saw him deserving of a crown;
If a throne was appointed to him,
Our luck would turn around.
If he, too, were provided with a crown,

---

[52] David Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 3.

Of course, for us too there would be respect.

He would feel sorry for us orphans;

He would set us free from bondage to the cravens.

They would not be vicarious over us these Turks;

Ours would not turn into ghost towns,

We wouldn't become fugitives, dispossessed, wretched,

We wouldn't bow our heads in defeat to the Turks, the Tadjiks.

To the same extent they cherish freedom and independence,

They hate submission and obligations.

It is the spirit of independence and exalted benevolence

That has become the obstacle to shouldering the burden of obligation;

Always without unity it is because of this

Divided and pitched against one another they stand.

If we had unity amongst ourselves,

If we all together obeyed one another

The Turks, The Arabs and the Persians

Would all together be in our servitude.

Then we would perfect the art of government and religion,

Then we would acquire all the wisdom and command nature;

Haji Qaderi Koyee, who was born 110 years after Ahmadi Khani, is considered as one of the greatest spokesmen of Kurdish nationalism in the nineteenth century. He carried on the nationalist message of Ahmadi Khani in his poems, but gave it a modern flavour. He expressed his nationalist view in a way that showed a new vision and dimension of Kurdish nationalism. Haji Qaderi Koyee wanted to enlighten the Kurdish people and help them to remedy the problems of illiteracy, backwardness and ideas which result from lack of knowledge and from religious fanaticism. He encouraged the Kurds to turn to literacy, science and the realities of modern society in their struggle to liberate Kurdistan and to build an independent state instead of relying on religious leaders and tribal sheikhs. Mariwan Qani highlights the role of Haji Qader

"With Haji Qaderi Koyi, we are looking at an intellectual who linked nationalism and education and literacy. He came out of the religious language into a nationalist one. This great man was not like Khani who spoke about a Kurdish prince or King, which was a feudalist terminology and its meaning did not go beyond the tribal fantasy. Instead, he spoke about a Kurdish state, which was a new term that expressed the era of the development of nation-state. He was not only a modern nationalist but he was known for his criticism of the role of religious people in the Kurdish society."[53]

Almost all the Kurdish nationalists lived within the boundaries of states that were not their nation-states. However, their main desire was to see their people rule their own destiny as a free nation. According to Talabani, "Sharafnama was another perfect example. There is a great link between to be a Kurd, to feel as a Kurd and struggle for the rights of the Kurds (Kurdayeti). The struggle for the rights of Kurds is the action while the other one is a feeling. The liberation movement of the Kurdish People is Kurdayeti and is Kurdish nationalism. To think about evidence in writing, one can take Sharafnama, the poems of Ahmadi Khani and those of Haji Qaderi Koyee as the feeling of being Kurds and that they knew they were oppressed."[54]

Any nationalist movement with a social force to change the current situation starts from the beginning as a concept and view of the elite of the society. It takes considerable time and effort for supporting geopolitical, social and economic factors to be transferred into a powerful force for change. Noshirwan Amin states that

"At the time of Sharafkhani Betlisi (1543-1603), and later during the time of Ahmadi Khani (1650-1707), the feeling of belonging to Kurds and recognition of difference between Kurds, Turks, and Ajem [Iranians] as well as the aspiration and ambition of creating a strong and independent state for the Kurds remained as the thinking of the Kurdish elite. It was reflected in the two wonderful pieces of work of Sharafnama and Mem u Zin. This phenomenon (idea) did not materialize due to a number of economic, social, political and cultural factors. It did not become the ideology for the elite class of Kurds and was not translated into a manifesto for people's national

---

[53] Mariwan W Qani', *Nasionalizm u Safer (Kurdish), Nationalism and Migration – The Kurds in Diaspora* (Suleimanyeh: Rehend Centre, 2006), 66-67.

[54] Interview with Jalal Talabani, the President of Iraq and the General Secretary of PUK, on 28th March 2005 -10:00 – 11:30 am, in Qalachwalan-Suleimanyeh, Iraq.

movement until the late stages of the eighteenth century. That voice was echoed during the uprisings and creation of the isolated emirates of Betlis, Baban, Soran and Botan in the first half of the nineteenth century."[55]

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, a number of educated and notable Kurds realized that organization was one of the essential tools needed to promote Kurdish nationalism. They, therefore, established a number of political and nationalist groups and parties, many of which played significant roles in promoting Kurdish nationalism. David McDowall states that

"Other urban notables wished to qualify their support of the CUP movement with their own ethnic identity. A handful of Istanbul's educated Kurdish elite formed a number of Kurdish societies about which we know little. The first was the Society for the Rise and Progress of Kurdistan (Kurdistan Ta'ali Wa Taraqi Jamiyati). Among the founders were: Amin Ali Bader Khan, Sheikh Abdul Qadir of Nahri and General Mohammed Sharif Pasha, a Baban from Suleimanyeh. Similar Kurdish groups were also founded in Diyarbakir, Bitlis, Mosul and Baghdad. A group of young Kurds organized a new group, Hivi-ya Kurd Jamiyati (Kurdish Hope Society), which began to distribute a weekly paper, Ruji Kurd. Hivi enjoyed a wider membership, with many fresh and younger faces, sons of urban notables."[56]

It is clear that most of the Kurdish groups in Turkey emerged after the foundation of the Committee for Union and Progress (CUP), which included a number of Kurdish elite who managed to keep their own ethnic identity.

One of the other tools that boosted Kurdish nationalism in the nineteenth and twentieth century was the emergence of nationalist newspapers. The first Kurdish newspaper was published at the end of nineteenth century and was called "Kurdistan." It was the first nationalist newspaper that promoted Kurdish Nationalism and advocated for an independent Kurdistan, and played a significant role in rallying support from the Kurdish elite and intellectuals for Kurdish nationalism. The Kurdistan journal was published for the first time in Cairo on 22nd April, 1898 by Miqdad Midhat Badirxan and later moved to Europe, after which Miqdad's brother, Abdul-Rahman Badirxan took over the

---

[55] Noshirwan Amin, *Kurdu Ajam- Mejooi Syiasi Kurdakani Iran (Kurdish) – Kurds & Ajem-The Political History of Iranian Kurds* (Slemani: Santari Lekolinaway Stratizhi Kurdistan, 2005), 152.

[56] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 93-94.

newspaper, and expanded its publication to Geneva, London and Folkestone. Thirty-one issues were published between 1898 and 1902. According to McDowall, "in April 1898, Midhet Bader Khan was in Cairo, where he commenced publication of a bilingual journal (Kurmanji – Turkish) entitled Kurdistan, which both supported the CUP and stirred up feelings in support of the Kurdish people. Subsequently, Kurdistan was published in Geneva, and then London and Folkston, possibly because the politically active Baderkhans wanted to be in closer touch with Ottoman exiles in Europe."[57]

3.3   Kurds Ruling Themselves

Many Kurdish intellectuals, sheikhs and tribal leaders who witnessed the status of neighboring nations and their empires believed in Kurdish nationalism. They analyzed the situation and compared their people and the affairs of their land to that of neighboring nations, such as the Persians and the Turks. They believed that their people deserved to run their own affairs and their land like these other nations. This was initially triggered by the poor treatment the Kurds received at the hands of their rulers, Ottomans and Qajaris, during their centuries-long reigns of Kurdistan. According to Munther al-Mosuli, "Kurdistan has seen a number of Kurdish emirates and administrations. Some of these emirates were in the shape of small states and independent administrations. The most famous ones were Ardalan, Baban, Soran, Badinan, Hakari and Botan. They all continued until the end of Ottomans Empire. The emirates vanished in the second half of the last century [nineteenth century] when a new administration organization was implemented and Kurdistan became under the direct rule of the Sultan of Ottomans Empire."[58]

Feelings of both desperation and aspiration were tapped into by some, who used them to establish independent or semi-independent emirates in parts of Kurdistan. This was supported by the trend that the Ottoman Empire followed for many centuries. Hassanpour

---

[57] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 90.

[58] Munther al-Mosuli, *Alhayat al-Syasia Walhizbiya Fi Kurdistan (Arabic) – The Political Life in Kurdistan - An Arab View of the Kurdish Problem* (London: Riad El-Rayyes Books, 1991), 71.

states that "throughout these centuries, many Kurdish dynasties and principalities established their independent, or semi-independent, rule over parts of Kurdistan."[59]

Running the affairs of the Kurdish emirates by Kurdish princes created an environment where the concept of nationalism was visible amongst the population – especially the elite, notables and tribal chiefs. The rule of the Kurdish semi-independent emirates became a fertile ground for emergence and growth of the concept of Kurdish nationalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The emirates had a number of unique characteristics which explain the importance of emirates in the emergence and development of Kurdish nationalism. According to Hassanpour, "the emirates were characterized by these features: a) power was in the hands of the Emir, khan, Pasha, Beg or Agha; b) each principality had a territory whose borders were defined by custom and dictated through power; c) an army with standing members and recruits from tribes was kept for purpose of defense and expansion; d) the prince was the sole ruler of the whole territory. e) more powerful principalities were independent and struck coins and the Friday prayer was read in the name of the prince."[60]

The geographical location of Kurdistan between two powerful empires in the region was one of the reasons for the Kurds not having an independent state/empire in the last few centuries. Hassanpour continues in his analysis and states that "the social, economic and cultural development of Kurdistan was, however, soon inhabited due to the rise of two powerful states to the west (the Ottoman Empire) and to the east (the Safavi Persian Empire) of Kurdistan. Pursuing a policy of expansion and centralization, these two states engaged in a destructive war in Kurdistan, Armenia and Azerbaijan that lasted until the mid-19th century."[61]

The following is a brief history of some of those emirates as an example to demonstrate how the Kurds ran their own affairs.

---

[59] Amir Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan, 1918-1985* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992), 50.
[60] Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language*, 50-52.
[61] Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language*, 52-53.

3.3.1 Emirate of Baban

The establishment of Emirate of Baban in the eighteenth century is a major source of pride for many Kurds. The location of the emirate, the timing of its establishment and views of its founder, Ibrahim Pasha, were unique in recent Kurdish history. C J Edmonds states that

> "The first capital of the emirate of Baban was Qalachwalan. It is located to the south of the town of Chwarta. But soon after Ibrahim Pasha became the emir of Baban in 1783, he moved the capital to a village called Malkandi 12 miles to the south west behind the mountain of Azmar. He built a town called Suleimanyeh. The biggest geographical area under the control of Baban emirate extended from Bana (a town in the Kurdistan governorate of Iran) and Koyeh to the north and Kifri, Qaratapa, Mandali and Badra to the south…During the rule of Abdulrahman Pasha, the Baban emirate was enjoying complete independence."[62]

The Baban emirate lasted for an extended period, through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The ruling of Baban emirate changed hands on a number of occasions - sometimes in a very dramatic way. Most of the rulers of Baban entered a number of wars to defend their emirate from Iranian and the Ottoman attacks. In the end, the emirate crumbled under the mighty army of the Ottoman Empire when the emirate exhibited a fair amount of independence by starting to build its own army and seeking different sources for arming its troops. According to Edmonds,

> "In 1844 Mr. Felix Johns described Ahmad Pasha, the emir of Baban from 1838-1844 as one of the great Emirs of Baban. He said that after one year of ruling Baban emirate, Ahmad Pasha prepared an army of about 800 fighters and trained them in a very professional manner similar to that of the European armies. The end of Ahmad Pasha's independent emirate decided by his defeat at the hands of the mighty army of Najeeb Pasha, the Wally of Baghdad in 1847. He was defeated in a bloody battle near the town of Koyeh. Najeeb Pasha appointed Ahmad Pasha's brother, Abdulla, as the administrator of Suleimanyeh – not as an independent governor with

---

[62] C.J. Edmonds, *Kurds Turks and Arabs*, translated, Georgis Fat-Hullah (Baghdad, Maktabat al-Sharq al-Jadid, 1971), 56.

authority but as a Turkish employee- and to be replaced in 1851 by a Turkish person."[63]

The Kurdish historian, Mohammad Amin Zeki Beg, describes Ahmad Pasha as being one of the greatest Emirs of Baban Emirate. He states that

> "We could not collect precise information about this movement but Major Son says that Ahmad Pasha intended to start a revolution against the Turks. He prepared himself by setting up a modern army of thousands of fighters. He trained and equipped his army very well and divided them into four army units of one thousand fighters, each supported by artillery units. He challenged the authority in Baghdad. He announced his position when he controlled the town of Koysinjaq. But he was not successful in his attempts. This was mainly because of the betrayal of his uncle and his brother. His uncle, Mahmud Pasha, collaborated with the Iranians and they occupied the city of Suleimanyeh. His brother, Abdullah Pasha collaborated with the Wally of Baghdad, Najeeb Pasha."[64]

The Kurds developed a more national awareness and sentiment towards the concept of an independent Kurdish state during the period of Baban rulers as these emirs had clear ambitions and aspirations for such a status. During the rule of Baban, the local education system had improved and the market flourished as a result of trade with Tehran, Baghdad, Istanbul and Damascus. According to Amin Zeki,

> "Abdurrahman Pasha Baban became the Emir of the emirate of Baban in 1788. The emirate was part of the Ottomans Empire. He was very smart and had a clear vision. He controlled the emirate six times and ruled for a total of 24 years. Abdurrahman Pasha's political goals and national aspiration was to set up a strong independent state. He tried very hard to achieve his goals. He revolted against the Ottomans Empire several times and entered into two big battles with the Baghdad army in Bazian. Abdurrahman Pasha was finally defeated by Abdullah pasha, the Wali of Baghdad, in a battle near the town of Kifri. This battle ended his hopes of establishing a big and strong Kurdish state in Iraq."[65]

---

[63] C.J. Edmonds, *Kurds Turks and Arabs*, translated, Georgis Fat-Hullah (Baghdad, Maktabat al-Sharq al-Jadid, 1971), 57.

[64] Mohammad Amin Zeki, *Khulasat Ta'reekh al-Kurd Wa Kurdistan (Arabic) - Summary of the History of Kurds and Kurdistan* (Cairo: Matbaat al-Saada, 1939), Zeki39.

[65] Amin Zeki, *Khulasat Ta'reekh al-Kurd Wa*, 30-31.

3.3.2 Emirate of Soran (1810-1836)

The Soran emirate was one of the famous emirates of Iraqi Kurdistan in the nineteenth century. It was renowned for its famous emir, Mohammed Pasha. Mohammad Pasha was an ambitious ruler who wanted to expand his emirate and set up a fair, organized and professional administration. Amin Zeki states that

> "The first emir of this emirate was Aughoz Beg, followed by Mustafa Beg. The capital of the emirate was the town of Rawanduz, situated in the north of the city of Erbil. It was during the time of Mustafa Beg when the emirate of Baban wanted to occupy some of the lands from the emirate of Soran. In 1826, Mohammed Beg inherited the emirate after the death of his father, Mustafa Beg. Mohammed Beg became so famous that he was called the Great Emir. He was known for his determination, brilliance, and intelligence. Soon he expanded the boundary of his emirate to reach Duhok, Zakho, Jazirah, Mardin and Sinjar to the west. He occupied the city of Erbil and the town of Kopri and Kirkuk to the south and the town of Rania to the east. He managed to reach the mountainous border of Bradost with Iran to the north."[66]

Mohammed Pasha's army was well-organized and did not encounter any defeat in their battles to occupy other regions to the south, west and east of its capital, Rawanduz. He used local raw material and skills to make weapons and artillery. His enemies tried to avoid engaging in any wars with him. According to Amin Zeki, "the Wali of Baghdad, Ali Reza Pasha realized that he could not stop the advance of this young emir which was coming from the north militarily. Instead he decided to use diplomacy and other methods to confront him. Ali Reza Pasha recognized his emirate and gave him the title of Pasha."[67]

There are many folklore stories about the degree of justice, good management and organization in running the affairs of his people during Mohammed Pasha's rule. He was famous for appointing the right people in the right place. Amin Zeki declares that "after he controlled all the towns, cities, and regions that he had reached he started arranging

---

[66] Mohammad Amin Zeki, *Khulasat Ta'reekh al-Kurd Wa Kurdistan (Arabic) - Summary of the History of Kurds and Kurdistan* (Cairo: Matbaat al-Saada, 1939), 31-37.

[67] Zeki, *Khulasat Ta'reekh al-Kurd*, 32.

and organizing the affairs of running those places. He organized the administration in the best possible way in all the areas under his control. Order and people's security were his main focuses... Major Lonjrik admitted that Mohammed Pasha's administration was the best and unique in the region."[68]

The Ottoman Empire took every opportunity to eliminate threats of the Kurds to their control in other parts of the empire. The Wali in Istanbul was occasionally forced to accept the situation when some Kurdish emirs wanted to run the affairs of their emirates according to their own preferences rather than what the Caliph ordered. However, they only tolerated this until all necessary military arrangements were prepared to defeat such emirs. No Caliph ever allowed any Kurdish emirate to fully secede from the empire. Any attempt by the emirs would be faced with refusal, punishment and attack on the emirate. According to Amin Zeki,

> "The Ottoman Empire gave orders to Rashid Pasha, who was the Wali of Siwas and Sadr al-A'zam, to attack the Soran Emirate. They informed the Wali of Baghdad and the governor of Mosul to liaise with Rashid Pasha and support him in his campaign to get rid of Mohammed Pasha. They moved towards the stronghold of the emirate of Soran but soon they realized that it would be difficult to overcome the well-prepared army of Mohammed Pasha. Therefore, they hatched a clever plan. They asked Mohammed Pasha to see them so they would seek recognition from the Wally in Istanbul for his authority and would assign him as a permanent Emir on his emirate. Mohammed Pasha believed them and as soon as he arrived they captured him and sent him to Istanbul to be executed later."[69]

3.3.3 Emirate of Botan and Baderkhan Pasha's Movement

The emirate of Botan was another semi-independent administration in Jazeerai Ebn Omer's region. Baderkhan Pasha was from one of the oldest and the most influential families of the region, Baderkhaniakan. Baderkhan Pasha had big ambitions to liberate Kurdistan from the control of the Ottoman Empire and to set up an independent Kurdistan. Therefore, he revolted against the authority of the Ottoman Empire and

---

[68] Mohammad Amin Zeki, *Khulasat Ta'reekh al-Kurd Wa Kurdistan (Arabic) - Summary of the History of Kurds and Kurdistan* (Cairo: Matbaat al-Saada, 1939), 33-37.

[69] Zeki, *Khulasat Ta'reekh al-Kurd*, 36.

declared independence. Amin Zeki states that "Baderkhan pasha came to power to run the emirate of Botan in 1812 at the age of eighteen. Soon he tried to thwart all the plots that the Turks planned against him on one hand and to liberate and unite all the Kurdish lands that were under the control of the Ottoman Empire. As a matter of fact, the tribal leaders of the regions of Wan, Hakari, Kheezan and Mush had agreed with him on that important issue."[70]

The emirate's territory expanded to the east and south of the capital because of the strategic thinking of Baderkhan Pasha. Baderkhan Pasha was from an educated family and had contacts in Europe. He had also studied and followed the events in Europe, and being influenced by the emergence of European nationalism, he tried to follow the same methods in achieving his ambitions. According to Amin Zeki, "in 1842 he issued his own currency with his name on it. Baderkhan Pasha expanded his territory to Wan, Sablagh (Mahabad), Rawanduz, and Mosul. Then he controlled Sinjar, Sumurd, Piranshahr and Seewerk. He reached Dyiarbaker and after he controlled the disturbances in Mosul area he managed to reach Shno and Arumyia."[71]

Many Kurdish scholars and Kurdish nationalists consider Baderkhan Pasha a symbol of Kurdish nationalism for his strategic views and ambitions to set up an independent Kurdish state. Jalal Talabani states that

> "Baderkhan pasha, who was the emir of Botan, led a revolution that was clearly a national movement as it demanded independence and liberation of Kurdistan from the control of the Ottoman Empire. The Emir encouraged domestic industry and helped people set up small factories; He sent a delegate to Europe to explain the movement's position and another delegate was sent to Egypt to liaise with Ibrahim Pasha against the Ottoman Turkish empire. Mr. Derek Kinnane, analyzed the Baderkhan movement in his book, *The Kurds and Kurdistan* by saying: From 1843, Baderkhan Pasha, the Emir of Jazeerai Ebn Omar, attempted to achieve freedom and independence from the

---

[70] Mohammed Amin Zeki, *Khulasat Ta'reekh al-Kurd Wa Kurdistan (Arabic) - Summary of the History of Kurds and Kurdistan* (Cairo: Matbaat al-Saada, 1939), 40.

[71] Zeki, *Khulasat Ta'reekh al-Kurd*, 41.

Ottoman's control. That revolution can be considered as the first Kurdish national movement by modern standards."[72]

The fate of this independent emirate was not any better than many other Kurdish emirates. Baderkhan Pasha made a fatal mistake by involving almost his entire army in his campaign to conquer other regions and territories. The Turks took advantage of this engagement of the emirate's army under direct command of the Emir to expand its territory and attacked the emirate, ending his reign. Amin Zeki states that "in 1848, the Ottoman recruited a massive army lead by Osman Pasha to attack the Emir's army. The two armies met near the city of Aroomyieh and were engaged in a fierce fighting. When Baderkhan Pasha heard the news of capturing his capital, Jazeera, he left his troops and went back to his capital. Although he managed to recapture his capital soon after that he was forced to retreat to the mountains. He was engaged in a fierce fighting before he was arrested along with his two sons. They were sent to Istana in Istanbul."[73]

Independence and freedom have become two very important goals for Kurds in general and for its elites and intellectuals in particular. They possessed the feeling of belonging, pride in their Kurdishness, and were ready to work and sacrifice to achieve their goals. Many tribal leaders and sheikhs who had the power to mobilize people played significant roles in this regard. According to McDowall, "the Baderkhans had never fully accepted the defeat of Bader Khan himself in 1847. In 1879 two of his many sons, Osman and Hussein, mounted a short-lived rebellion in Buhtan. In 1880 another son, Badri, played a double game between Istanbul and Sheikh Ubeidulla. In 1889 Amin Ali and Midhat, attempted to rally the tribes, but word got out and they were captured before they assembled their forces."[74]

---

[72] Jalal Talabani, *Kurdistan Walharaka Alqawmyiah Alkurdyiah (Arabic), Kurdistan and the Kurdish National Movement* (Baghdad: Manshurat al-Nur, 1971), 85-86.

[73] Mohammad Amin Zeki, *Khulasat Ta'reekh al-Kurd Wa Kurdistan (Arabic) - Summary of the History of Kurds and Kurdistan* (Cairo: Matbaat al-Saada, 1939), 42.

[74] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 90.

3.4   Revolts & Independence Claims

Istanbul, being the capital of the Ottoman Empire, can be described as the centre for the elites and intelligentsia for almost all of the nations and ethnicities within the reign of the Ottoman Empire at the end of nineteenth century. People from different ethnic backgrounds worked together to form groups, unions and organizations that reflected their anger and frustration toward the policies of the Ottoman Empire. This was in addition to the formation of organizations by some ethnic groups to express their sense of national identity once they realized that the new Turks would try to divert the direction of the empire from a religious to an ethnic basis.

3.4.1   Sheikh Ubaidullai Shamzini (Nehri) movement:

The Kurds like many other ethnicities within the Ottoman Empire, left their mark on the empire. The history of the empire would not be complete without mentioning the revolutions and attempts by Kurdish nationalists, religious, and tribal leaders to challenge the authority of the empire and break from it, or at least to gain more rights. According to McDowall,

> "Other Kurds had become involved in the political fate of the empire. Two Kurdish dynasties feature prominently in the story, one religious and the other one secular: the Sayids of Nehri (or Shamzinan) and the Badr Khans. Although it became apparent later, one could describe them as the founders of the two broad strands of Kurdish nationalism, the autonomists and the secessionists. At first both sought solutions within the Ottoman context but when forced to decide they chose different routes. As great families from adjacent parts of central Kurdistan, their rivalry was also symbolic of factionalism that has been a persistent feature of Kurdish nationalism."[75]

Sheikh Ubeidulla went beyond any other Kurdish leader prior to him in leading a nationalist movement which demanded a full independent nation-state for Kurds. Hence, he is considered one of few Kurdish leaders who had strategic views regarding Kurdish nationalism and gave it a modern vision. Despite the fact that he came from a religious

---

[75] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 89-90.

family, he realized that Kurds fulfilled all of the criteria of a nation and deserved to have their own independent state. Mariwan Qani argues that

> "What Haji Qaderi Koyee produced in his poems, fantasy and literature, Sheikh Ubeidulla put it in practice. Although he came from a religious family, but he wanted to combine religion and nationalism. He tried to give religion a nationalist cover. In 1880, he wrote a letter to the British Consulate stating: the Kurdish nation is different, its religion is different from the others; their culture is also different from the others. Olson believes that the sheikh's uprising was the first stage of the birth of nationalist awareness and that the sheikh demanded an independent Kurdistan."[76]

Sheikh Ubeidulla believed that the Kurds fulfilled all the criteria of a nation and had the rights for independent nation-state of Kurdistan. He realized the importance of international support for his cause at that time. According to Gunter,

> "In 1880, Sheikh Ubeidulla of Nehri led a famous but ultimately unsuccessful revolt that is sometimes said to have been the prototype for subsequent Kurdish nationalist revolts. In a famous letter to the British consul-general in Tabriz, Ubeidulla seemingly made obvious references to some kind of pre-existing Kurdish nationalism when he declared that: the Kurdish nation is there to enjoy their national rights. Their religion is different and their law and customs are distinct… We also are a nation apart. We want our affairs to be in our hands."[77]

Sheikh Ubeidulla wanted his revolt to be similar to other nations' struggle to set up a nation-state. His revolt coincided with other European nations' struggle for independence. His views, plans and actions portray him as a Kurdish national leader with a clear goal, which was to set up a Kurdish independent state. He had a strategic vision as to how he would achieve his goals. Noshirwan Amin states that "in the last quarter of nineteenth century Sheikh Ubaidullai Shamzini translated that struggle into a concrete strategy to set up an independent Kurdish state. This happened at the same time as when the Germans and Italians set up their own national states and other nations such as

---

[76] Mariwan W Qani', *Nasionalizm u Safer (Kurdish), Nationalism and Migration – The Kurds in Diaspora* (Suleimaniyeh: Rehend Centre, 2002), 69.

[77] Michael Gunter, *The Modern Origins of Kurdish Nationalism - The Evolution of Kurdish Nationalism* (California: MAZDA Publishers, 2007), 6-7.

Romanians, Serbs and Greeks intensified their national struggle. Sheikh Ubeidulla's movement can be considered as the turning point for Kurdish nationalism."[78]

Many scholars and analysts agree that Sheikh Ubeidulla was indeed the first Kurdish nationalist leader with clear national goals. He had a clear vision of what he was trying to achieve, and intended to unite the land that he believed was the land of the Kurds. He also planned to secure security and prosperity for his people after achieving his ambitious nationalist strategy through a fair and efficient administration. According to Noshirwan Amin,

> "The strategic goal of Sheikh Ubeidulla was the creation of an independent state of Kurdistan. He wanted to: 1. Unify all the Kurds regardless of their tribe, religion, dialect and region under the theme of national unity. He wanted to free them from the two so called Islamic states. 2. Liberate Kurdistan from its two enemies, Ottomans and Qajari, and unite it as one state. 3. Safeguard security for people and improve education, business, industry and civilization in Kurdistan. 4. Create and maintain good relations with the Christians, Armenians and Assyrians in Kurdistan and introduce religious tolerance amongst the citizens of the state of Kurdistan. 5. Establish good relation with the Muslim nations of Iran and the Arabs (from the emirates of Mosul, Baghdad, Hijaz and Egypt). 6. Obtain recognition from the European countries."[79]

Many Kurdish and non-Kurdish scholars, as well as some Kurdish leaders, consider Sheikh Ubeidulla the first nationalist leader who tried to achieve clearly identified national rights for the Kurds – President Jalal Talabani is an admirer of Sheikh Ubeidulla. According to Talabani,

> "The Kurdish revolutions were not all national revolutions. Some of them were national revolutions but some others were rather regional. The first national revolution in Kurdish history was Shamzinan revolution in 1880. There were revolutions – refusal of authority, uprisings and challenges to the Ottomans such as that of Soran emirate, but the first national movement in terms of ideology, aim and the wide range of people's participation was

---

[78] Noshirwan Amin, *Kurdu Ajam- Mejooi Syiasi Kurdakani Iran (Kurdish) – Kurds & Ajem-The Political History of Iranian Kurds* (Slemani: Santari Lekolinaway Stratizhi Kurdistan, 2005), 153.

[79] Noshirwan Amin, *Kurdu Ajam-Mejooy Syiasi Kurdakani Iran (Kurdish) – Kurds & Ajam – The Political History of Iranian* Kurds (Slemani: Santari Lekolinaway Stratizhi Kurdistan, 2005), 156.

Shamzinan [Sheikh Ubaidullai Shamzinan]. Even that was a revolution like anything else that emerged in history – to start with before it was developed to a medium level and finally to a more advanced form. So, one cannot claim that the movement was a perfect revolution by today's standards, but it was unique. Its goal was to liberate and unite all Kurdistan; people from all over Kurdistan participated in the revolution. I heard that people from Shwan in Kirkuk had gone to Turkey to participate in the revolution against the occupiers of Kurdistan. The Sheikh [Sheikh Ubaidullai] made contacts with other countries to get their support. It had many characteristics of a revolution by that time's standards."[80]

One of the weaknesses of Sheikh Ubeidulla's movement was that it did not include the Shiite Kurds from all parts of Kurdistan. The Kurds of Western Iran's provinces of Kurdistan (Senandaj) and Kermanshah were not recruited for Sheikh's revolt and subsequently did not participate in his movement. One of the reasons for this failure, in addition to the long distance and lack of communication with this group of Kurds, might have been the fact that the Kurds of those Iranian provinces were mainly Shiite Kurds while the Kurds of Turkey and that of the province of Aroomiyeh (Raza'iyah) and Azerbaijan were mainly Sunni. The Ottomans tried very hard to divert the Kurds' loyalty from a national feeling to religious, and more strictly to doctrinal, faith. They tried to create barriers between the Sunni and the Shiite. Martin van Bruinessen states that "Ottoman Sultans, from the mid-sixteenth century onward, boasted the title of Caliph, leader of the true believers. As such, they commanded the religiously sanctioned loyalty of all Sunni Muslims. Both the Ulama and Ottoman officials stressed the unity of Sunni Kurds with Sunni Turks, Sunni Arabs and other Sunni ethnic groups. Differences between Sunni and Alevi Muslims between Sunni Kurds and Alevi Kurds were fanned into enmity by the same authorities, because of Ottoman-Safawi rivalries."[81]

It must be said that Sheikh Ubeidulla himself was not influenced by such a plot and concentrated on mobilizing all of the Kurds for their national struggle. However, it might have had some impact on ordinary rank-and-file Kurds. Noshirwan Amin analyzes Ubeidulla's movement and argues that

---

[80] Interview with Mr. Jalal Talabani, the President of Iraq and the General Secretary of PUK, on 28th March 2005 -10:00 – 11:30 am, in Qalachwalan-Suleimaniyeh, Iraq.

[81] Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State* (London: Zed Books, 1992), 268.

"The movement did not achieve its goals and was defeated by his enemies. There are a number of reasons for the collapse of the movement. There are some internal and a few external factors that played significant roles in the collapse of the movement. Sheikh Ubeidulla failed to mobilize all the Kurds of Iran. He did not reach the Kurds in Kermanshah and Senendaj, two big provinces/regions in Iran. The Kurdish troops were not trained for big battles against the well-prepared, trained, disciplined and equipped armies of the Ottomans and Qajari empires. The sheikh failed to organize his supporters in military units to be trained by professional officers. The units were based on tribal links and were easily demoralized when they received a single blow from the enemy in the battlefield. Another main reason for the collapse of the movement was collaboration between the two empires, the Ottomans and the Qajari, following a successful diplomatic effort by the Iranians. Despite the fact that they were bitter rivals and had entered a number of wars against each other, they shared a common interest in crushing the Kurdish movement. The Iranians managed to conduct a thorough diplomatic mission to convince Britain and Russia, both major players in the politics of the region, not to support the movement. The Turks suspected that the Kurds might have been influenced by the Russians. Finally, the emergence of a Kurdish movement aiming to establish an independent Kurdistan was not in the interest of Britain, Russia and the international system. The Kurds wanted to take some lands from the Iranians and the Turks and create a state in between the two. Britain and Russia did not like this idea and wanted to maintain the balance of force in the region as it was."[82]

The Kurdish elite began demanding more ethnic and national rights following the adaption of a centralization policy by the 'new' Ottomans after 1908. Once they realized that relative non-centralization and the type of autonomy they enjoyed during the reign of the Sultans of Ottomans Empire was gradually disappearing from the Young Turks' agenda, they demanded more national rights. Sheikh Abdussalam Mohammed Barzani was one of those Kurdish notables who tried to rally many sheikhs and tribal leaders to achieve his aspirations. Abdussalam's demands included the Kurds' right to use Kurdish as an official and educational language and the Kurds to run their own affairs in their regions. According to Andreas Wimmer, "in Abdussalam's petition, however, certain elements of a discourse of ethnic representativity appear for the first time. He demanded

---

[82] Noshirwan Amin, *Kurdu Ajam-Mejooy Syiasi Kurdakani Iran (Kurdish) – Kurds & Ajam – The Political History of Iranian* Kurds (Slemani: Santari Lekolinaway Stratizhi Kurdistan, 2005), 172-193.

the adoption of Kurdish for official and educational purposes in the administrative districts surrounding Badinan; the appointment of Kurdish-speaking officials."[83]

3.4.2   Sheikh Mahmud's Kingdom

Britain managed to conquer Iraq rather easily at the beginning of twentieth century. They occupied Iraq during World War I without substantial resistance. However, the Kurds in the north of Iraq, especially in Suleimanyeh, the stronghold of Sheikh Mahmud, caused many troubles for the British forces. Ironically, the British government handled the cases differently. They allowed the Kurds in that part of Iraq to run the affairs of their region. Sheikh Mahmud was one of the Kurdish leaders to be granted such authority. Jalal Talabani states that

> "The most serious trouble occurred in Suleimanyeh. Everywhere else Britain administered the occupied territories directly through a network of political officers. Suleimanyeh was the one area which enjoyed special status…On 1st December 1918, Wilson had confirmed Sheikh Mahmud as Hukumdar (governor) of Suleimanyeh division, a large tract of land between the greater Zab and Diyala. Other Kurdish officials had been assigned to the administration of various sub-divisions under guidance of British political officers… Sheikh Mahmud was the single most influential leader in Suleimanyeh. As far as Rawanduz, Koysinjaq and Rania, there was willingness among impoverished communities anxious for aid to accept him as Britain's appointed Kurdish King. King Mahmud described the Soviets, in his letter, as the nations' friend".[84]

According to Gunter,

> "The British government also gave the Kurds some false hope. There are few occasions when the British government officially declared the rights of the Kurds for some sort of autonomy. Nevertheless, these promises were never materialized. Both the British and the Iraqi government issued a number of statements that theoretically recognized and guaranteed Kurdish rights. On December 24, 1922, for example, an Anglo-Iraqi Joint Declaration to the

---

[83] Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict - Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 170.

[84] Jalal Talabani, *Kurdistan Walharaka Alqawmyiah Alkurdyiah (Arabic), Kurdistan and the Kurdish National Movement* (Baghdad: Manshurat al-Nur, 1971), 219.

Council of the League of Nations clearly recognized the right of the Iraqi Kurds to some type of autonomy."[85]

Despite the religious background of Sheikh Mahmud, many of the urban intellectuals of Suleimanyeh, poets and ex-army officers who served in the Ottomans' army rallied behind their leader, King Mahmud. Kurdish nationalism blossomed during the period when Sheikh Mahmud was the ruler of Suleimanyeh. He formed a government with many ministers from the notables and elite of Suleimanyeh, paid special attention to the education system and the administration, set up a system for taxes and custom duties, and ran municipal services and courts. Gunter argues that "genuine Kurdish nationalist feeling did manifest itself in September 1923, when strikes and demonstrations broke out in Suleimanyeh. For perhaps the first time, it appeared that the Kurdish leadership was moving from the religious and tribal countryside to the cities and their emerging middle classes."[86]

Sheikh Mahmud remained to be seen as one of the great nationalists for the Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan and other parts of Kurdistan. He believed in self-determination for the Kurds and set up a Kurdish Kingdom in part of Kurdistan in defiance to the British government and Baghdad. The sheikh believed that the British administration would approve such a kingdom as an accepted style of self-rule. Gunter states that "the scheme for a 'free united Kurdistan' suggests that Sheikh Mahmud was a nationalist, as indeed he was. Not only did he believe in a Kurdish political entity under his own authority but he also justifiably believed that Kurdish self-determination was effectively what the Allies had promised. Strapped, like a talisman, to his arm was a Quran on a fly leaves of which was written in Kurdish the texts of Woodrow Wilson's twelfth point and the Anglo-French Declaration of 8 November."[87]

Sheikh Mahmoud's ambition to setup an Independent Kurdistan faced a big challenge, the new development in the region following World War I. He clearly had the vision of a

---

[85] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 2.

[86] Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq*, 3.

[87] Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq*, 158.

nationalist leader to set up an independent state for the Kurds, which was supported by many writers, former Ottoman army officers, tribal leaders and the majority of the Kurdish populace. The mandate he was granted by the British to be the governor of Suleimanyeh did not fulfill his national ambitions. He sided with the Turks against the British government and declared himself the King of Kurdistan. Sheikh Mahmud needed to strengthen himself by gaining the loyalty of all or most of the Kurdish tribes as well as international support for his ambitious project. He failed to mobilize all of the Kurdish tribes and through a lack of diplomatic skill failed to gain international support. Eventually he was also defeated by the mighty British forces. Andreas Wimmer describes the situation as follows:

> "Sheikh Mahmud from Suleimanyeh was installed as ruler over much of Kurdistan. He managed to build up a large confederacy of various tribal groups. His ambitions, however, went far beyond being governor at the grace of the British, so he started to court the new Turkish government, which was eager to gain an advantage in the Mosul question. After declaring himself independent he was immediately deprived of power by the British and sent into exile, only to be later reinstalled to stop Turkish troops and their Kurdish allies from advancing in the north-western corner of mandate territory. After having helped to repel the Turkish forces, however, Sheikh Mahmud declared himself king of independent Kurdistan. He was subdued by force of arms and exiled again in 1924."[88]

---

[88] Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict - Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 184

4.   The Kurds in Iraq

4.1.   Foundation of Iraq and the Kurds

The foundation of Iraq, following World War I, was a result of the desire of the European colonial powers to carve the Ottoman empire into smaller states. Many of the newly founded states were multi-ethnic and multi-religious in nature. The victorious European countries drew the map of those countries according to their own interests. Iraq is a unique example of such a mosaic state. Each of the newly-founded states fell under the mandate of one of the victorious European powers, often Britain or France. According to Andreas Wimmer, "the newly founded state of Iraq, composed of former Osmanian provinces of Basra, Baghdad and Mosul, owes its existence almost entirely to the constellation of forces among the European imperialist powers at the end of the war. The province of Mosul, although numerically dominated by non-Arabic speakers, was added to the Iraqi state because the British wanted to include the oil-fields of Mosul in their domain and because a Shiite majority in the new state had to be avoided and Turkey's influence in the region curtailed."[1]

Modern Iraq was founded against the will of the Kurds, who make up the second largest ethnic group, after the Arabs. They expected a state of their own similar to that of the other nations ruled by the Ottoman Empire and not to be forced within the boundaries of Iraq, where the majority of the population is Arabs. Wimmer states that "similar to the Shiite and the Assyrian leaders, the Kurdish elite – Osmanian notables, officers, as well as important sheikhs and aghas – resisted the formation of the new state right from the start. They still hoped that a Kurdish nation- state would be cut out of the dying body of the empire, as had been promised by the imperial powers at the end of the war."[2]

The Kurds had high expectations of the victorious Allied Forces following the war. President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points had one particular point, number twelve, which had declared that all non-Turkish minorities of the Ottoman Empire should be

---

[1] Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict - Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 172-173.
[2] Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and*, 183-184.

granted the right of autonomous development. This gave the Kurds real hope for their independent state. The Treaty of Sevres (1920) was another factor that made the Kurds remain optimistic about their future. Its article 62 clearly declared the right of autonomy for the predominantly Kurdish areas. Article 64 went further and made the creation of independent Kurdistan possible too. However, the Treaty of Lausanne (1923) overruled both of these documents and buried any Kurdish hope for such status. David Romano states that

> "For the Kurds, the most important element in the Treaty of Sevres was Article 64: If within one year from the coming into force of the present Treaty the Kurdish people within the areas defined in Article 62, [Article 62 defined these areas as "the predominantly Kurdish areas lying east of the Euphrates, south of the boundary of Armenia as it may be hereafter determined, and north of the frontier of Turkey with Syria and Mesopotamia. Quoted on the same page – Shorsh], shall address themselves to the Council of League of Nations in such a manner as to show that a majority of the population of these areas desires independent from Turkey, and if the Council then considers that these people are capable if such independence and recommends that it should be granted to them, Turkey hereby agrees to execute such a recommendation, and to renounce all rights title over these areas… If and when such renunciation takes place, no objection will be raised by the Principle Allied Powers to the voluntary adhesion to such an independent Kurdish State of the Kurds inhabiting that part of Kurdistan which has been there to be included in the Mosul Vilayet."[3]

Despite the existence of such articles approved by the League of Nations and the involvement of Ataturk in war on different fronts against Greek, Armenians, French and pro-Sultan forces, the Kurdish leaders did not benefit from this opportunity. Ataturk destroyed the Armenians and Greek forces. The Allies did not fight Ataturk. These new developments encouraged the Kemalists to abolish the Sultanate.

The victory of Vladimir Lenin's Bolshevik revolution in Russia was another factor added to the political equation against the Kurds and in favor of Ataturk. The West desperately needed an alliance with Turkey, Russia's Muslim neighbor. Ataturk was closer to the Western political system rather than a new communist regime. The Western allies favored Ataturk's demands over those of the Kurds'. On July 24[th]1923, the Treaty of

---

[3] David Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 28.

Lausanne replaced Sevres and it contained no mention of the Kurds and their rights. This was at a time when Kurdish nationalism had emerged and the Kurds demanded recognition of their national rights. According to Liam Anderson, "the evolution of the pan-Kurdish nationalist cause was, of course, dealt a severe blow in the aftermath of World War I, when the 1923 Lausanne Treaty annulled the 1920 Treaty of Sevres, which had promised the Kurds self-determination. Most of the Kurdish region under Ottoman Empire's control became part of modern state of Turkey and the rest divided between Iraq and Syria."[4]

Modern Iraq was founded by forcing various ethnicities, religions and doctrines to live within the boundaries of Iraq, but it did not work. The Kurds and their land became part of Iraq against their will. Such forceful amalgamation had a reverse effect in dividing Iraq along ethnic lines and resulted in eruption of violence and more harsh policies by the rulers and reaction by the Kurds for more than eighty years. Andreas Wimmer states that "its population was made up of 21 percent Sunni Arab speakers, 14 percent mostly Sunni Kurdish speakers, 53 percent Shiite Arab speakers, 5 percent non-Muslim Arab speakers (such as the Baghdad Jews), and 6 percent other religious-linguistic groups (such as the Sunni Turkmen of northern Iraq, the Christian speaking Assyrian or Chaldean etc)."[5]

The false promises given to the Kurds by Britain and other Western powers was not left to any misinterpretation. Wimmer refers to "Arnold Wilson wrote: The Kurds, who were by no means ill-disposed to us, became once more prey to doubts and suspicions. It seemed clear to them that the assurances of support, freely given by some irresponsible officers… We had induced them to show their hand to their enemies the Turks, and we

---

[4] Liam Anderson, *"The Role of Political Parties in Developing Kurdish Nationalism",* in *The Evolution of Kurdish Nationalism,* ed. by Mohammed Ahmad & Michael Gunter (California: Mazda Publishers, 2007), 126.

[5] Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict - Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 173.

had left them in the lurch. The Hamawand leaders, in particular, never forgave us, and remained hostile to us for many years after."[6]

The Kurdish leaders failed to convince the West that they would and could protect their strategic interests in the region if they were allowed to set up their own independent state, but Ataturk did. They did not show unity in their requests and did not meet the demands that the situation placed upon them; they failed to mobilize the whole nation and to speak with one voice and to have a clear agenda. Obviously, the tribal structure of the Kurdish society was the main obstacle in reaching such a unanimous strategy. However, just at the time when the Kurdish society was beginning to change and urban intellectuals started to emerge, the British government encouraged the Agha and the Sheikhs to represent their tribes. According to David McDowall,

> "The Kurds were politically inept in their response to the post war situation. Poor communication, diffusion of society and the adversarial nature of intra tribal relations made the presentation of a united political position virtually impossible. On the whole most Aghas and sheikhs were happy to fall in with British plans, since this included administration through the traditional patronage system; but subordination to Arab rule stuck in their craw. Direct Arab rule was imposed just as new class of Kurds began to emerge: the non-tribal educated professionals of the towns of Kurdistan. It was their misfortune that by the time they were ready to mobilize the Kurds as a people rather than as tribes, Britain had long since betrayed its offer of self-determination. In the meantime both Britain and the Arabs in Baghdad confirmed the Agha class as an intermediary through which to ensure Kurdish compliance with their policies."[7]

4.2   Foundation of Iraq and Kurdish Nationalism

The Kurdish case in Iraq is unique in the region. There is no nation-state for the Kurds in the region to protect them from attacks and attempts for annihilation by the central governments where the Kurds live as a non-dominant ethnic group; they are not a dominant ethnic group in Iraq or any of the other other states that they live in.

---

[6] Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict - Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 153.

[7] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004) 151.

Nevertheless, they never stopped asking for their national rights to be recognized in Iraq, Turkey, Iran and Syria. Other minority ethnic groups in those countries - such as the Armenians, Turkmen, Arabs and Azeris - have nation-states of their own to protect and support them.

Kurdish nationalism had developed in Iraq in a moderate form in the early decades of twentieth century. The Kurd's demands then reflected their determination to gain what they believed they deserved as a nation which was to set up their own nation-state, similar to the many Arab states established in the Middle East and North Africa. Andreas Wimmer argues that "the political discourse of the Barzani and their movement was firmly rooted in modern nationalist language: the Kurdish formed 'a people' on the basis of linguistic and cultural commonality, thousands of years of common history, a characteristic personality adapted to the life of nomadic herders and fighters amidst the greatest mountains of Kurdistan, and their eternal struggle for freedom and self-rule."[8]

The urban intellectuals of Iraqi Kurdistan in the early twentieth century played a significant role in advocating for national rights through a wide use of literature and cultural activities. Publication of Kurdish books, magazines and newspapers played a significant role in raising national awareness and promoting nationalism. The poems of Haji Qaderi Koyee were praised by a group of young nationalists and intellectuals such as Sheikh Nuri Shekh Saleh, Zewar and Ali Bapir. They published their nationalist poems and literary pieces in newly founded newspapers such as Peshkawtn and Rozhi Kurdistan in the city of Suleimanyeh to mobilize people in support of Kurdish nationalism. According to Wimmer, "during the second half of the 1920s urban intellectuals of Suleimanyeh founded a series of literary and cultural clubs. They were dedicated to what countless nationalists did and continue to do in other places during the first phase of nationalist awakening."[9]

---

[8] Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict - Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 189.
[9] Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and*, 185.

The Kurdish elite reacted to the spread of Pan-Arabism in Iraq. The Arab Army officers were among the first group to advocate for Arab nationalism and for creating an Iraqi state with Arabic identity. The Kurdish army officers who served under the Iraqi army, on the other hand, reacted to such attempts by establishing Kurdish political groups with clear nationalist goals.

Kurdish intelligentsia continued to play a significant role in promoting Kurdish nationalism in the 1930s. Poets such as Piramerd and Faiaq Bekas were among the front line of such an army. They not only urged Kurds to demand national rights but also mobilized people through their activities and publications. The Iraqi government decided to centralize education and Arabized curriculum in schools all over Iraq, including majority Kurdish population speaking towns and cities. As a reaction to that policy, some Kurdish writers and grammerists established a centre in the city of Suleimanyeh to purify Kurdish language from foreign vocabulary – mainly Arabic and Turkish words.

The growth of Kurdish nationalism was proportionate to the degree of Arab nationalism's growth in Iraq. The emergence of Ba'ath Party was followed by the foundation of the KDP. As Arab nationalists strengthened their grip on the Iraqi army and other administrative apparatus, Kurdish nationalists tried to rally more people behind their ideology. It is noted that participation of more intellectuals, army officers, and civil servants in the Kurdish nationalism movement gave it a stronger dimension of nationalism. Kurdish nationalism spread further. According to Wimmer, "after the revolution of 1958 when the Arabization of the state apparatus advanced quickly. The lawyers, left-wing officers and officials who led the movement in urban areas added a new element to Kurdish nationalism."[10]

4.3   Emergence of Kurdish Nationalist Parties and Groups in the 20th Century

4.3.1   Kurdistan Assembly

---

[10] Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict - Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 186.

A number of Kurdish elite, including writers, poets and army officers of the city of Suleimanyeh set up a political group called Kurdistan Assembly. Their main goal was to support Sheikh Mahmud. Abdulstar Taher Sharif states that "in July 1922 a secret political group was set up under the chairman of Mustafa Pasha Yamulki and the membership of Rafiq Hilmi, Ahmad Beg, Tofiq Beg, Ali Bapir and some others...Yamulki returned to Suleimanyeh from Istanbul and tried to use his experience and knowledge that he gained from the Ottoman Empire, while he was a senior army officer, to establish a political group to improve the methods of Kurdish national struggle."[11]

The Assembly was engaged in a number of activities to rally support for Kurdish national rights. According to Sharif, "as one of Kurdistan Assembly's activity they sent a letter to the League of Nations on 1st October 1924. They opposed Turkey's claim for Mosul wilayat and stated in their letter that giving Mosul wilayat to Turkey would contradict with the Kurds' national rights. They ended their letter with a pledge to the League of Nations to support the Kurds in their rightful demand to help stabilize the region and live with their Armenian and Christian neighbours in peace."[12]

4.3.2   Hiwa Party

The Hiwa Party was first set up in the city of Kirkuk in 1937 by a number of Kurdish nationalists who were mainly urban intellectuals. In the beginning, the party was called Darkar, but soon changed to Hiwa. The Hiwa Party managed to recruit a large number of teachers, lawyers, army officers and tribes' leaders. They believed that these professionals and personalities could mobilize more people into its ranks to promote Kurdish nationalism and urge people to support the Kurdish struggle for independence. Rafiq Hilmi was the chairman of the party. Sharif studies Hiwa Party and states that

> "Members of the Hiwa Party, who were from all towns and regions of Iraqi Kurdistan, were very enthusiastic and had a national feeling towards the

---

[11] Abdulstar Taher Sharif, *Aljam'iat Walmunazamat Walahzab Alkurdyeh Fi Nesf Qarn (Arabic), Organizations, Associations and Political Parties in Half-Century 1908–1958* (Baghdad: Al-ma'rif Publishers, 1989), 88-89.

[12] Sharif, *Aljam'iat Walmunazamat*, 90.

Kurdish cause. They believed that the Kurds had the right for unification and self-determination. Their anger and frustration from the Turks and Arabs treatment of the Kurds made them believe that they could liaise with the British to help them gain their national rights... The party did not have many members and supporters at the beginning, but soon became one of the biggest parties before and during World War II and a large number of Kurdish intellectuals, army officers and writers joined the party... In 1943 Hiwa Party was dissolved, following a bitter split within the ranks of the party."[13]

The Hiwa Party was looked upon as a nationalist forum that demanded recognition of Kurdish national rights. It attracted a large number of intellectuals and a new generation of army officers who studied in Baghdad and had progressive views and wanted to participate in the Kurdish national struggle. They reacted to the activities of their Arab colleagues who advocated for Pan-Arabism. According to Wimmer, "again during the thirties, a young generation of Kurdish officers of the newly founded Iraqi army came under the influence of Kurdish nationalism. This generation had not served under the Ottomans and was educated at the recently established Military Academy of Baghdad. They founded organizations such as Hizbi Hiwa [Party of Hope] in order to counter the Pan-Arabic parties and groups that enjoyed more and more popularity among their colleagues of Arab origin."[14]

4.3.3 Shorsh Party & Rezgari Party

The Shorsh Party was founded, mainly, by a number of progressive and leftists who were originally members of the Hiwa Party. Following the split and then dissolution of the Hiwa Party, some of the former Hiwa activists joined the Kurdish communists of the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP). They established the Yekyati Tekosheen – Union for Struggle. They issued a magazine called Shorsh. The name of the Shorsh Party was derived from their official gazette. According to Sharif, "the Hiwa Party was dissolved, but some of their active members had joined a splinter group from ICP called Yakeyati

---

[13] Abdulstar Taher Sharif, *Aljam'iat Walmunazamat Walahzab Alkurdyeh Fi Nesf Qarn (Arabic), Organizations, Associations and Political Parties in Half-Century 1908–1958* (Baghdad: Al-ma'rif Publishers, 1989), 98-99.

[14] Andreas Wimmer*, Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict - Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 186.

Tekosheen. They jointly founded The Communist Party for Iraqi Kurdistan in the autumn of 1944 and issued a magazine called Shorsh."[15]

At the beginning of 1945 the Shorsh Party issued a statement urging the Kurdish intellectuals and nationalists to form a new party called Rezgari to promote Kurdish nationalism. They declared that the main goal of the newly-founded party would be unification and liberation of Kurdistan, and to set up an independent state of Kurdistan. Sharif analyzes the situation and declares that "the birth of the Rezgary Party came as a response to the need of the Kurds to organize themselves in a progressive party which could unite all loyal Kurds. They decided to participate in the national and democratic struggle of Iraqi people and for the legitimate national rights of the Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan... The Rezgary Party's long term goal was to unify and liberate whole of Kurdistan."[16]

In August of 1946, the Rezgary Party decided to dissolve itself and set up the Kurdish Democratic Party which later changed its name to KDP. Those who opposed such a move by the majority of the party joined the ICP – Alqaeeda.

4.3.4 Association for the Restoration of the Kurds (Komalai Jyanawai Kurd – JK) – 16 September 1942

The Association for the Restoration of the Kurds (JK) is considered to be one of the Kurdish organizations in twentieth century that clearly advocated for an independent Kurdish state. Its manifesto and publication contained these goals and urged all the Kurds to support such a trend in their struggle. JK enjoyed support from many Kurds throughout Kurdistan - Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey. Representatives from the Hiwa Party of Iraqi Kurdistan and some educated Iranian Kurds met several times and discussed the objectives and structure of the proposed organization. Most of the founders of JK had progressive ideologies and were calling for the rights of workers and farmers as well as the Kurds' right for self determination. Sharif states that

---

[15] Abdulstar Taher Sharif, *Aljam'iat Walmunazamat Walahzab Alkurdyeh Fi Nesf Qarn, Organizations, Associations and Political Parties in Half-Century 1908–1958* (Baghdad: Al-ma'rif Publishers, 1989), 110.
[16] Sharif, *Aljam'iat Walmunazamat*, 114.

"In 1942, the Hiwa Party, which was the strongest political organization in Iraqi Kurdistan, sent two of its experienced members to Iranian Kurdistan to make contacts with nationalist Kurds there. They sent Mirhaj Ahmad and Mustafa Khoshnaw, who were army officers, to liaise with the Iranian Kurds in their struggle for national rights of the Kurds. They contacted many individuals and personalities who would later join them. On 16 September, 1942, a group of young men from the town of Mahabad held a meeting in Haji Dawoud Park. The two representatives of Hiwa attended the meeting. They decided to set up an organization called Jianawy Kurdistan (JK)."[17]

The end of World War II and the defeat of Nazis brought many new issues as far as nations' demand for self-determination and end of colonialism were concerned. At the peak of flourishing Arab nationalism in the region a number of Arab nationalist parties and organizations emerged. The Ba'th Party was one of the most influential nationalist Arab parties. It was established by a number of Arab nationalists and left-wing Christians in Syria. The Kurds were not far from the influence of the new developments by any means, but they acted in a similar way and started organizing themselves to set up Kurdish nationalist parties with a clear nationalist agenda. JK was one of those parties.

JK was founded mainly by young intellectuals who espoused a nationalist ideology. They intended to set up an organization to clearly advocate for a Kurdish nation-state. According to Farideh Koohi-Kamali, "the Komala J.K. was founded in 1942 by 18 people, all urban middle-class intellectuals and city notables, and who, with the exception of two Iraqi Kurds, were all from Mahabad."[18]

The founders of JK and its first leadership members had progressive ideology in addition to their nationalist views. Hassanpour states that "among the first political parties to renounce the "betrayal" of tribal and feudal lords was 'Komelay J K', Society for Revival

---

[17] Abdulstar Taher Sharif, *Aljam'iat Walmunazamat Walahzab Alkurdyeh Fi Nesf Qarn (Arabic), Organizations, Associations and Political Parties in Half-Century 1908–1958* (Baghdad: Al-ma'rif Publishers, 1989), 72.

[18] Farideh Koohi-Kamali, "The Kurdish Republic in Mahabad", in *The Evolution of Kurdish Nationalism*, (California: MAZDA Publishers, 2007), 236.

of Kurdistan, formed in 1943 in Iranian Kurdistan. This Party launched an effective campaign against the traditional leadership of the movement."[19]

JK's propaganda and publications leave no doubt about the degree of the national awareness they had, as they clearly asked for the unification and liberation of all parts of Kurdistan. In all nine issues of JK's ideological magazine, Nishteman, the leaders of JK urged Kurds to direct their struggle for the establishment of a unified independent Kurdistan. According to Noshirwan Amin, "in the main editorial article of the first issue of Nishteman, the ideological publication of JK, in July 1943 it read: To all our beloved Kurdish brothers, JK is against every step or action that may accelerate or advocate the inner fighting and disagreements amongst Kurds. On the contrary, we will do our best to destroy all the barriers and obstacles to free the Kurdish people and liberate and unify our divided land in one free and prosperous Kurdistan."[20]

The founders of JK, who were mostly young, had very ambitious goals and laid plans and mechanism to achieve JK's objectives. The first step of such ambitious agenda must start with establishing contacts with the other parts of Kurdistan. Komalai J.K. successfully initiated a practical step towards that direction. Koohi-Kamali states that

> "In order to extend its activities, the Komala dispatched a representative to Kirkuk to prepare for unity of the Komala J.K. and the Hiwa Party of Iraq. The two organizations managed to establish cooperation and also agreed on a meeting of the Kurdish representatives of the four countries with the largest Kurdish populations. This took place on the Dalan-Par Mountain on the borders of Iran, Iraq and Turkey. The participants were from Iraq (representatives of Hiwa), Turkey, Syria and Mahabad. They signed a treaty known as the treaty of Peimani Seh Sunour, or the treaty of the three boundaries, which emphasized the unity of the parties and restoration of Kurdish language and culture."[21]

---

[19] Amir Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan, 1918-1985* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992), 61.

[20] Noshirwan Amin, *Hukumati Kurdistan – Kurd Lagamai Sovieteeda (Kurdish), The Government of Kurdistan - The Kurds in the Soviet Game* (Hawler: Wazarati Roshnbiri, 1993), 60.

[21] Farideh Koohi-Kamali, "The Kurdish Republic in Mahabad", in *The Evolution of Kurdish Nationalism*, (California: MAZDA Publishers, 2007), 239.

It did not take too long before JK made many supporters amongst the Kurdish people. They accepted members from all parts of Kurdistan. Abdurrahman Zabihi, who was a young intellectual and a Kurdish nationalist, was the secretary of the association. The first few members and activists were mainly young and showed a high degree of willingness to sacrifice for their cause. Benedict Anderson states that "both in Europe and in the colonies 'young, and 'youth' signified dynamism, progress, self-sacrificing idealism and revolutionary will."[22] Soon after the establishment of JK, many well-known Kurdish figures, tribal leaders, sheikhs and personalities from Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria began to support JK. Qazi Mohammed, who was a well respected personality from Mahabad and from a well-known family, also joined JK. This gave JK further strength, but due to the social class of its prominent members and the new recruits, it lost its original belief of advocating for the rights of workers and farmers, and of social justice. Noshirwan Amin states that

> "JK's organizations made good progress and a large number of Agha, Sheikh, Mala (Muslim priest), businessmen, merchants, and tribal heads of Dibukri, Mamash, Zarza, Mangur, Harki, Shekak, Jalali and Sadati Nahri supported it. It crossed the border and made good contacts with famous and well-known Kurds from Iraq, Turkey, and Syria. It opened a branch in Iraqi Kurdistan after the dissolution of the Hiwa Party. Ibrahim Ahmad, a well-known intellectual Kurd who was the editor of Galawejz magazine, was in charge of the branch. Many poets and other personalities such as Fayaq Bekas, Ismail Shawais, Sediq Shawais, Mohammed Madhoosh, Ata Talabani and Saleh Rushdi became members of JK."[23]

JK saw itself as a pan-Kurdish Party which encompassed all Kurds under its banner. Hence, it maintained a strong relationship with the Hiwa Party. They sent representatives to Iraqi Kurdistan to liaise with Hiwa in their nationalist struggle. They also supported Barzani's movement and considered Mustafa Barzani as a national hero. In one of their letters addressed to Barzani they appealed to him to set national goals for his movement. It is worth mentioning that due to the progressive nature of the association and the beliefs

---

[22] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Community* (London & New York: Verso, 2006), 119.
[23] Noshirwan Amin, *Hukumati Kurdistan – Kurd Lagamai Sovieteeda, (Kurdish), The Government of Kurdistan - The Kurds in the Soviet Game* (Hawler: Wazarati Roshnbiri, 1993), 73.

of most of its leadership members, they urged Barzani to liaise with the Soviet Union in his struggle against the Iraqi government. Noshirwan Amin states in his book that

> "A letter addressed to Mustafa Barzani was published in the second issue of Nishteman magazine. Due to the historical importance of the letter's content, we will publish the whole content of the letter:
>
> To the leader of Freedom Mr. Mustafa Barzani
>
> On behalf of the leadership of JK we write to you… We hope you respond to our letter in detail. 1. First, we would like to congratulate the leader and the Liberation army of Kurdistan for their great victory over the enemy. 2. … 3. What is the goal of your revolution? Are you calling for the liberation of Iraqi Kurdistan only or all parts of Kurdistan – including Turley's Kurdistan? 4. … 5. We believe that your revolution should carry a pan-Kurdish name. i.e. you must aim at liberating all parts of Kurdistan. All the Kurds on this planet must support and help you to achieve this. You must form a national Kurdish army under your command from all the Kurdish supporters. 6. ... 7. In order to liberate Kurdistan we need the support of one of the super powers. We believe that this super power must be the Soviet Union.
>
> We will do our best to help you in any sort, form or shape possible."[24]

JK did not last long after the collapse of the Barzani movement and the withdrawal of its fighters to Iranian Kurdistan. The leaders of JK surrendered to the will of the some tribal leaders and Barzani fighters who did not have the same progressive approach. On 8th November 1945 JK dissolved itself and the KDP was set up at the request of Qazi Mohammed. On December 6 1945, the statement of the first conference of the KDP was published in Kurdistan newspaper.

4.3.5   KDP (KDP) -16 August 1946

The absence of a Kurdish nationalist party in Iraqi Kurdistan in the first half of the twentieth century had led a number of Kurdish intellectuals to join the ICP, which took a favorable position towards Kurdish nationalist rights. Therefore, any discussion about the emergence of Kurdish nationalist parties/groups in Iraqi Kurdistan will not be complete

---

[24] Noshirwan Amin, *Hukumati Kurdistan – Kurd Lagamai Sovieteeda, (Kurdish), The Government of Kurdistan - The Kurds in the Soviet Game* (Hawler: Wazarati Roshnbiri, 1993), 78-80.

without highlighting the role that the ICP played at that time. According to Michael Gunter,

> "In Iraq, however, the absence of any Kurdish party led few intellectuals to join the ICP, which had been founded in 1935. Over the years the ICP took a favorable attitude towards the Kurdish movement… The dearth of Kurdish parties began to change in 1941, when the urban intellectuals of Iraqi Kurdistan created the clandestine Heva (Hope) Party as a nationalist organization embracing the political spectrum from left to right… As a matter of practicality, therefore, Heva cooperated with Mullah Mustafa Barzani, helping him to escape from detention in Suleimanyeh in 1943 and in his unsuccessful uprising of 1945."[25]

The establishment of the KDP was, to a large degree, related to the two conferences held by the two main Kurdish parties in 1946, Rezgari and Shorsh. KDP could not have established and strengthened in the way it happened if those two parties did not end their activities. Sharif states that

> "In the first week of August 1946 the Communist Party in Iraqi Kurdistan (Shorsh) held a conference. The conference decided to dissolve the party and to give its members the choice of joining The Kurdish Democratic Party or the Iraqi Communist Party. The political bureau and the lower organizations of the party agreed, but two directions emerged amongst its members because of their position towards Mullah Mustafa Barzani. Barzani wanted to insert two feudal figures, Kaka Ziad and Sheikh Latif, into the leadership of the KDP. Saleh Haidari, Hamid Osman and Jamal Haidari – from the political bureau- rejected joining the KDP along with the party's branches in Erbil, Rawanduz and Shaqlawa. They instead joined the Communist Party and that was the end of Shorsh. In the second week of August the Rezgari Kurd Party held its conference in Baghdad…The purpose of the conference was to dissolve Rezgari and set up the new party. All the members of the conference agreed to dissolve the party and accept the conditions of Mullah Mustafa Barzani about the appointment of Kaka Ziad and Sheikh Latif as two deputies to the chairman of the party. Hamza Abdulla attended the conference as Barzani's representative and envoy."[26]

---

[25] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 21.

[26] Abdulstar Taher Sharif, *Aljam'iat Walmunazamat Walahzab Alkurdyeh Fi Nesf Qarn (Arabic), Organizations, Associations and Political Parties in Half-Century 1908–1958* (Baghdad: Al-ma'rif Publishers, 1989), 141-142.

The KDP was established as a necessity to accommodate the struggle of the Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan. The timing of the establishment of the KDP and the start of its activities coincided with that of Ba'th Party and other Arab-nationalist parties. There were two strong Kurdish parties with a strong national manifesto; Rezgari, which was a progressive national party, and Shorsh, which was oriented towards similar patterns of the socialist/communist parties of that time with a national agenda. The unification of these two parties and the establishment of the KDP was conceived and influenced by Mullah Mustafa Barzani and his comrades in Mahabad. Even the manifesto and the party's constitution were prepared by them and sent to the two parties to be accepted. One of the main reasons for that step could have been to avoid the embarrassment of the newly established Republic of Mahabad from hosting Barzani and his comrades in Mahabad.

The formation of the newly formed Iranian KDP and the way it was seen as the leading party to run the republic must have motivated Barzani and the Iraqi Kurdish officers to speed up the formation of KDP. Barzani never joined any Kurdish party prior to 1946, nor ever showed interest in joining any of them.

Mustafa Barzani sent a list of candidates to be the party's central committee members to the conference. The majority of the leadership of Rezgari and Shorsh accepted all the suggestions of Barzani. Few members of the central committee of Shorsh and some lower rank members refused the suggestion of appointment of the two feudal leaders to the central committee. Despite these objections, they were appointed. This shows the large influence of Barzani and the weakness and lack of confidence of the other members, who accepted his conditions.

According to Habib M Karim,

> "The set-up committee for KDP emerged in the town of Mahabad in the winter of 1946 under the leadership of Mustafa Barzani. The committee included Hamza Abdulla, Mirhaj Ahmad, Noori Ahmad Taha, Mustafa Khoshnaw, Mohammed Mahmud Qudsi, Kheirulla Abdulkarim, and Izzat Abdulaziz. All of them except Hamza Abdulla were former Iraqi army officers who left the Hiwa Party and joined the revolution in Barzan, calling themselves the Freedom Committee. The founders of the party prepared its constitution and a manifesto to meet the needs of the political, economic and

social circumstances of Iraqi Kurdistan. Qazi Mohammed and Hamza Abdulla did not want to see KDP's leadership and their headquarters in Mahabad because they felt that would have created more enemies for the newly established republic. Therefore, they decided to send Hamza Abdulla to contact the political parties in Iraqi Kurdistan to set up a national party to lead the struggle of the Kurdish people for freedom, democracy and the national rights of the Kurds. He took the following proposals to the political parties: 1. Not to make major changes to the constitution and manifesto of the party. 2. The leadership which would be appointed in the conference must not create troubles with the regime in Iraq and the imperialists so that it could strengthen itself first. 3. To elect Sheikh Latif as the first deputy to the Chairman of the party and Kaka Ziad as a second deputy due to their undeniable position they both held within the Kurdish society.

Hamza Abdulla contacted representatives from Shorsh, Rezgari and JK parties and they agreed in principal to hold conferences and consider the proposals to set up the new party."[27]

The KDP's manifesto was not very clear and did not contain any progressive standards. The founders of the KDP, in their first conference, failed to adopt a progressive manifesto to include the rights of workers and peasants, which was a popular practice at that time. This was due to two major factors; first, the influence of Mustafa Barzani as the chairman of the party, second, the Politburo members did not have enough confidence to adopt a manifesto that truly reflected their beliefs. Rather, they surrendered to the wishes of Mustafa Barzani, who had the mentality of a traditional tribal chief rather than a progressive modern nationalist leader. Gunter states that "the program of the party was vague, speaking of the Kurds' national goals and their desire in a state of their own choice. It lacked any progressive social and economic substance due to the dominance held by the traditional tribal leaders. Given Barzani's long exile in the Soviet Union until 1958 and the quiescent state of Kurdish affairs until that time, one observer concluded that what had been established was more of a social and cultural gathering than a well-defined political party."[28]

---

[27] Habib Mohammed Karim, *Ta'reekh Alhezb Aldemoqratti Alkurdistani –Al'raq (Arabic), The History of the KDP –Iraq* (Duhok, Khabat Publishing, 1998), 33-34.

[28] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 22.

The manifesto of the KDP at the beginning adopted the right of self-determination for the Kurds. The word autonomy was first adopted by the ICP. The ICP's manifesto at the beginning also included clear aims for the Kurdish national rights to be recognized in the form of self determination but after the death of their first secretary, Fahd, they changed their tone and started talking about autonomy. Soon, the KDP adopted the same manifesto under the influence of the Iraqi Communist Party – and specifically through two pro-ICP politburo members of KDP, Hamza Abdullah and Noori Shaweis. According to Jalal Talabani,

> "At the beginning, the ICP supported an independent Kurdistan and made their members and supporters aware of that policy. In the 1956 conference of the ICP, they changed their manifesto about Kurdish rights to autonomy with assurances that this should not replace self-determination if this possibility had risen. In that conference they made some good points. They said that the Arab nation was divided and so was the Kurdish nation. But they brought a new term for this issue. They brought in the word autonomy for the first time. At the end of 1958 and the beginning of 1959 they (the ICP) imposed their manifesto regarding Kurd's rights on the KDP and ever since it became the main objective of the KDP. Before 1958, the KDP manifesto was to advocate for two united, democratic and popular republics to be within Iraq. This manifesto was passed and had been adopted by the KDP in the third conference in Kirkuk in January 1953. In 1958, Qasem toppled the monarchy and set up the Republic of Iraq. The aim and agenda for all parties had changed to become the protection of the republic."[29]

4.3.6 Republic of Mahabad

The end of World War II brought some good opportunities for some of the nations and movements in the Middle East. The Kurds in Iran seized the opportunity of the presence of the Red Army and the defeat of Germany to announce a self-ruled administration called the Kurdistan Republic of Mahabad. The establishment of Mahabad Republic was the biggest achievement of the Kurdish national struggle at the time. The opportunity arose, and some Kurdish influential leaders seized it and announced the establishment of the Kurdistan Republic of Mahabad. A new era for Kurdish national struggle in Iraq and Iran had emerged soon after the announcement of the Mahabad Republic. This resonated

---

[29] Interview with Jalal Talabani, on 28th March 2005 -10:00 – 11:30 am in Qalachwalan-Suleimanyeh.

with all the Kurdish parties, and Kurds of all regions of Kurdistan looked at the Mahabad Republic as their ultimate ambition and aspiration.

The former members of JK who lived in Mahabad did not have the influence they needed to help make the republic robust and were incapable of withstanding the forthcoming challenges and to sufficiently meet people's expectations and aspirations. The founders and supporters of JK had clear ambitions of nationalism, but the republic's leaders failed to incorporate these Kurdish national aspirations and ambitions into a lasting reality. Hence, the Mahabad Republic collapsed in the first confrontation with the Iranian army and the withdrawal of the Red Army from Azerbaijan.

The collapse of the Republic not only shocked nationalist Kurds but also brought new challenges. Mustafa Barzani was seeking amnesty from the Iraqi government to go back to Iraq. Although he contacted the British and American embassies, he failed to secure such a deal. He also met the Shah of Iran. Barzani and his older brother Sheikh Ahmad wanted to ensure a temporary safe haven for the members of their tribe in Iran for the winter season before taking his people back to Iraq and then heading towards Azerbaijan and the Soviet Union. Gunter states that "shortly after June 22, 1932 the Barzani brothers were returned to Iraq. They were arrested and exiled first to Nasiriyeh then to Suleimanyeh in the north. This later choice was probably a mistake on the part of the government; Suleimanyeh was the centre of building Kurdish national awareness, a city dear to all Kurds. It was here that the young Mullah Mustafa Barzani undoubtedly began to stretch his limited, tribal horizons and reach instead for a beginning appreciation of Kurdish nationalism."[30]

The establishment of the Republic of Mahabad was arguably a big achievement for Kurdish nationalist movement by all measures and definitions of a national movement. It began with the formation of a political/nationalist group by the elites of a non-dominant ethnicity with a clear nationalist objective. In the case of the Republic of Mahabad, this was the foundation of Komalai JK. The next step would be rallying people within the

---

[30] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 7.

relevant ethnicity to support such an attempt. The expansion of KJ and the joining of Kurds from different regions in Kurdistan represented the second stage. The following step would be to win support of the masses for such move to set up a nation-state. The participation of many Kurds from Turkey and the four prominent Iraqi Kurdish army officers, Izzat Abdulaziz, Mustafa Khoshnaw, Kheirulla Abdulkarim and Mohammed Qudsi, along with the contribution of Mustafa Barzani and his fighters from Iraqi Kurdistan was a shining example to prove that the Republic of Mahabad fit the definition of a nationalist movement. The final stage would be to seize any opportunities which would arise, to bring the dream to fruition. The opportunity that presented itself was the political situation at the end of World War II. Gunter refers to Horch in describing the situation and states that "Miroslav Hroch argues that, in order for a national movement to materialize, the existence of certain circumstances is essential:1) a social/ or political crisis of the old order, accompanied by new tensions and horizons; 2)the emergence of discontent among significant elements of the population; [and] 3) loss of faith traditional morale systems. In the case of the Kurdish Republic, almost all of these factors are applicable."[31]

The leaders of the republic were not up to the expectations of the Kurds and they faced many challenges. This was due to the feudal nature and the tribal background of most of the leaders of the republic. They did not have a strategic view and the sharp thinking skills required to analyze the situation adequately and prepare all the necessary tools for the survival of the republic. They should have quickly established a loyal army through voluntary or compulsory recruitment to defend the republic. They failed to extend their territories and did not set up an efficient administration nor did they win the trust of a large proportion of Kurds in Iran – such as Sanandaj and Kermanshah provinces; they did not have diplomatic skill to obtain international recognition and did not make much of an effort in that regard, apart from writing a few letters to, and making contacts with, the British and Soviets in the region.

---

[31] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 234.

4.4   End of Monarchy

Since World War I, there has existed a sentiment in the Arab world against colonial powers and their conduct in their colonies. There were a number of coup d'états in the Middle East against the monarchies and regimes imposed by the Allies after World War I and World War II. Iraq was no exception. According to Gunter, "on July 14, 1958 General Abdulkarim Qasem overthrew the Hashemite monarchy in a bloody coup. (Mustafa) Barzani was in Prague enjoying a holiday. He immediately telegraphed for permission to return, and it was granted. His route home led through Cairo where he was received by President Jamal Abdulnaser, but their talks were not substitutive. When he first returned to Baghdad on October 6, 1958, Barzani was welcomed by Qasem."[32]

Qasem portrayed himself at the beginning as an Iraqi nationalist through a number of measures. He started this trend by adapting a new constitution for Iraq. The Kurds' rights were partially recognized for the first time in the new constitution. The constitution clearly declared that Iraq is shared by Arabs and Kurds. This was a great achievement for Kurdish nationalism in Iraq as the second nation, according to the new constitution. Gunter states that "Qasem also legalized Barzani's KDP and permitted the publication of fourteen Kurdish journals… Article 3 of the new provisional constitution (July 27, 1958) gave the Kurds a recognition which they had never enjoyed before in Iraq. It declared that: the Kurds and the Arabs are partners within this nation. The Constitution guarantees their rights within the framework of the Iraqi Republic."[33]

It was a huge achievement for the Kurds to have their rights officially recognized in the Iraqi constitution. The third article of the Iraqi Constitution, which was announced on 27th July 1958, stated that 'Iraq is a country shared by the Kurds and Arabs.' David Romano declares that "for the first time an independent Iraqi constitution recognized Kurdish "national rights": Iraqi society is based on complete co-operation between all its

---

[32] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 11.
[33] Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq*, 11.

citizens, on respect for their rights and liberties. Arabs and Kurds associated in this nation; the constitution guarantees their national rights within the Iraqi whole."[34]

Most of the cabinets before 14/7/1958 worked towards homogenizing Iraq and giving it an Arab identity. They tried to adhere to the popular pan-Arabism phenomena and homogenize all Iraqi ethnic groups to it. Abulkarim Qasem, however, followed a different trend and worked towards establishment of a nation-state. In the beginning, Qasem intended to establish an Iraqi state for all components and ethnic groups. He was supported by the ICP. This inclusion of all ethnic groups soon ended and was crushed by the diverging goals of different political groups. According to Wimmer, "the Free Officers and who took power and their Communist allies adhered to a program of reform and national reconstruction. This program contrasted with the Pan-Arabic aspiration of proceeding and succeeding regimes. Pan-Arabic rhetoric was overlaid by a multi-ethnic nationalism."[35]

The Iraqi Communist Party played a significant role at the beginning in advocating for the plan Qasem intended to follow. Many Kurds did not trust Qasem in his plans and they believed that Qasem was planning to dilute Kurdish national demands under the alleged claim of establishing Iraqi state for all.

The Kurds were concerned about Qasem's homogenization trend. They feared that they would lose their national identity and would gradually be outnumbered and sidelined by the Arab majority. The alliance between Qasem and the ICP made the Kurds more skeptical still. The ICP, as part of their ideology, had been advocating for abandoning national demands and work towards establishment of a communist society. Communism, according to the ICP's manifesto, is a fair society for all ethnic groups. The Communists and Qasem were confronted by the growing Kurdish nationalism movement led by the KDP. Wimmer states that "Qasem's reign between 1958 and 1963 was initially based to a

---

[34] David Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 190.

[35] Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict - Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 190.

large extent on the Communist Party mobilizing large sections of the Arab, Shiite Arab and Kurds within its central committee. In his National Council of the Revolutionary Command and the cabinet, Kurds, Shiite Arabs were represented… Both regimes were overthrown by Arab nationalist circles in the army, allied with urban notables and a rising class of bureaucrats. The rise to power of Pan-Arabism therefore implied the Arabization of the army and of the state apparatus."[36]

In the beginning, Barzani developed a good relationship with Abdulkarim Qasem. He declared publicly and on many occasions that he would support and protect Qasem and his newly established republic against all his enemies before their relations went into a deep crisis. Wimmer concludes that

> "The extreme divisions amongst the elites undergirding Qasem's new government essentially propelled him into cooperation with Barzani and the Kurdish nationalists. Barzani declared to Qasem his "devotion to Arab-Kurdish cooperation" and helped him suppress his non-Kurdish opponents in the country (Ba'thists, Pan-Arabists, and Communists). By 1960, Qasem began to fear that his Kurdish ally was growing too strong, and would soon be able to dictate policy to Baghdad. Qasem, began backtracking on promises he made to Barzani, arming Barzani's tribal enemies, and basically trying to nurture counterweights to an ally he did not trust."[37]

4.5   Kurdish Liberation Movement

The establishment of the republic of Iraq and return of Barzani from exile along with the official recognition of some Kurdish rights created a positive atmosphere for Kurdish nationalism to grow stronger. The Kurdish national demands attracted thousands of supporters amongst all classes of Kurdish society. The urban intellectuals as well as the rural population were advocating for Kurdish national rights. It was the first time that a political party, KDP-Iraq, was leading a large population of Kurds and setting a nationalist agenda. In terms of the movement's objective, it had a clear aim, which was democracy for Iraq and autonomy for Kurdistan.

---

[36] Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict - Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 176.
[37] Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and,* 190.

The KDP demanded autonomy to preserve the Kurds' national identity within what Qasem planned to establish, an Iraqi state for all. However, one must not forget the structure of the Kurdish society at that time. There were still traces of tribal social relationships and the Kurdish society could be categorized as an agrarian society with recently emerged urban intellectuals. The tribal bonds and the feudal (Agha) relationship were still strong and the tribal leaders played a significant role in the events surrounding the Kurdish issue. Masud Barzani describes the situation as follows:

> "The relationship between Abdulkarim Qasem and KDP deteriorated in the early 1961, especially after the return of Mustafa Barzani from Moscow to Baghdad in January 1961. Qasem suspected Barzani and was not happy with his moves. Barzani tried hard to meet him but Qasem ignored him and did not respond to his request until February. Barzani tried to assure Qasem during the meeting and told him that his doubts did not have any ground. He tried very hard to convince Qasem that neither he nor the KDP had anything against Qasem. In March, Barzani decided to leave Baghdad for a period of time and urged the Kremlin to support the Kurds. They instead decided to give money to Barzani himself in order to buy weaponry from regional arms dealers, money that they sent through their embassy in Baghdad. Naskov was the contact person in the embassy. Barzani drew a plan to buy arms and appointed some people to do so. By this time, the regime had started harassing the KDP members, then closed Khebat, the official KDP newspaper. The government then started a campaign to arrest KDP members. Some were arrested, and some managed to escape to Kurdistan and some blended into the towns and cities."[38]

The relationship between Qasem and Barzani broke up. The ICP, which had good relations with Qasem, did not agree with the Kurdish demands. They tried to convince the Kurds to abandon their demands, since, as they said, the newly created republic was in danger of many conspiracies from the regional and internal 'backward forces'.

As the relationship between the KDP and Qasem further deteriorated, the central committee of the KDP held their meeting on 30th July 1961 without the presence of Barzani. The central committee realized that the mobilization for a nationalist armed movement was not completed yet. Hence, they wanted to give dialogue and peace

---

[38] Masoud Barzani, *al-Barzani Walharake al-Taharuryeh al-Kurdia (Arabic), Barzani and The Kurdish Liberation Movement* (Erbil: Khabat, 2002), 22 - 23.

another chance and sent a letter to Qasem. They decided to call for restraint and urged the tribes to stop provoking government forces. According to Barzani, "at the end of June 1961 the central committee of the KDP held a meeting to discuss the situation and to make a decision. After a thorough discussion, they decided to send a letter to Qasem to end the misunderstanding between Qasem and the Kurds. They aimed at bringing back some trust and to stop any possible confrontation. Qasem did not pay much attention and seemed to have made his mind, however. The meeting discussed plan B in case Qasem did not respond to their letter. Plan B included preparation to start the revolution despite the fact that the time had not arrived."[39]

According to Talabani, the KDP central committee's letter to Qasem included the following details and demands:

> "To his Excellency, the Prime Minister and Commander in Chief of the Iraqi Armed Forces; the Kurdish people have been part of the revolution ever since it started… We were made very optimistic by your act of introducing a principle of sharing between the Kurds and Arabs in Iraq and appreciated your recognition of the Kurdish national rights…Unfortunately the Kurds feel now that not only their national rights are denied but they are targeted by the authorities…The third article of the Provisional constitution is completely ignored. No one mentions that Iraq is the country for Kurds and Arabs any longer… We are trying to make the following demands to save the country from a threat that endangers its safety and its future: 1. Withdrawal of the forces that were sent to Kurdistan recently…2, 3, 4, 13,…At the time when we urge the government to respond to our pledge positively and meet the demands of the Kurdish people in Iraq, we ask all the Arabs in Iraq, particularly those who can play a positive role in this regard, to do their best to avoid bloodshed and to bury the enemies' plots against Iraq…Long live the united Iraq, long lives the Republic of Iraq, the Republic of Kurds and Arabs."[40]

According to some other documents, the letter was not a letter of reassurance, but was rather the outline of Kurdish demands. Gunter states that

---

[39] Masoud Barzani, *al-Barzani Walharaka al-Taharuryeh al-Kurdiya (Arabic), Barzani and the Kurdish Liberation Movement* (Khabat: Erbil, 2002), 23.

[40] Jalal Talabani, *Kurdistan Walharaka Alqawmyiah Alkurdyiah (Arabic), Kurdistan and the Kurdish National Movement* (Baghdad: Manshurat al-Nur, 1971), 295-297.

"Gradually, however, Qasem and Barzani drifted apart as it became clear to both of them that their intentions were mutually incompatible. In July 1961 Barzani presented Qasem a petition that demanded full Kurdish autonomy. According to this document, Kurdish was to become the official language of the Kurdish autonomous region. The police and army units stationed in Kurdish region were to be entirely Kurdish. The Kurdish autonomous government was to control education, health services, communications, and municipal and rural affairs. A large share of the oil revenue garnered from the Kurdish region was to be spent there."[41]

The KDP's central committee members engaged Barzani in every decision they made during that period because they believed that they would not be able to lead any armed movement without him. This was, perhaps, a major weakness of the central committee. They decided in their meeting to dispatch Talabani to go see Barzani and explain the situation to him. He was also meant to discuss the options available to the Kurds. Barzani describes the events before the start of the armed movement and states that 'it was decided in the meeting to send Talabani to meet Barzani and inform him about the decision… On 12th July 1961, Talabani met Barzani in Chilli resort, near Barzan and explained the situation to him, and Barzani asked Talabani not to do anything before preparation was completed. By the time Talabani returned to Suleimanyeh, the situation got worse and was out of control after the tribes' men gathered in Khalakan and Bazian and did not listen to the instructions from the KDP and Barzani.'[42]

All of the tribes that gathered and amassed their forces to spark the armed movement did not share the same aims and objectives. They were a mixture between nationalists, who wanted to defend the Kurds' national rights and participate in the national struggle, and others, who gathered to achieve some personal and tribal benefits. According to M Barzani,

"There was no consensus amongst them. They were divided. In most of the cases tribal objectives were more important to many of them than national goals. Some joined the movement because of Land Reform Law number 90. The feud between the tribes created an even worse situation of mistrust and

---

[41] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 12.

[42] Masoud Barzani, *al-Barzani Walharake al-Taharuryeh al-Kurdia (Arabic), Barzani and The Kurdish Liberation Movement* (Erbil: Khabat, 2002), 24.

division amongst the tribes. Therefore, many chose to side with the regime and attacked the Kurdish fighters. It was then that the new terms "Jash" for collaborators and Peshmerga for freedom fighters became common, expressing, respectively, the identity of those with or against the Kurdish liberation movement. To conclude, the KDP could not organize and lead the tribes, but was rather a gathering of many tribes, each for different purpose… Some joined the gathering because they were not happy with Article 90 of Land Reform; others wanted to blackmail the government for some personal gain, and there were many tribes who gathered to genuinely support the Kurdish cause."[43]

The KDP tried to show Qasem that they could mobilize the city workers, civil servants and officials as well as the members of tribes and peasants. They thought that this demonstration of power might make Qasem change his policy towards the KDP and the Kurds, but it was not useful. Masud Barzani continues outlining the situation and writes that "the KDP decided to announce a general strike on 6 September. The Kurdish people responded to KDP's request positively. The strike was very successful and was a unique experience in Kurdistan. The purpose of the strike was to show Qasem that the KDP had an important influence, and must not be ignored. They hoped that such message might stop Qasem from sending troops into Kurdistan."[44]

11th September, 1961 is considered to be the first day of the Kurdish national liberation movement in Iraq. On that day, Iraq started an intensive air strike on locations where the tribes gathered around the cities of Suleimanyeh, Koysinjaq and Erbil. The air strikes were accompanied by a massive attack by the Iraqi army on the city of Suleimanyeh from Kirkuk. The majority of the men from tribes dispersed and did not show any level of resistance, and so the Iraqi army managed to reach Suleimanyeh without any resistance. Iraqi airplanes attacked these men around the cities of Erbil, Koysinjaq and around Duhok too. Barzani admits that "they all agreed that 11 September was the day when the Kurdish revolution started. The regime launched a massive air strike on the tribes' men in Derbandi Bazyan and Dolli Khalakan, before the Iraqi army started their biggest attack. The regime intended to control the main road between Kirkuk and Suleimanyeh and was

---

[43] Masoud Barzani, *al-Barzani Walharake al-Taharuryeh al-Kurdia (Arabic), Barzani and The Kurdish Liberation Movement* (Erbil: Khabat, 2002), 24-25.

[44] Barzani, *al-Barzani Walharake,* 25.

accomplished without any resistance…The fighters in Erbil area decided to go to Safin Mountain and they organized themselves and set up a regional leadership."[45]

The 11th September 1961's movement is considered as the beginning of the Kurdish nationalist armed movement for the second half of the last century in Iraq. It had a clear nationalist goal. It managed to mobilize hundreds of thousands of supporters, including elite intellectuals, army officers, peasants, workers, students and women. It represented the Kurds' demands in many rounds of negotiations with successive Iraqi regimes; and it set up a local administration in the areas under its control. Gunter argues that "only in the 1960s did the Kurdish movement in Iraq begin to take on the characteristics of a genuine nationalist movement. Following the destruction of the Mahabad Republic of Kurdistan in Iran in 1946, the famous Iraqi Kurdish leader Mullah Mustafa Barzani's retreat to the Soviet Union subsequently became epic in the rise of modern Kurdish nationalism."[46]

Despite the influence of Mustafa Barzan as a charismatic leader, the driving force behind the movement was the KDP. A large number of KDP members were urban intellectuals, lawyers, students, teachers, workers and civil servants. Those KDP members gave the movement an added dimension. They not only advocated for Kurdish national rights, but also had progressive views and tried to unshackle Kurds from the influence and power of religious sheikhs and tribal leaders. Wimmer agrees that "the lawyers, left-wing officers and officials who led the movement in urban areas added a new element to Kurdish nationalism. Their vision of a better future implied not only liberation from Turkish, Arab and Persian domination, but also emancipation from the power of religious notables and tribal leaders."[47]

---

[45] Masoud Barzani, *al-Barzani Walharake al-Taharuryeh al-Kurdia (Arabic), Barzani and The Kurdish Liberation Movement* (Erbil: Khabat, 2002), 26-28.

[46] Michael Gunter, "The Modern Origins of Kurdish Nationalism," in *The Evolution of Kurdish Nationalism* (California: MAZDA Publishers Inc, 2007), 10-11.

[47] Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict - Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge, Cambridge, University Press, 2002), 186.

5.   Between Watanyya & Qawmiyya in Iraq (1963 – 1968)

5.1   The Ba'th Party – Ideology and Origin

The Arab Ba'th Socialist Party that ruled Iraq for two periods (8th February – 18th November 1963 & 17th July 1968 – 9th April 2003) had its origins in Syria. Its founders were Arab nationalists who claimed to be of the leftist ideology, but many scholars and researchers have stated that the founders of Ba'th Party were more influenced by fascism than socialism. Some claim that the founders and the leadership of the Ba'th Party were great fans of Mussolini of Italy and of Spain's Franco. The practice implemented by the regimes in Iraq and Syria strengthen the latter argument. Sa'ad Jawad describes the foundation of Ba'th Party as follows: "the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party began as a secret group of nationalist intellectuals formed in 1940 by two French-educated Syrians, Michel Aflaq and Salah al-Bitar. Their ideas tended to the left while emphasizing Arab nationalism, Arab unity and anti-Communism. In 1943 this group became known as the Arab Ba'th Party, drawing its main support from students, the salaried class, army officers and petit bourgeoisie."[1]

The main difference between The Arab Ba'th Socialist Party and other nationalist parties was that this party did not restrict its activities to a single country or the country of its origin. It rather considered the whole 'Arab world' (Arab countries) to be its field of activity. This was a true reflection of its slogans from the day it was founded. It did not take long before the Ba'th Party started its activities in many Arab countries and eventually setup branches in Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon in addition to Syria. Jawad states that "the party's influence grew even greater in 1953, after its merger with another Syrian party, the Arab Socialist Party, founded by Akram Hourani. This merger added the word 'socialist' to the name of the party."[2]

The Ba'th Party's triple slogan has maintained to be Unity, Freedom & Socialism with the 'One Arab Nation with an Eternal Mission' motto. Based on the activities of the Ba'th

---

[1] Sa'ad Jawad, *Iraq & the Kurdish Question 1958-1970* (London: Ithaca Press, 1981), 227.

[2] Jawad, *Iraq & the,* 227.

Party through decades of ruling Iraq and Syria these slogans are all meant for the Arab nation and the Arab land. This was clearly reflected in the party's manifesto, especially Article 7. The Ba'th Party considered all Arab countries as the Arab's fatherland and all other nations and minorities which live within those countries as guests on Arab land. According to Jawad, "Abu Jabar defined the Arab World in Article 7 of the constitution of the Ba'th Party as that part of the globe inhabited by the Arab nation, which stretches from the Taurus Mountains (on the Turkish - Iraqi border), the Pusht-i kuh (Iranian-Iraqi border), the Gulf of Basra (now known as either the Arab or Persian Gulf), the Arab Ocean, The Ethiopian Mountains, the Sahara, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Mediterranean."[3]

Therefore, any part of Kurdistan, which is located within this geographical location was considered as Arab land in the eyes of the Ba'th Party. Obviously, Iraqi Kurdistan is within the boundaries of this definition of Arab land. David McDowall states that

> "The Ba'th and the Kurds were not, of course, strangers to each other. In theory, the Ba'th laid claim to Iraqi Kurdistan as an integral part of the Arab world, and therefore took the view that Kurdish self-determination was impossible since it contradicted this claim… Michel Aflaq, the Ba'th's founding ideologue, made his view clear in 1955 by saying: when we call for economic equality and the offering of equal opportunity, we mean that we have delivered the nation's cause to its true owners, the people…What does the Kurdish sector of the people want, and to what do they aspire (except for some leaders who have feudal interests) other than to live happy and dignified life."[4]

The differences between the Kurdish nationalists and the Ba'th Party have historic and ideological roots. The Kurds continued to demand recognition of their national rights – especially in Iraq – and the Ba'th Party denied such a request. Sa'ad Jawad argues that

> "Some Ba'thist leaders, taking Article 7 almost as an article of faith, denied the Kurds in the Arab World any right to self-determination on the grounds that this would imply Arab occupation of foreign territory – a clear contradiction of the Article. In consequence, most of the minorities in the

---

[3] Sa'ad Jawad, *Iraq & the Kurdish Question 1958-1970* (London: Ithaca Press, 1981), 228.

[4] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 324.

Arab World wanted nothing to do with the Ba'th, fearing that it aimed at a policy of assimilation. This fear gained substance when the Iraqi Ba'th opposed the KDP's attempt to join the Front of National Union in 1957. Indeed, the Kurds saw the Ba'thist-Arab nationalist success in achieving the union of Egypt and Syria in 1958 as another threat to their position."[5]

The leadership in the top hierarchy of the Ba'th Party had a chauvinist view about Kurds. It was clearly stated in the manifesto of the party. Some senior members of Ba'th Party admitted that they looked at the Kurds as invaders or strangers on Arab land.

Dr. Ali K Abdullah asks Talib Shabib, a former member of the national leadership of Ba'th Party during the 1963 coup d'état, in his book "what is your real view about the Kurds and the Kurdish issue? Talib Shabib: It is difficult to understand the real view of the Arab nationalists in general and Ba'th Party members, in particular, about this issue. Our general understanding about the Kurds was that they were migrant people in the Arab land. We believed that they came to these areas to be Arabs' guests. I realised later that in fact, it was not like that."[6]

According to S Haji, "the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party is a fanatic Arab nationalist party; its slogan is Unity, Freedom & Socialism. The objectives of this party are the outcome of the chauvinist ideology that was popular amongst Arab fanatics of the Arab Nationalist movement in the 1940s. The Ba'th Party had a pan Arab manifesto and not an Iraqi one. Therefore, when it seized power in Iraq – in 1963 and later in 1968, it maintained its manifesto as 'One Arab Nation with an Eternal Mission'."[7]

The Ba'th Party had different reading for history. It contradicted all factual findings and conclusions of historians, archaeologists and researchers. The Ba'th Party does not believe that the Kurds are the indigenous people of Kurdistan. Haji states that "the Ba'th Party views the Kurds as one of the minorities who arrived and settled on the Arab land.

---

[5] Sa'ad Jawad, *Iraq & the Kurdish Question 1958-1970* (London: Ithaca Press, 1981), 229.

[6] Dr. Ali Karim Said Abdulla, *Iraq 8 Shubat 1963 Min Hiwar Almafaheem Ila Hiwar Aldam – Muraja'at Fi Thakirat Talib Shabib (Arabic), Iraq of 8th February 1963 From the Dialogue of Conceptions to the Dialogue of Blood – Reviews in Talib Ash-Shibib's Memory* (London, Zed Books, 1999), 247.

[7] Shorsh Haji, *Ta'reebi Kirkuk – Syasati Ta'reeb la dutwei Hashta Balganamada (Kurdish), Arabization of Kirkuk – Evidence of Arabization Policy in Eighty Documents* (London: Dar al-Hikma, 2004), 19.

It views any minority or group of people who oppose its ideology as enemy to Arabs and the Arab cause. The Ba'th Party lists the Kurds as one of the perils which threatens the national security and future of the Arabs and the state of Iraq."[8]

In the late 1950s, the Ba'th Party expanded its activity into many Arab countries. The growth in the number of its members and sympathisers in Iraq was substantial. The clash between the Ba'th Party and the KDP in Iraq was not a surprise. They clashed on a number of occasions, over a number of issues. The two parties clearly had different views about many essential issues related to the composition of Iraq's population, Iraq's identity and the administrative system that should run the government in Iraq. In 1957, the KDP joined the Front of National Union that embarked the Ba'th Party along with some other Arab nationalists and other Iraqi parties, however. Following the 14th July 1958's coup d'état, the differences between the Ba'th Party and the KDP increased even further. One of the main issues that they differed upon was the union of Iraq with the United Arab Republic (UAR). Jawad analyzes Ba'th's view and states that "the Ba'th was more than enthusiastic, while the KDP was clearly and publicly hesitant; this angered the Ba'thists and led them to believe that the non-Arab minorities would always be an obstacle to Arab unity."[9]

The Ba'th Party and the KDP published a number of articles in their newspapers outlining their view about some, then, crucial issues. One of those issues was view about the relationship between Arab unity and Kurdish national rights. The Ba'th Party in Iraq was planning to create a homogenous state and give it an Arab identity. They also tried to impose such homogenous identity on the others. According to Jawad,

> "In 1959 the Ba'th Party's Beirut newspaper al-Sahafa published an article expressing the party's ideology or policy towards non-Arab minorities living inside the Arab world to rally the support of Arab nationalists against the Kurds' demand for autonomy, which was regarded as a step towards separation. The article argued that no non-Arab minority living inside the

---

[8] Shorsh Haji Resool, *Anfal – Kurdu Dawlati Iraq (Kurdish), Anfal – The Kurds and the Iraqi State*, (London: Dar al-Hikma, 2003), 23.

[9] Sa'ad Jawad, *Iraq & the Kurdish Question 1958-1970* (London: Ithaca Press, 1981), 231.

Arab World could claim any part of the Arab World as their own; they are living there because the "generous Arab nation has taken all these minorities under its protection." The article gave the minorities the choice of either remaining in the Arab homeland or else migrating into their own countries."[10]

This article leaves no doubt about the ideology and view of the Ba'th Party towards the Kurds and their land, Kurdistan. Jamal Nabaz concludes that "the article (the author means the article that was published in the Ba'th Party's Beirut newspaper al-Sahafa – Shorsh Resool) made it clear that the Arab nation was not prepared to give away any part of the territory that it considers as its own territories to others."[11]

The Ba'th Party started changing its tone against the Kurds and its national movement after the end of monarchy rule in 1958. This change could not be considered as a genuine approach to the Kurdish question based on new evidence and analysis of the Kurdish question from different angle. It was rather an undesirable and bitter tactical position that was imposed on them by the new circumstances and the power struggle in Iraq. The Ba'th Party needed to make some sort of alliance with the Kurds against Abdul-Karim Qasem and the ICP.

The Ba'th Party tried to show some sort of sympathy and support to the Kurdish people and its legitimate national rights on one hand, but they invalidated KDP's position on the other hand. The KDP was leading the Kurdish national armed movement and was representing the Kurdish national aspiration. The Ba'th Party's stand against KDP was harming the Kurdish struggle for their national rights and fuelled more hatred amongst Arabs against the Kurds. Creating such an atmosphere was the aim of the fanatic members of Ba'th Party who did not want to agree to any recognition of Kurds' rights. Sa'ad Jawad argues that

"When the (Kurdish) revolution escalated, the Ba'th leadership failed once more to see that it was essentially a national movement. They maintained that

---

[10] Sa'ad Jawad, *Iraq & the Kurdish Question 1958-1970* (London: Ithaca Press, 1981), 230.

[11] Jamal Nabaz, *Hawla al-Masa'la al-Kurdyeh (Arabic), The Kurdish Question* (Berlin: Yakiati Qutabiani Kurdistan la Awrupa, 1969), 10.

the revolt was caused by the break in relations between Qasem and Mullah Mustafa, and did not result from the denial of the Kurdish national rights as KDP maintained… Yet a statement from the Ba'th Party showed the party's appreciation of Kurdish discontent with Qasem, which they regarded as further evidence of widespread discontent with his rule, but argued that the Kurdish problem will not be solved nor Kurdish national objectives achieved through such a suspect revolt. Nothing was said about the Kurds' national objectives and demands. Instead, the Kurds were urged to unite their struggle with that of the rest of the Iraqi people in defying Qasem's regime."[12]

The Ba'th Party did not appreciate or recognize the Kurds' stand with regard to the Arab cause in general, nor in regard to the Iraqi people, Arabs and non-Arabs alike. One of the main slogans that was reflected in the manifesto of the KDP and in almost all their statements was democracy for Iraq. Only when the Ba'th Party needed the support of the Kurds or when it wanted to neutralise them, they pursued a tactic of appeasement. According to Jawad,

"Thus when the coup against Qasem was set, the Ba'th leadership began to realise the impracticality of ignoring the Kurdish revolt altogether, and a more pragmatic and at times more realistic policy pursued without, however, any commitment being given. This new stand was best demonstrated in Sa'di's meeting with Saleh al-Yousifi in January 1963, at a time when the Ba'th leadership was sure that the move against Qasem would be bloody and fraught with difficulty, and would necessitate the co-operation, or at least the tacit approval, of all anti-Qasem forces. They also realised that although it would not hamper the actual takeover, a continuing state of war in Kurdistan would weaken the post-coup's regime's chance of survival, especially if KDP and Mullah Mustafa chose not to support it. This assumption led the Ba'th leadership to think seriously about appeasing the Kurds. Without changing their basic attitude towards the Kurds and the Kurdish nationalism, the Ba'th Party managed to pacify the Kurdish leadership by giving them some assurances."[13]

The chauvinist ideology of the Ba'th Party towards the Kurds strengthened Kurdish nationalism, and its approach to the Kurds created a reactionary response from the Kurds, rather than defeat or surrender. This could be the secret behind the survival, and even the thriving, of Kurdish nationalism in Iraqi Kurdistan, despite all the severe policies

---

[12] Sa'ad Jawad, *Iraq & the Kurdish Question 1958-1970* (London: Ithaca Press, 1981), 233.

[13] Jawad, *Iraq & the Kurdish*, 235.

implemented by the regime. Symbols and events are some important and fundamental factors in the definition of a nation. Nawroz, the traditional Kurdish New Year celebration, is one of these fundamentals, shared by all the Kurds. According to Falakadin Kakayee,

> "The Ba'th ideology is against Kurdish nationalism and anything else that is against the interest of Arabs. Naturally, this created psychological resistance amongst the Kurds against the Ba'th Party and its ideology. This reaction and resistance against the Ba'th Party was not necessarily armed resistance but took different forms such as artistic, linguistic and educational resistance. Nawroz was one of the core tenets of the Kurdish culture. The Kurds managed to maintain Nawroz, and Nawroz unified them. The Ba'th ideology could not manage to tell the Kurds that they are not Kurds. However, it managed to disturb the Kurdish character. It disturbed Kurdish language, music and folklore but despite all of that, Kurdish nationalism and the Kurdish desire to achieve their national rights thrived under the brutal rule of Ba'th Party."[14]

5.2   The Ba'th Party's Seizure of Power on 8th February, 1963

Despite Qasem's scorched-earth policy in Kurdistan and the severity of government forces' attacks there, the Kurds did not give up hope and did not surrender to the regime's desire; their demands for national rights did not falter. They continued their struggle on three fronts. The Peshmerga forces fought the Iraqi army on the borders whenever they attacked Kurdistan while maintaining their position to seek a peaceful solution to the crises through negotiation. In the mean time, they made every effort to talk to and support any Iraqi group who were in favour of sacking of Qasem. The latter option was a most complicated one.

Qasem's government was under pressure from multiple directions. The war in Kurdistan put a heavy burden on the economy and the military. Foreign oil companies were not happy with Law no. 80, which deprived them of 99% of unexplored land, which was handed over to the Iraqi National Oil Company. Qasem's poor relation with other Arab parties was another weakness of the regime. Jawad argues that "the forces that were

---

[14] Interview with Falakadin Kakayee, Minister of Education in the KRG & a member of KDP's Politburo, 21/8/2006, Erbil.

considered to be alternatives to Qasem were made of three types, the Ba'thists, the Nasserists and the Communists. The Ba'thists and the Nasserists were the more likely candidates for many reasons, including their influence within the army and amongst civilians, their good organization (especially the Ba'thists) and their hostility towards Qasem."[15]

In 1962, the Kurdish leadership concluded that Qasem's days in power were numbered, and started making contacts with possible alternative figures. They thought it would best beneficial for the Kurds if they were in contact with all possible alternatives before any one of them seized power, and their situation would be best if they reached an agreement with anyone who could end up assuming power while they were still in need of the Kurds' support. KDP secretary Ibrahim Ahmad engineered and followed up on those contacts. Jawad declares that

> "The man Ahmad chose to contact was a retired colonel, Tahir Yahya. He first approached Karim Qarani, a Kurdish officer, to explore through Yahya the possibilities of cooperation between the Kurds and the army against Qasem. Yahya agreed to consider the idea and asked Ahmad, again via Qarani, to give further thought to such cooperation. In fact Yahya wanted to secure Kurdish support or neutrality for the coming coup, since a coup against Qasem would require the withdrawal of some forces from the north and this could not be done without jeopardising the Army's position in Kurdistan."[16]

The Kurds' attempt to cooperate with the Ba'thists to overthrow Qasem was intended to gain some national rights and recognition of their demands. Sa'ad Jawad states that

> "After informing Mullah Mustafa Barzani and KDP's central committee, Ahmad sent a written reply on 18th April, 1962, assuring Yahya of the Kurds' support, stressing that the aims of the Kurdish revolt were to overthrow Qasem, achieve autonomy for Kurdistan and to establish a democratic regime in Iraq. He added 'the Kurdish people possess the undeniable right to separate from the state, but do not desire to exercise this right. To avoid any misunderstanding in the future it is essential that you should recognize in advance the internal autonomy of the province of Kurdistan, and that this

---

[15] Sa'ad Jawad, *Iraq & the Kurdish Question 1958-1970* (London: Ithaca Press, 1981), 107-108.

[16] Jawad, *Iraq & the,* 107-108.

recognition should be publicly announced in one of the early proclamations of the government of the revolution. His Excellency Mullah Mustafa shall be invested as the governor or prime minister of this territory (Iraqi Kurdistan), giving him the right to form the government of an autonomous Kurdistan. These conditions will serve as guarantees against all possibilities of future misunderstanding… The comrades with whom I have had discussions consider the acceptance in black and white of these conditions as essential basis for the beginning of negotiations on other matters of detail… Yahya gave an oral answer to Ahmad, giving general assurances."[17]

The Kurdish revolution played a significant role in weakening successive Iraqi regimes, due to the cost of war in Kurdistan and high number of army casualties as a result of clashes with the Kurds, not to mention the effects of stress and frustration it caused among those in the leadership of these regimes. The Kurds were looking to assist anyone who opposed Qasem, and so tried to topple his regime. The KDP took this position without thorough consideration of the intentions of the Ba'thists. According to Masud Barzani "the Kurdish revolution was one reason for facilitating this coup d'état, as it did for all other coups d'état. It weakened Qasem's regime and the following governments. The coup d'état was a result of an agreement between the Ba'th Party and the Nasseri officers. They contacted the KDP during their preparation stage for the coup d'état, and promised that they would meet all the political demands of the Kurdish revolution. Taher Yahia was the contact officer through a retired Kurdish officer called Karim Qarani."[18]

On 8th February 1963 The Ba'thist-Nasserist coalition seized power and established what was called the National Council for Revolutionary Command (NCRC). This coup was also known in the Iraqi history as Ramadan coup, as it coincided with the 14th day of the holy month of Ramadan. Munther al-Mosuly writes that "on 8th February 1963, the Ba'th Party ended the rule of Abdulkarim Qasem, which had lasted for four years, six months and twenty five days, through a military coup."[19]

---

[17] Sa'ad Jawad, *Iraq & the Kurdish Question 1958-1970* (London: Ithaca Press, 1981), 109 -110.

[18] Masoud Barzani, *al-Barzani Walharake al-Taharuryeh al-Kurdia (Arabic), Barzani and The Kurdish Liberation Movement* (Erbil: Khabat, 2002), 81.

[19] Munther al-Mosuli, *al-Masaala al-Kurdiyeh fi al-Iraq (Arabic), The Kurdish Question in Iraq* (Beirut: Dar al-Mukhtar, 2000), 132.

This was one of the bloodiest events in Iraq's recent history. The Ba'thists killed Qasem and his associates and Ba'thist supporters massacred both a large number of Qasem's followers and Communists. In the end, Qasem's fate was similar to that of King Faisal, whom Qasem had killed in a similar coup. Jawad concludes that

> "He was deposed in the same way he had deposed Faisal. The first reaction of the Kurds was one of enthusiasm, and as they were still in Baghdad, Saleh al-Yousifi and Shawkat Aqrawi, together with Fu'ad Aref, went to the NCRC headquarters (Baghdad Radio Station) to congratulate the nationalists. They assured the NCRC members their support and sent them a telegram in the name of KDP declaring that the Kurds admired the movement that had overthrown Qasem and were waiting for positive steps to be taken by this movement towards solving the Kurdish question on the basis of self-government, which would ensure everlasting brotherhood."[20]

The Kurds were once again, betrayed by those individuals in which they had placed their trust, and with whom they had formal agreements. Though it was a verbal assurance from the Ba'th Party leadership, the Kurds were happy to see the end of Qasem and formally congratulated the coup leaders, declaring their support. According to Jawad, "on 10th February 1963, the KDP sent a telegram to the NCRC, welcoming the coup and asking for the declaration of ceasefire, the release of Kurdish prisoners, compensation for the injured, the removal and punishment of officials responsible for torturing the Kurds, and finally the immediate and official declaration of the Kurds' rights of autonomy within the Iraqi Republic. They also asked the government to send a delegation to spell out the terms of the autonomy."[21]

The Kurds made another attempt to solve their problems using dialogue with the new rulers in Baghdad. Immediately after the overthrow of Qasem, the KDP sent a delegate to Baghdad to negotiate with the new government. Dr. Ali K Abdullah states that "two weeks after the 8 of February, a Kurdish delegation came to Baghdad which included Jalal Talabani, Saleh Yousifi, Luqman Barzani and others. There were a number of informal meetings between them and members of the Ba'th Party leadership, among

---

[20] Sa'ad Jawad, *Iraq & the Kurdish Question 1958-1970* (London: Ithaca Press, 1981), 112.

[21] Jawad, *Iraq & the Kurdish*, 113.

them, Ali Saleh Alsa'di, Hazem Jawad and I (Talib Shabib) and Saleh Mahdi Ammash. We agreed to publicly announce a declaration regarding the autonomy for the general public – both Arabs and Kurds)."[22]

The main problem remained the lack of trust between the Kurds and the Ba'th Party. This lack of trust was due in part to memories of past promises broken by Ba'th Party officials after brokering previous agreements with the Kurds. According to Abdullah,

> "Mohammed Hasaneen Haikal published in his book, Sanawat Alghalayan, page 933 a copy of a letter from Jamal Abdulnaser (Egypt's president) to his deputy Mushir Amer Hakim, that he deposed the King stating on the right side of the letter: I met the Kurds in my own and they told me that they didn't have faith in any promise that the government gives. They asked me to give assurances and guarantees. They claimed that they wanted autonomy, that they had announced a ceasefire after the revolution, and that they had been given promises by their Ba'thist contacts before the revolution. I see that the government avoids fulfilling their promises."[23]

Ba'th Party officials viewed the Kurds' demands suspiciously. They considered them as threats to the unity and sovereignty of Iraq and the greater Arab land no matter how minor the Kurds' demands were. Whenever the Kurds demanded the right to run their own affairs, Ba'th Party officials objected under the justification that this would constitute creating state within a state. Ba'th policy and practice were derived from their chauvinist belief, outlined in their manifesto that they consider any non-Arab ethnic group who live in an 'Arab country' as guests on Arab land. This position did not deter the Kurds, but rather they became more adamant in their national demands.

5.3   Split within the KDP

Ever since the establishment of the KDP, there had been a power struggle and conflict amongst the members of the Politburo – one notable example being the conflict between

---

[22] Dr. Ali Karim Said Abdulla, *Iraq 8 Shubat 1963 Min Hiwar Almafaheem Ila Hiwar Aldam – Muraja'at Fi Thakirat Talib Shabib (Arabic), Iraq of 8th February 1963 From the Dialogue of Conceptions to the Dialogue of Blood – Reviews in Talib Ash-Shibib's Memory* (London, Zed Books, 1999), 249.

[23] Said Abdulla, *Iraq 8 Shbat*, 251.

Hamza Abdulla and Ibrahim Ahmad, not to mention the ongoing conflict between the Politburo and Barzani. The latter conflict, which led to the emergence of a splinter group called the Politburo in 1964 (widely known as Jalali), cost the party and indeed Kurds and the Kurdish movement, a great deal. This split left a mark on Kurdish society that can still be seen. Michael Gunter states that

> "The most important intraparty conflict, however, became the one between the more conservative and traditional, tribal wing of KDP associated with Barzani and the leftist, intellectual, Marxist wing (the later, so called KDP Politburo) led by Ahmad and Jalal Talabani. The latter group only grudgingly accepted Barzani because they needed his military powers. The battle intensified in 1964, when Barzani signed a ceasefire accord with Baghdad without even informing the Politburo. Both factions expelled each other, but Barzani won the day by driving the Politburo over to the Iranian frontier."[24]

The relationship between Barzani and the Politburo deteriorated after the KDP conference in Mawat. The possibilities for reconciliation seemed slim to none, as a power struggle between Barzani and the Politburo continued, each seeking to marginalize and undermine the authority of the other. During the conference, which Barzani did not attend, Politburo members decided to suspend Barzani from the presidency of the KDP. According to Masud Barzani, "on 4th April 1964, a conference was held in Mawat at the request of Ibrahim Ahmad (secretary of KDP – Shorsh). The purpose of the conference was to legitimize the challenge to Barzani's authority… One of the decisions of the conference was to suspend Barzani from the presidency of KDP."[25]

A Kurdish delegate from Baghdad travelled to Rania where Barzani was staying, with the intention of mediating between him and the Politburo. They managed to strike a deal, but it did not last long before bitter disputes re-emerged. Barzani adds that "the delegate arrived Rania on 24th April 1964. They urged Barzani to agree to sit down with the

---

[24] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 23.

[25] Masoud Barzani, *al-Barzani Walharake al-Taharuryeh al-Kurdia (Arabic), Barzani and The Kurdish Liberation Movement* (Erbil: Khabat, 2002), 137.

Politburo members and end their differences. They travelled to Mawat and came back to Rania accompanied by the Politburo members."[26]

The KDP held its fourth conference on 1st July 1964 under the supervision of Barzani and in the absence of the Politburo. During the conference, Barzani decided to expel all the Politburo members and replaced them with a number of KDP members who were loyal to him. Barzani elaborates on the event and writes "the Politburo sent a two member delegation to the conference on its first day. They were Ali Abdullah and Said Aziz Shamzini… Barzani ordered his followers to arrest them, and they did. The conference had continued its work. On 6 July, new members of the Politburo, those loyal to Barzani, were elected. Barzani also challenged the Politburo, and gave an order for them to be arrested."[27]

Barzani amassed a large number of fighters and attacked the forces loyal to the Politburo in the areas of Mawat and also Penjwin, where the Politburo's headquarters were located. Barzani and his followers managed to reach the headquarters, causing members to flee into Iran. The bitter relationship between the two factions was so deep that in the book, 'Barzani and The Kurdish Liberation Movement – 1961-1975,' Mr. Masoud Barzani, describes the campaign forty years later with the enthusiasm one would expect if he were describing a campaign to liberate a precious piece of Kurdistan's land occupied by an enemy of the Kurds. According to M Barzani,

> "After the completion of the conference, Barzani moved towards Mawat to settle the situation – and I was accompanying him. We started on 12th July 1964 and headed to the village of Sarsian. The loyal Peshmerga forces in the Soran region carried out a precise and well-calculated plan of attack to purify the region from the elements of Politburo… In the afternoon of 18th July 1964 we arrived in Mawat and found it completely empty and abandoned. The followers of Ibrahim Ahmad had left the area and surrendered to the Iranian authorities. We discovered later that Ibrahim Ahmad and his family had left

---

[26] Masoud Barzani, *al-Barzani Walharake al-Tahaururyeh al-Kurdia (Arabic), Barzani and The Kurdish Liberation Movement* (Erbil: Khabat, 2002), 140.

[27] Barzani, *al-Barzani Walharake*, 144.

the area and went to Iran before everybody else… So, Barzani fulfilled his promise to liberate the Soran region using people from the region itself."[28]

The Politburo and their followers were settled in the town of Bana for a short period by the Iranians before they were transferred to the town of Hamadan. After approximately one year, in July 1965, Barzani allowed them to return to Iraqi Kurdistan and were told to stay in Dolaraqa, near the town of Rania. Despite many serious efforts to heal the wounds and minimize the difference between the two parties, there was no reconciliation process. Both sides accused each other of plotting against each other. The Politburo claimed that Barzani had a plot to transfer them to Galala and then kill them and Barzani accused the Politburo of collaborating with the Iraqi regime. In the summer of 1966 the Politburo members and their followers decided to join the Iraqi regime and left their headquarters in Iraqi Kurdistan for Baghdad. M Barzani describes his father by stating that "Barzani was known for his honesty and keeping promises and never had any bad intentions towards the Politburo members. He rather wanted them to be on his side and not to be dragged into betraying their people. Jalal Talabani's allegation that Barzani planned to kill them was baseless and groundless."[29]

The KDP Politburo made a fatal political mistake by making an alliance with Iraqi regime to defeat their rival, Mustafa Barzani, a step very difficult to justify, as it paved the way for similar action by others. One wonders if history had repeated itself, prolonging the suffering of the Kurds at the hands of their oppressors but in cooperation with individuals who portrayed themselves as the true defenders of the Kurds' ambitions and aspirations. This step left big scar on the Kurdish struggle for self-determination for many years to come.

5.4   Ba'th Party's Policy against the Kurds

All the successive governments in Iraq – especially the Ba'th regime – ruled Iraq as if there were no other nations and ethnicities living in Iraq. Iraq was ruled by Sunni Arabs

---

[28] Masoud Barzani, *al-Barzani Walharake al-Taharuryeh al-Kurdia (Arabic), Barzani and The Kurdish Liberation Movement* (Erbil: Khabat, 2002), 144-147.

[29] Barzani, *al-Barzani Walharake al-Taharuryeh*, 172.

for more than eighty years, and these rulers worked to homogenize the state and impose a Sunni-Arab identity on all non-dominant groups. It became clear that Ba'th Party leadership filled almost all senior party and government positions with members of Sunni-Arabs from the area of Tikrit. The reflection of that policy and practice made the Kurds lose any feeling of belonging towards Iraq. Some went further and became full of hatred towards everything Iraqi – from its national football team to its military, flag and establishments.

The Ba'th Party never denied its position against the Kurds and their demands. In their eyes, any recognition of Kurdish national aspirations would jeopardize the integrity and sovereignty of Iraq and the Arab cause. According to Dr. Ali Abdullah,

> "In February 1963, we asked the KDP delegate to give as their proposals and demands so we could study them. They gave us the proposals. After a thorough study of the demands we concluded that agreeing to those demands would lead to creation of a state within a state. The principles of the unity and sovereignty of any country is to maintain a united military, political structure, economy and foreign policy. But the demands of the Kurdish delegate to grant the Kurds what they wanted would have jeopardized all of those principles. The proposal contained three main sections. They demanded a restriction of the Iraqi army's training and activity fields to the Arab part of Iraq and if the army need to use a base in the Kurdish region they must get permission from the Kurdish administration there; they also wanted to have a share of 20%, as a reflection to their population in Iraq for all senior administration positions in the government. If we accepted that, for example, to give the Kurds 20% of the places in the foreign ministry we would have had two foreign policies. They demanded to have a share of the oil revenue reflecting their population in Iraq too and spend it in the development of their region. This means that the country would have had two economic policies, which were neither acceptable nor reasonable demands. It would have been better if Kurdistan had separated from Iraq and left the remainder of Iraq healthier than allowing the country to go through that. We would have had been faced with two diseases, disintegration and a state within a state – Peshmerga forces in parallel with Alharas Alqawmi. Both were two epidemic diseases."[30]

---

[30] Dr. Ali Karim Said Abdulla, *Iraq 8 Shubat 1963 Min Hiwar Almafaheem Ila Hiwar Aldam – Muraja'at Fi Thakirat Talib Shabib (Arabic), Iraq of 8th February 1963 From the Dialogue of Conceptions to the Dialogue of Blood – Reviews in Talib Ash-Shibib's Memory* (London, Zed Books, 1999), 252.

The overthrow of Qasem did not bring with it any new opportunities for the Kurds as they so dearly wished. Jawad argues that "the Ba'thists' success in overthrowing Qasem in February 1963, and the power struggle that ensued left the Kurdish question in limbo once more. In the end, as we have seen, nothing substantial was done to solve the problem."[31]

The new Ba'th regime was engaged in unification efforts between Egypt and Syria. When they joined the scheduled talks and decided to pursue that route, Kurds made every effort to convince the leadership of each of the three countries' leadership that they supported the union between them in any shape or form, provided they recognize the Kurds' national rights. Despite all the efforts by the Kurdish leadership, the Ba'th Party still failed to establish any good will amongst the Kurds. In fact they gave the impression that any progress towards Arab unification and any success of the Arab nationalist movement would harm the Kurdish cause. This, in turn, encouraged the Kurds to continue their national struggle again, without cooperation of the Iraqi government. Jawad concludes that "eventually the three countries, Iraq, Egypt and Syria agreed to form a Federal Arab Republic, and the agreement was declared on 17 April 1963. It did not mention the Kurds or their rights, and the Kurds seemed to have come to a conclusion that the agreement was against their movement. This suspicion was confirmed four months later when Syria agreed to merge with Iraq and sent a contingent of 5,000 men of its army to fight the Kurds in Kurdistan, alongside the Iraqi Army."[32]

Abdulsalam Aref died in a helicopter accident on 13th April 1966 while he was on his way to southern Iraq. Iraqi officials, ministers, army commanders and other influential personalities in Baghdad had differing views regarding the selection of a successor to Aref. At the end, his brother, Abdurrahman Aref, Deputy Army Chief Staff, became the President of Iraq. M Barzani believes that "the new president was not malicious like his brother and was not aggressive and rude person but was rather a peaceful army officer. He did not have a strong personality and was influenced by others' views easily. In a

---

[31] Sa'ad Jawad, *Iraq & the Kurdish Question 1958-1970* (London: Ithaca Press, 1981), 235.

[32] Jawad, *Iraq & the Kurdish,* 122.

press conference on 18 April 1966, he called upon the Kurds to start negotiation with the government."[33]

Day after day, the number of atrocities and the scale of attacks against the Kurds by the successive Iraqi government increased. Ironically, with every aggressive measure by the regime, the Kurds' demands increased as well. The attacks on Kurdistan continued and the violence escalated in Iraq. Violence was fast becoming the main characteristic of Ba'thist rule, and their scorched earth policy and constant bloodshed became their hallmarks. Dr Abdulla states that "the decision and thought of mass killing of civilians never crossed the minds of political and military leaders. Their main aim was to protect their grip on power against their enemies. They used everything they could to get rid of their enemies and rivals whether they were individuals or parties… Most of the decisions and measures for mass killing and genocide against the Kurds were taken during the rule of Saddam Hussein. What happened in 1963 was based on military judgments and was justified by military commanders."[34]

The Ba'th Party was so full of hate and ignorance about Kurdish rights that they never gave the matter a serious thought. They did not believe in any Kurdish national rights and did not accept the fact that Kurdish movement and its armed struggle were the result of and reaction to such ruthless policies by them and the previous regimes. Their loss of power in 1963 did not improve their analysis of the situation. They repeated the same policies as soon as they seized power again in 1968. Jawad argues that "the shock of losing power in Iraq in November 1963 was so great for Ba'th Party that a change of policy in many areas might have been expected. But even at this stage the party neglected the fact that the war in Kurdistan was a major factor in its fall."[35]

---

[33] Masoud Barzani, *al-Barzani Walharake al-Taharuryeh al-Kurdia (Arabic), Barzani and The Kurdish Liberation Movement* (Erbil: Khabat, 2002), 173.

[34] Dr. Ali Karim Said Abdulla, *Iraq 8 Shubat 1963 Min Hiwar Almafaheem Ila Hiwar Aldam – Muraja'at Fi Thakirat Talib Shabib (Arabic), Iraq of 8th February 1963 From the Dialogue of Conceptions to the Dialogue of Blood – Reviews in Talib Ash-Shibib's Memory* (London, Zed Books, 1999), 257.

[35] Sa'ad Jawad, *Iraq & the Kurdish Question 1958-1970* (London: Ithaca Press, 1981), 236.

On the contrary, they believed that the war in Kurdistan was a necessary measure against a group of separatists who wanted to divide Iraq and harm Arab national interest, and there is no evidence of attempts to rethink their stand of using force against the Kurds. Human Rights Watch's report indicates that "the radical pan-Arabist ideology on which the Ba'th Party was founded was hostile to the non-Arab Kurds, who are culturally and linguistically related to the Persians."[36]

5.5   Rounds of Negotiations

Negotiation between the Kurdish movement and the central government in Baghdad has become a phenomenon attached to the Kurds' recent history. It is difficult to find a period of even a few years in the recent history of the Kurds where there were no negotiations being attempted between them and the rulers of Baghdad. In other words, the Kurds were involved in rounds of negotiation with all successive governments in Baghdad despite the consistent mistrust between the negotiating parties. Almost every round of negotiations resulted in failure, and often increasingly vicious fighting erupted afterwards.

There are two elements in the recent history of the Kurds in Iraq that will be very difficult for a foreign scholar to understand. First of all, the regime which recognized some of the national rights of the Kurds and declared this in its constitution committed genocide against the very same ethnic group. Secondly, despite the level of brutality from successive regimes in Iraq and the collaboration of Kurds with the enemies of Iraq on many occasions, both sides were involved in continuing rounds of negotiations.

The Kurds did not have a state of their own, nor a foreign state or power upon which they could truly rely in times of difficulty. They did not possess the necessary force, money or support from inside Kurdistan to overcome the overwhelming power of Iraqi regimes. These regimes, on the other hand, also never had the complete support of its neighbours, Arab countries, and the international community to defeat the Kurds.

---

[36] Human Rights Watch/Middle East, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide – The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 22.

The central government in Iraq engaged in negotiations with the Kurds well before the start of the Kurdish armed movement in 1961. In 1941, Nuri Sa'eed, Iraq's prime minister at the time initiated a round of negotiation with Mustafa Barzani at the request of British government.

The Kurds had a number of demands when they negotiated with the new rulers of Iraq. Gunter writes that "the main Kurdish demands were that a Kurdish province consisting of the districts of Kirkuk, Suleimanyeh, Erbil, Duhok, and Khanaqin be given cultural, economic, and agricultural autonomy, and all internal matters, except those concerning the army and the hinder mire, be placed under a special minister for Kurdish Affairs in the Iraqi cabinet."[37]

The Ba'th Party started implementing this process in dealing with the Kurdish problem since they seized power in Iraq on 8th February 1963. It is widely thought that the Ba'th Party did so as a tactic to derail Kurdish attempts for self determination or recognition of their national rights.

The Ba'th Party leadership started negotiating with representatives from the KDP prior to their coup d'état against Abdulkarim Qasem. They pursued this tactic for two reasons. Firstly, they wanted the KDP to continue their armed struggle against the regime so the military would be engaged in fighting in Kurdistan and, consequently, the party would have a better chance of success in their coup plot. Secondly, they did so in order to require the KDP and its Peshmerga forces to announce a ceasefire immediately after the Ba'th coup should it succeed. The events following the success of their coup proved this view about their intentions and long-term strategy. Kurds were handed some empty promises. According to Wahid Omer Meheddin,

> "There was some sort of contact between the Ba'th Party and the Arab Nationalists with the KDP. The Ba'th Party asked General Taher Yahia, who had just contacted them to talk to KDP people. He delivered a message to Ibrahim Ahmad, secretary of the KDP, through Lieutenant Karim Qarani. They gave the Kurds a verbal promise to solve the Kurdish problem

---

[37] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 9.

peacefully through a non-centralized autonomy package (lamarkazi - Shorsh Resool) once they seized power. Yahia's condition was that the KDP continue their fighting against the regime and support the Ba'th Party in their coup plot until they toppled the regime. Based on this agreement, the KDP leadership agreed to liaise with the Ba'th Party. Ibrahim Ahmad, the KDP secretary, wrote a letter to the Ba'th Party agreeing to this, also outlining the KDP's one condition, that the Ba'th Party to announce in their first declaration after the seizure of power, their intention to grant the Kurds autonomy and that Mustafa Barzani would be the prime minister of the autonomous region."[38]

Meheddin adds that "the first statement of the Ba'th Party after their successful coup on 8 February 1963 did not include any solid declarations regarding Kurdish political and national rights, but included some vague references and phrases, and the Kurds were actually urged to end their movement. Still, on the same day as the coup, Barzani announced a ceasefire."[39]

This incident became the Kurds first bitter experience of betrayal by the Ba'th Party and this betrayal continued until the end of their rule in Iraq on 9th April 2003. Ba'thist leaders were indeed masters of tactics and manoeuvres, but seemingly devoid of principles when it came to the Kurdish problem in Iraq. Nevertheless, the KDP insisted on pursuing a peaceful solution for the Kurdish problem, and put more pressure on the new ruler to sit with them at the negotiating table. The ceasefire declaration by the KDP was a positive gesture in this direction, but it must be said that there were some within the KDP who preferred to continue fighting in order to place more pressure on the new rulers before their full grip on power had been realized. In the end, a high-profile delegate from the KDP visited Baghdad and began negotiations.

On 18th November 1963, fierce fighting erupted between two factions of Ba'th Party on the streets of Baghdad. Abdulsalam Aref seized the opportunity and used the army to fight the Ba'thists. The new regime wanted to do something different from what the

---

[38] Dr. Wahid Omer Meheddin, *Danustanakani Bzutnawai Rezgarixwazi Natawayee Kurd u Hukumatakani Iraq (Kurdish), The Rounds of Negotiations Between The Kurdish National Movement and the Iraqi Governments 1921-1968* (Slemani: Santari Lekolinaway Stratizhi Kurdistan, 2006), 123-124.

[39] Meheddin, *Danustanakani Bzutnawai Rezgarixwazi*, 127.

Ba'thists did during their previous few months in power, and one of the new measures that they adopted was to start negotiating with the Kurdish movement. However, both sides were often motivated by wanting breaks from fighting in order to re-enforce their energies rather than serious talks to solve the outstanding problems. M Barzani analyzes the situation and states that

> "1963 was a valuable testing year for all concerned. The rulers in Baghdad soon realised that they could not destroy the Kurdish revolution by using force. They also concluded that the Kurdish problem could not be solved through fighting, but negotiation and dialogue was the only way forward. It was also proven to the Kurdish people that their revolution was strong. They also realised that fighting would bring disasters and misery to both nations. However, the Kurds needed a pause to the fighting in order to take a good break, re-organize and re-group. The Kurds also wanted to study the economic situation because the fighting harmed the Kurdish economy. On 16 December 1963 Alexander, who was a pharmacist and a close friend of Barzani the father, visited Barzani and gave him a letter from Sheikh Baba Ali. Sheikh Baba Ali stated in his letter that the government wanted to start negotiation with the Kurds. Barzani discussed the offer with Noori Shaweis and Jalal Talabani (they were members of the KDP's Politburo – S. Resool) and Major Abdulkafi who were accompanying him. He replied to Sheikh Baba Ali, agreeing to start negotiation. He expressed his desire to welcome a government delegate in the town of Rania if they so wished."[40]

The government delegation that arrived in the town of Rania was accompanied by Sheikh Ahmad, Barzani's older brother. The government sent Sheikh Ahmad with the delegation to force Barzani to accept the government's offer. They stayed for a long time and were liaising with Baghdad while they were negotiating with the Kurdish delegate. They discussed the Kurdish demands and the government's offer, and after a thorough deliberation, both sides agreed to announce an agreement. However, there were a few outstanding points that needed agreement. One of the disputed issues was the wording of the agreement which carried deep differences in the way the government viewed the Kurdish national rights and how the Kurds viewed hem. According to M Barzani,

---

[40] Masoud Barzani, *al-Barzani Walharake al-Taharuryeh al-Kurdia (Arabic), Barzani and The Kurdish Liberation Movement* (Erbil: Khabat, 2002), 125.

"It became clear later that Abdulsalam Aref sent a Qura'n and an envoy to Sheikh Ahmad Barzani to accompany the government delegate. Abdulsalam realized that Mustafa Barzani would listen to Sheikh Ahmad. Sheikh Ahmad agreed that both sides needed to solve their differences peacefully, and he told Barzani that they must know what to do. The negotiations continued until 10th February 1964, the day of the agreement's announcement. Barzani realized that the government delegation did not want to solve the Kurdish problem, but rather were buying time. Kurdistan also needed a ceasefire and some time to heal its wounds…Barzani was not involved in preparing the agreement but Noori Shawais, Jalal Talabani, Masoud Barzani and Abulkafi were involved…An argument erupted about the wording of the agreement. Abdulsalam and the rest of the government delegates were insisting on "The government agrees to grant the Kurdish their citizenship rights", while the Kurdish delegate supported by Barzani wanted the agreement to state that "the government recognizes the national rights of the Kurds"…Finally the government agreed on the changes the ceasefire was announced on 10th February 1963."[41]

During those very difficult times the Kurdish delegation insisted on wording the agreement in such a way as to express the national demands of the Kurds, rather than Iraqi citizen's rights. The Iraqi Prime Minister, Taher Yahia was leading the Iraqi delegation in the negotiations, following the announcement of the agreement. Yahia promised to amend the Iraqi constitution to fit the agreement, but never did so and once again the negotiations failed to achieve any sort of useful outcome.

Abdurrahman Aref, the new president, after the death of his brother Abdulsalam, started another peace initiative in his first press conference after the death of his brother, but Arab nationalist and chauvinist Army officers persuaded him to abandon such an initiative. M Barzani adds that "Abdurrahman Aref continued in his efforts. On 28th April 1966, he sent Zeid Ahmad Osman to Galala to meet Barzani asking him to start negotiation. Barzani agreed. The Army officers did not agree with Aref's initiative and they put pressure on him to stop such an initiative."[42]

---

[41] Masoud Barzani, *al-Barzani Walharake al-Taharuryeh al-Kurdia (Arabic), Barzani and The Kurdish Liberation Movement* (Erbil: Khabat, 2002), 127-129.

[42] Barzani, *al-Barzani Walharake,* 173.

The failure of all the negotiations was due, in large part, to the contradictory views of the two sides. The rulers of Iraq believed in the Arab identity of Iraq and worked to force the Kurds accept such identity. The Kurds, on the other hand, did not accept such an identity. Moreover, they demanded recognition of their national rights. As soon as the Ba'th Party seized power on 17th July 1968, they dispatched an envoy to Barzani, asking him for negotiations. It was believed that the Ba'th Party must have learned a lesson from the 1963 failure as a result of their brutal policy against the Kurds. Soon, it became clear that their philosophy for dealing with the Kurds had, in fact, not changed. M Barzani states that "on 20th July 1968, the new prime minister made an initiative and dispatched Saleh al-Yousefi with a letter to Barzani asking him to name two Kurds for two ministerial posts. Barzani named Muhsen Dezayee and Ihsan Sherzad."[43] That round of negotiation, just like the previous ones, did not have any concrete benefits for the Kurds.

---

[43] Barzani, *al-Barzani Walharake,* 204.

6.   from Victory to Collapse (1968 – 1975)

6.1   1968's Ba'th Party and Coup D'état

The Ba'thists did not stop planning to return to power after their ouster in 1963. They also tried to learn their lessons from their bitter experience by analysing the situation and studying the reasons which led to their overthrow. The party realized that the fighting in Kurdistan was one of the factors that distracted their attention from internal problems and their real enemies. They planned to end the fighting with the Kurds once they returned to power and then focus on strengthening their grip on power. They did not think of changing their policy towards the Kurds and insisted on homogenizing Iraq and giving it an Arab identity. They also realized that the Kurds were strong enough not to accept any offer from the regime. According to David Romano,

> "The Arab Nationalist Ba'th Party, which briefly held power in 1963
> (deposing Qasem) and then continuously again after 1968, offered the Kurds
> in 1970 the most far-reaching autonomy agreement yet seen anywhere in
> Kurdistan. The military campaigns had gone badly for Iraqi army, and
> Baghdad decided it needed more breathing space…With the capacity of Iraqi
> state to repress the Kurds still in question, Baghdad's ruling elites decided to
> offer a more open political system to the Kurds, in order to bring them into
> the fold. This apparent opening may be compared to Kemalist offers to the
> Kurds from 1919 to 1923, when Turkish forces were too weak and distracted
> to repress Kurdish insurgents."[1]

Ending the fighting in Iraqi Kurdistan was an issue of priority for the Ba'th Party agenda. They wanted to force, persuade or deceive the Kurds to accept the Iraqi identity, at least for a long enough period of time to allow them to concentrate on other issues. They pretended that they abandoned their chauvinist thoughts and wanted an Iraq for all its ethnicities. According to Human Rights Watch's report, "the new Iraqi regime, which seized power on 17th July 1968, made a priority of achieving a durable settlement with the Kurds. The Ba'th was not lacking in pragmatism. The Party was weak when it came to office, and it had no desire to contend with a troublesome insurgency. Pan-Arabist

---

[1] David Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 192.

rhetoric was therefore played down after 1968, in favour of a new effort to forge a single unified Iraqi identity, one whereby the Kurds would be accepted as partners."[2]

The Ba'th Party seized power twice in Iraq and once in Syria through conspiracy, plotting and coup d'état, and did not come to power through a democratic process. Tanks and special units decided their destiny, not ballot boxes and civic campaigns to win the population's hearts and minds. M Barzani states that "we were not surprised by the coup because we expected that to happen at any moment. There is not any other party in the entire Arab world which is as obsessed with plotting and coup d'état as the Ba'th Party was."[3]

Deception proved to be fundamental to the nature of Ba'th Party philosophy. To them, the ends justified the means, and, those with whom they dealt found that, more often than not, this manifested by members saying one thing and doing another. They betrayed those who helped them come to power in 1968, which included not only the Kurds but also Abdulrazaq Naif and Ibrahim Dawud. In the beginning, the Ba'thists lured others into cooperating with them only to later dispose of them. As soon as they succeeded in ousting Naif and Dawud, they began implementing their plan to reinforce their position in the Army, Revolutionary Command Council and the cabinet. According to M Barzani,

> "Hardan al-Tikriti was behind the alliance that the Ba'th Party made with those three. The Ba'th Party cheated them and promised them any positions they wanted, saying they planned to appoint Ahmad Hasan al-Baker as President. Abdulrazaq Naif as prime minister, Ibrahim Dawud as the Ministry of Defence and Sa'dun Ghedan as the commander of the Baghdad army. The Ba'thists staged another coup d'état on 30th July when they put Abdulrazaq Naif on a plane and sent him abroad then informed Ibrahim Dawud, who was on an official visit in Jordan, that he was no longer Minister of Defence after

---

[2] Human Rights Watch/Middle East, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide – The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 22.

[3] Masoud Barzani, *al-Barzani Walharake al-Taharuryeh al-Kurdia (Arabic), Barzani and The Kurdish Liberation Movement* (Erbil: Khabat, 2002), 2003.

which he was also sent abroad. Sa'dun Ghedan was part of the Ba'thist plot so he stayed."[4]

6. 2   Emergence of Saddam Hussein

Saddam Hussein, whose infamous brutal and dictatorial style of ruling became known to the world later, was not a powerful figure when the Ba'th Party seized power in July 1968, holding the position of deputy to the Secretary of the Ba'th Party Regional Leadership and Vice-chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council. His ambition and drive to gain power was very high, and he was known even then for his bloody and ruthless history with both his enemies and his friends. Hussein used his family ties to move up in the hierarchy structural of the party, namely those with his uncle and father-in-law, Kheirullah Tulfah, a prominent Arab nationalist with strong chauvinist tendencies, and one of the ideologists of Ba'th Party. Hussein was also related to Ahmad Hassan al-Baker, then President of Iraq and the Chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC).

Saddam Hussein had an ideological vision for the Ba'th Party to intervene in all aspects of Iraqi's lives. He also wanted the Ba'th Party to have authority above all government institutions. Above all, he wanted to be the leader of the Ba'th party. Hussein aspired to run party organizations in parallel fashion to the official administration and concentrated on mobilizing students, youth and young workers through their organizations, institutes and unions. Hussein was a tough, hard working and ambitious person. He made himself well-known and accessible in the beginning, and soon built a popular image of himself amongst students, youth and women. Zuhair al-Jaza'iri states that "Saddam Hussein managed to reach the top through backstage control of party institutions that operated in parallel to their state equivalents: the 'public relations bureau' rather than the security and intelligence services; the 'military bureau' rather than the Ministry of Defense; the

---

[4] Masoud Barzani, *al-Barzani Walharake al-Taharuryeh al-Kurdia (Arabic), Barzani and The Kurdish Liberation Movement* (Erbil: Khabat, 2002), 204.

'culture and information bureau' rather than the Ministry of Culture and Information; the 'bureau of vocational organizations' rather than the party itself."[5]

Saddam Hussein pursued a route to end fighting in Kurdistan by initiating negotiations with Mustafa Barzani, soon reaching an agreement with Barzani and engineering what was known later as the March Agreement. This gave him enough credibility to pursue his ambitions to become the most powerful leader in the Ba'th Party. Saddam gradually planned to portray himself as a statesman and diplomat by travelling to a number of countries, establishing friendly relations with world leaders such as Jacques Chirac of France, Fidel Castro of Cuba, Shawchesko of Romania and Tito of Yugoslavia. The nationalisation of the oil companies and the vast revenue from both the increase in oil production and rising oil prices boosted his ambitions and his tactics.

Hussein was obsessed with power and highly suspicious of the intentions of everyone around him, putting his faith only in his closest relatives and his clan. He started a plan to control the party by appointing a number of his closest friends and family members to sensitive positions and in the Presidential Palaces' security forces. His next main target was the youth and students, whom he rallied for his personal goals and objectives. According to Zuhair al-Jaza'iri,

> "Saddam set up a security cordon around himself made up of close relatives. His half brother Barzan became the head of intelligence; his half brother Saba'wi the head of his private office; his half brother Watban the head of his deputy's office; his cousin Ali Hassan al-Majid the director of security; his cousin Sa'dun Shaker the minister of interior; his brother-in-law Adnan Kheirullah the minister of defence. This family-like business regime was strengthened with a series of marriages that consolidated the positions of the grooms. Saddam's son Uday married the daughter of his deputy, Izzat al-Duri. Hussein Kamel advanced to the post of official in charge of palace security after marrying Saddam's daughter, Hala; his brother Saddam Kamel married Saddam's second daughter, Rana."[6]

---

[5] Zuhair al-Jaza'iri, "Ba'thist Ideology and Practice," in *Iraq Since the Gulf War* (Fran Hezelton: Zed Books, 1998), 32.

[6] al-Jaza'iri, *Iraq Since the Gulf*, 33.

In the latest years of his rule his sons, Uday and Quseiy held increasingly sensitive security and military positions.

Having secured an army of supporters within the Ba'th Party and in the ranks of the Iraqi army, Saddam ousted Ahmad Hassan al-Baker and on 17th July 1979 became Chairman of the RCC and the President of the Republic of Iraq. From that point on, he was officially the first and the only decision maker in the Ba'th Party and the government of Iraq.

6.3   Arabization Policy

The Ba'th Party tried to give an Arab identity to the state of Iraq. All of its policies, decisions, instructions and directives by the Ba'th Party leadership and all its apparatuses served this single goal. It also tried to force the Kurds accept this homogenous Sunni-Arab dominant state. The Kurds or any other subordinate group who reject this trend would be punished severely.

The Ba'ath Party planned to repeat the same policy of the Young Turks of 1908, using different strategy through a centralized education and administrative system. The Ba'th Party recognized the importance of education in raising national awareness and sense of identity among people in a multi ethnic multi-national society. They opened a number of Arabic schools – both primary and secondary schools – in the towns and cities of Iraqi Kurdistan. All of the organizations of the government issued regulations to encourage the Kurds, especially Kurdish officials and Ba'ath Party members, to register their children in the Arabic schools. The party did not hide the ultimate consequences that people could face, should they not go along with such policies. According to Shorsh Haji, "Ashur Shehab, The Secretary of Ba'ath Party in Erbil, in his letter no. 13/4796 addressed all branch directors of party on 21 May 1989 and urged them to ask Kurdish members of

Ba'ath Party to write to the Directorate of Education, stating that they prefer their children to study in Arabic rather than Kurdish, in primary and secondary schools."[7]

The Ba'th Party implemented their policy of Arabization on a very large scale, immediately after seizing power in 1963 and again when they returned to power in 1968. It remained until their regime's fall in 2003. The policy extended to prevent any non-Arab holding a senior post in the party institutions, army, intelligence apparatuses and administration. They worked methodically to give Iraq a Sunni-Arab identity and homogenize all the others to it. Andreas Wimmer states that "between 1968 and 1977, the inner circle of power, represented by the Members of RCC (the highest state organ), was entirely composed of Sunni Arabs, except for one Arabized Kurd. A similar process of Sunnization of the elite could be observed within the party. While, from 1952 to 1963, there were still 54 percent Shiite among the members of the Command of the Ba'ath Party, their share was reduced to 6 percent during the period from 1963 to 1970."[8]

Party leadership was very selective in choosing senior members of its apparatus, often because they were hunted by fears. Wimmer adds that "fears of palace coups and rebellion of sections of the army led the ruler Saddam Hussein to rely more and more on people not only with Arab Sunni roots, but from the same region, the same tribe and ultimately from the same family clan."[9]

Arabization is a familiar term in the Kurdish and Arabic literature in Iraq, which is defined by the act of changing the identity of a place, person or anything else from any origin to Arab. This policy has become attached to the literacy of Iraq's new history and cannot be separated from the ideology and policy of the Ba'th Party. According to Amin Mineh,

> "Arabization of Kurdistan is an important part of the strategic plans of the Ba'th Party because the Ba'th Party considers Iraq part of the Arab land. It

[7] Shorsh Haji, *Ta'reebi Kirkuk – Syasati Ta'reeb la Dutwei Hashta Balganamada (Kurdish), Arabization of Kirkuk – Evidence of Arabization Policy in Eighty Documents* (London: Dar al-Hikma, 2004), 85-86.
[8] Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict - Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 179.
[9] Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and*, 180.

considers the Kurds as a homeless guest on part of the Arab land, Iraq and Syria. Therefore, the Ba'th Party believes that Arabization of the land where Kurds live is one of their essential national duties. The Ba'th Party was different from any other Iraqi ruling party, as they looked at the Arabization policy from a broader angle and made it part of their strategy in achieving their national objectives. The Ba'th Party set up a comprehensive plan to Arabize Kurdistan and prepared all the necessary tools to implement it – one of which was the use of force and brutality. They partially succeeded in their plan both by using force against some and by deluding some others."[10]

Although all successive Iraqi regimes throughout most of the last century implemented Arabization policy in and around the oil-rich city of Kirkuk, the period of the Ba'th Party rule and the time following the collapse of the Kurdish movement in particular, was the most destructive. According to G Chaliand and David McDowall,

> "On November 18, 1975, the Ba'th detached Kalar and Chamchamal, the two districts it had officially recognized as Kurdish, from Kirkuk province and attached them to Suleimanyeh as an integral part of the Autonomous Region. The implication was that all the rest of Kirkuk was to be subject to Arabization. Kifri district, which was no less Kurdish than the other two, was attached to Diyala province. Similar to Khanaqin, it was to be Arabized. What remained of the mainly Kurdish province was dismembered by an official RCC decree on February 8, 1976. The decree reduced the province to two of its districts – Kirkuk itself, with its town, and Hawidja."[11]

The Ba'th Party started the policy of Arabization in Kurdistan in general and in and around the city of Kirkuk in particular in February 8th 1963 when they seized power and then again on 17th July 1968. They started the campaign by deporting Kurdish farmers from hundreds of villages around Kirkuk, Khanaqeen and Sinjar, bringing Arab tribes and settling them in their places. McDowall states that "yet, there could be no meeting of mind over the fate of Kirkuk. There was already a shabby history of government efforts since 1958 to remove Kurds from the city [Kirkuk] and environs. For both parties its value had been greatly enhanced by the nationalization of the oil industry."[12]

---

[10] Amin Mineh, *Stratigi Amni Iraq - Sekuchkai Ba'sian Tarheel u Ta'reeb u Tab'ees (Kurdish), Iraq's Strategic Security – Ba'th Party's Trine* (Slemani: Wazarati Roshnbiri, 1999), 229-230.

[11] Gerard Chaliand & David McDowall, *A People without a Country* (London, Zedbooks, 1993), 187.

[12] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 335.

The Ba'th regime implemented a systematic campaign to change the demography of the city of Kirkuk. It brought thousands of Arabs to Kirkuk and transferred their registration records from their original towns and cities to Kirkuk. In 1975 the government started changing the Kurdish names of towns, villages, neighborhoods, schools, streets, roundabouts, parks and other public places to Arabic and Islamic names, often symbolizing Arabic and Islamic heroes and battles. It also started urging (often forcing) the Kurds in the Kurdish Autonomous Region to send their children to Arabic schools, instead of traditional Kurdish schools. According to Human Rights Watch's report, "in tandem with the 1970-1974 autonomy process, the Iraqi regime carried out a comprehensive administrative reform in which the countries sixteen provinces or governorates were renamed and in some cases had their boundaries altered. The old province of Kirkuk was split in two. The area around the city itself was now to be named al-Ta'mim and its boundaries redrawn to give an Arab majority."[13]

The Arabization campaign was extended to include changing the nationality of many Kurds to Arabs. The Iraqi government targeted a number of Kurdish tribes, the Yazidies, Kakayee and Shabaks around the cities of Kirkuk and Mosul and forced them to change their nationality and register as Arabs for the 1977 & 1987 general census. After the collapse of the Kurdish movement, that plan became easier to implement. The Ba'th Party realized that the Kurds did not accept the Arab identity that was being imposed on them, so it then implemented another plan to enforce the homogenization trend, which was Arabization.

Anyone and any subordinate group who refused the Ba'th policy would be excluded and eventually terminated. Hence, the Iraqi government started a more vicious campaign to destroy Kurdish villages and deport its inhabitants, particularly those close to the city of Kirkuk. It also started bringing more Arabs from the middle and south of Iraq and settled them in those villages. In other areas, the government built new villages and complexes to house the newcomers, Arab settlers.

---

[13] Human Rights Watch/Middle East, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide – The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 22.

According to S Haji,

> "The following are some methods and types of Arabization policy which were implemented by the Ba'th Party during their rule in Iraq: 1. Deportation of the Kurds from those towns and villages which were predominantly Kurdish and bringing Arabs to settle in their place. 2. Bringing Arab tribes from the middle and south of Iraq and settling them in those villages and towns where Arabs and Kurds live or building new villages and complexes. 3. Settling Arabs in Kurdish areas and using them as security forces. 4. Changing the administrative boundaries of the governorates of Kirkuk, Salahadin, Mosul, Diala, Erbil, Suleimanyeh, Duhok to increase the ratio of Arabs to Kurds in Kirkuk and Mosul. 5. Preventing thousands of deported Kurdish families who were originally from Kirkuk but had been settled in the south and middle of Iraq after the collapse of the Kurdish movement in 1975 from returning to Kirkuk. 6. Building new and large roads in the Kurdish neighborhoods in Kirkuk to destroy the maximum number of existing houses. The Kurdish owners of those houses were not allowed to buy a piece of land or build new houses in Kirkuk. 7. Forcing thousands of Kurds in Kirkuk and Mosul to change their ethnicity/nationality to Arab in the official registration documents during the general census. 8. Changing the names of towns, neighborhoods, streets, parks, schools and other public places from traditional Kurdish names to Arabic names. 9. Preventing Kurds from buying and building new houses and renovating old houses in Kirkuk, encouraging Arabs from all over Iraq to buy a piece of land or a house in Kirkuk through grants, loans and other incentives."[14]

The Arabization campaign started with the Ba'th Party's first seizure of power in February 1963, and though they remained in power for only nine months, their Arabization policy during that short period was so intense that it left a sizable mark on the demography of those areas. Obviously, the Arabization campaign reached its peak in the second round of their rule, 1968 – 2003. S Resool states that "another brutal Arabization campaign was implemented in the first round of Ba'th Party rule in 1963. The Ba'th regime started deporting the Kurds from 42 villages around the oil fields of Kirkuk."[15]

---

[14] Shorsh Haji, *Ta'reebi Kirkuk – Syasati Ta'reeb la Dutwei Hashta Balganamada (Kurdish), Arabization of Kirkuk – Evidence of Arabization Policy in Eighty Documents* (London: Dar al-Hikma, 2004), 23-27.

[15] Shorsh Resool, *Destruction of a Nation* (New York, Zahawi Publishing, 1990), 35.

Amin Mineh gives some details of Arabization process as follows: "the Ba'th Party Arabized the following villages and regions during six months of their rule, between April–October 1963: 24 villages in the district of Dubis, 12 villages in the nahiyeh of Qudis (Sargarran), 6 villages in the nahiyeh of Kandinawa – Makhmour district."[16] Just a few decades ago a very small number of Arab families lived in the city of Kirkuk. According to Dr Kamal M Ahmad, "Ibrahim Haidari was the minister of Religious Affairs in Yasin Hashemi's government. In December1924 he accompanied King Faisal for a visit to the city of Kirkuk, Erbil and Mosul. According to Mr. Haidari and many other witnesses who accompanied them in their visit, there was only one Arab neighborhood in the city of Kirkuk, called Arabler, and which was made up of only a few hamlets and temporary mud houses."[17]

If the minister and the king were alive to visit the very same city in 2003, they would have found that the one neighborhood they knew in Kirkuk became thirty six neighborhoods. S Haji gives more details about Arabization process and states that "at the moment (before 9 April 2003 – Shorsh Resool) there are 36 Arab neighborhoods in the city of Kirkuk. They are: Al-Karamah, al-Ba'th, 17 July, al-Wahda, al-Hurriyeh, ala'rouba, al-Naser, al-Qadisiyeh, Wahed Azar, al-Milad, al-Mansour, 7 Nisan, Qurtuba, Tunis, Aden, Saddam, al-Mua'tasam, al-Amin, Tes'een, al-Shuhada', al-Waseti, al-Suqur, al-Rashid, al-ma'moun, al-Hajaj, al-Majzera, al-Nakhwa, al-Farouq, al-Khazra', al-Zawra', al-Gernata, al-Khulafa', Sa'd, Bader, and Adnan."[18]

The collapse of the Kurdish movement in March 1975 was a golden opportunity for the Ba'th regime to implement the Arabization campaign in an even more vicious way. The end of the armed struggle in Iraqi Kurdistan freed the regime's hands to speed up the

---

[16] Amin Mineh, *Stratigi Amni Iraq - Sekuchkai Ba'sian Tarheel u Ta'reeb u Tab'ees (Kurdish), Iraq's Strategic Security – Ba'th Party's Trine* (Slemani: Wazarati Roshnbiri, 1999),Ba'th Party 238-240.

[17] Dr.Kamal Mazhar Ahmed, *Kirkuk We Nawahiha, Hukm al-Ta'rikh Wal Dhamir (Arabic), Kirkuk and its Districts – Judgment of History and Conscious* (Slemani: Renwen, 2002), 152.

[18] Shorsh Haji, *Ta'reebi Kirkuk – Syasati Ta'reeb la Dutwei Hashta Balganamada (Kurdish), Arabization of Kirkuk – Evidence of Arabization Policy in Eighty Documents* (London: Dar al-Hikma, 2004), *47.*

process, and also to invent new methods, and wasted no time in implementing the Arabization policy as quick as possible. According to David McDowall,

> "Besides making it difficult for Kurds in Kirkuk to hold title to their property, the governorate boundaries were rearranged to ensure Arab majority. Towns with heavy Kurdish majority, for example Kalar 30,000), Kifri (50,000) and Chamchamal (50,000), Tuzkhurmatu (80,000) were removed from Kirkuk and allocated to Suleimanyeh, Diyala or the new province of Salah al-Din. Other distasteful measures included financial rewards to Arabs who took Kurdish wives, a deliberate encouragement of ethnic assimilation, the transfer of Kurdish civil servants, soldiers and police out of Kurdistan, the removal of Kurdish faculty from the new university in Suleimanyeh and the Arabization of some place names. Undoubtedly Baghdad also resorted to arrests, torture and execution to ensure its writ went unchallenged."[19]

From 1974, the Ba'th Party had the upper hand in Iraqi Kurdistan and was in a better position to implement its Arabization policy in and around Kirkuk in full. Romano elaborates "in the meantime, having regained control of the north, Baghdad pursued policies of Arabization, particularly around the oil regions of Kirkuk and Mosul, forcing Kurds and Turkmen villagers into the south of the country and replacing them with ethnic Arabs."[20] Charles Tripp gives some more details about Arabization process and declares that "others (Kurdish families) were transferred to the south of Iraq where they were re-housed among the predominantly Shiite Arab population… At the same time, the government continued to encourage Arab families to move northward, in order to tip the balance in favour of the Arab inhabitants in certain areas and to justify their exclusion from the Kurdish region."[21]

By 1988, the Arabization campaign took a dramatic form. Having tested every other means to change the demography of Kirkuk and the balance between the Kurds and Arabs, the Iraqi regime implemented a very brutal policy to reduce the number of Kurds in that area. The new measures included mass killing of rural Kurds around the city of

---

[19] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 340.

[20] David Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 198.

[21] Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 206.

Kirkuk during Anfal campaign because they lived in areas outside the control of Army and security forces. According to Joost Hiltermann, "if that not sufficiently chilling, Al-Sammara'i (Staff Major-General Wafiq al-Sammara'i, who was the deputy director of Iraq's Military Intelligence Directorate, Istikhbarat), explained the selective killing of women and children as an integral part of the regime's Arabization of Kirkuk, he said, and were targeted expressly to reduce Kirkuk's Kurdish population. You can kill half a million Kurds in Erbil, but that won't do anything: It would still be Kurdish. But killing 50000 Kurds in Kirkuk will finish the Kurdish cause forever."[22]

Despite the systematic Arabization campaign in the city of Kirkuk and other places, the Kurds never gave up and instead insisted on resisting the Arabization campaign. In other words, the policy of Arabization that was carried out by the Ba'th regime created an atmosphere of resistance and determination amongst the Kurds to resist such policies. Ultimately, this was counter-productive as far as the Ba'th Party was concerned because these actions were not only unsuccessful in achieving the goals of Ba'th Party, but created fertile ground for Kurdish nationalism to blossom, accompanied by a feeling of hate and anger towards anything Arabic. S Haji gives the following example regarding Ba'th Party's policy of Arabization:

> "Document number 1052 of the administration for Kirkuk's Central District on 6/12/1999 shows two important facts, Firstthat the Ba'th regime was adamant in 1999 more than any other time to continue its campaign of Arabization of the city of Kirkuk and the surrounding region. Second, the Kurds were determined more than any other time to resist such a policy and not to give in. According to the document a Kurdish lady from the city of Kirkuk, Ms. Nazif Ali Karim, had been deported from Kirkuk three times between March 1998 – October 1999 and was detained during two of the three times before been deported to Suleimanyeh. The document indicates that the lady challenged the authorities and went back to her house in Kirkuk for the fourth time."[23]

---

[22] Joost Hiltermann, *A poisonous Affair – America, Iraq, and the Gassing of Halabja* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007),134.

[23] Shorsh Haji, *Ta'reebi Kirkuk – Syasati Ta'reeb la dutwei Hashta Balganamada (Kurdish), Arabization of Kirkuk – Evidence of Arabization Policy in Eighty Documents* (London, Dar al-Hikma, 2004), 240.

6.4   11th March 1970 Agreement

The 1970 March Accord is one of the most significant achievements of Kurdish nationalism in Iraq before 2003. It was a unique achievement for the Kurds to get their national rights recognized by the central government in Iraq, after the Iraqi constitution drafted in 1959. It was the fruit of tens of years of national struggle and nine years of armed struggle in Iraq, and Kurds all over the world saw it as a singular event. According to M Barzani,

> "The March Agreement was the first recognition of Kurdish national rights by a sovereign state in the modern history through a formal and official document. No one can deny the significance of this achievement, which will never be diminished. The March Agreement of 1970 was a progressive and a just solution to the Kurdish problem in Iraq; it was a huge victory for the Iraqi people in general and for the Kurds in particular. It was also the biggest victory of the Kurdish revolution and the party, the KDP. It was complete and contained no gaps or shortfalls, but failed in the implementation stage. I must admit here that both sides, the KDP and the Iraqi government, were responsible for its failure. It must be said that the Iraqi government's share of the failure was by far the greatest."[24]

Following its re-assumption of power in July 1968, the Ba'th Party had tactically changed its treatment of Kurdish issue, realizing that the Kurdish movement was a major factor in the downfall of their rule in 1963. Therefore, the Ba'th regime wanted to strengthen their grip on power by silencing the guns in Iraqi Kurdistan. David McDowall analyzes the situation and states that "when the Ba'th recovered power in July 1968 the 'resolution of the Kurdish question in a peaceful manner' was among the party's goals. This decision was not based on any commitment to Kurdish rights but upon the imperative to consolidate its own position. While it held effective power in the revolutionary Command Council, the Ba'th wanted to create the illusion of a broader representation government in order to neutralize the threats that might arise from the Kurds and the Communists."[25]

---

[24] Masoud Barzani, *al-Barzani Walharake al-Taharuryeh al-Kurdia (Arabic), Barzani and The Kurdish Liberation Movement* (Erbil: Khabat, 2002), 243.

[25] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 324.

The Ba'th Party was cautious of any possible threat to their power and acted immediately to eliminate it. According to Gunter,

> "Aware of the inability to solve the Kurdish problem was a major reason for the fall of several Iraqi regimes including the Ba'th Party's rule in the 1960s following yet another bloody but indecisive military campaign, the Ba'th Party, under President Ahmad Hasan al-Baker and Vice-President Saddam Hussein, finally sent Aziz Sharif, a former communist, to begin negotiations with Barzani... At the end, Saddam Hussein himself, who was apparently the main Ba'thist sponsor of the manifesto, journeyed north to meet with Barzani early in March 1970 and assure the Kurds of his government's good intentions. The final result was the famous fifteen articles of the manifesto of March 11, 1970. Since it was held at the time to be historic achievement, has been continually referred to over the years as a background for a settlement by both sides, and was declared the basis of the negotiations that took place after the uprising in 1991, it would be available to cite the Manifesto in detail."[26]

The Ba'th Party tried to invest in and benefit from the March Agreement. They considered this as the major sign of Ba'th Party's progressive ideology towards other nations and minorities who live with Iraq's Arabs. They pretended that they were genuine in their approach to solve the Kurdish problem through peaceful means, but the Ba'th Party had shown before that its skill at deception was extensive. It played this role so well that it managed to deceive the Kurdish delegation during the negotiation talks. M Barzani confirms that

> "On 18th December 1969 An official Iraqi delegate made of Aziz Sharif, Fuad Aref and Samir Aziz al-Najem, a member of the Revolutionary Council and the Ba'th Party Regional Command, visited Barzani… The Iraqi delegate was greeted warmly and was welcomed by the leadership. On 20th December 1969 a representative from Barzani, Dara Tofiq, accompanied al-Najem to Baghdad. His role was to listen to the views of the Ba'th Party leaders and other Iraqi officials. Dara Tofiq met the leadership of Ba'th Party and travelled with Murtaza Abdulbaqi to Beirut and met Michelle Aflaq (founder of Ba'th Party). According to Dara Tofiq, the Ba'th Party leadership was positive and genuine in their approach and they were ready to go ahead with an agreement based on strong and real understanding of the Kurdish question. He also emphasized on the fact that Saddam Hussein al-Tekriti was a very influential young figure amongst the Ba'th leadership. He was the Deputy to

---

[26] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 14.

the general secretary to the Ba'th Party Regional command and was the vice-president of the Revolutionary Command Council."[27]

The Ba'th Party was one of the most chauvinist-leaning Arab parties in the region. It considered Kurds as one of the main perils to the security and unity of Arab land and Arab nation. One of the subjects taught in al-Baker Academy to train Iraqi Army Commanders and senior members of the Ba'th Party was 'Arab National Security'. The Kurds were described in their textbooks as one of the three perils threatening the Arab national security and Iraq's future. The other two were Israel and Shiite Iran. The Ba'ath Party pretended that they granted the Kurds their national rights but this claim was false and no such intention existed. They did so only because they needed a quiet period to concentrate on a number of other priorities such as: strengthening their positions in the government, getting rid of rivals in the army, arming and equip the army, and showing the international community that they had a progressive approach towards other nations' rights. The Party also intended to nationalize the foreign oil companies. For all of these reasons, they needed a respite from their fighting in Kurdistan. Sa'ad Jawad confirms that

> "According to documents released by the Iraqi government immediately after the foiled military coup on 20 January 1970, this attempt was sponsored by the Iranian government and was led by rightist officers. This incident led the government to believe yet more strongly in the need for peace in Kurdistan. It was obvious that the civilians had emerged with greater strength after this was foiled and were now more able to convince all hard-liners of the necessity of peace to enable the government to counter the Iranian threat effectively…. A whole host of contingent political circumstances combine to explain the conclusion of this agreement. Apart from the fact that there was a general understanding that war would not solve the problem, and that the army was not ready for a war in Kurdistan, there was a growing threat from Iran, which increased with the occurrence of regular of border skirmishes. Finally, Iraq's desire to get on with its long term development and consolidation was another, if not perhaps the most significant factor."[28]

It is difficult for a scholar to analyze the situation related to the Ba'th Party's approach to the Kurdish issue. It would be even more difficult to understand how a government

---

[27] Masoud Barzani, *al-Barzani Walharake al-Taharuryeh al-Kurdia (Arabic), Barzani and The Kurdish Liberation Movement* (Erbil: Khabat, 2002), 227-228.

[28] Sa'ad Jawad, *Iraq & the Kurdish Question 1958-1970* (London: Ithaca Press, 1981), 266-267.

alleges to promise to grant ethnic group autonomy only to commit genocide against the very same people, a few years later. Hurst Hannum states that

> "Despite the theoretical autonomy which Iraq's three million Kurds enjoy, which is unknown in neighbouring Iran or Turkey, the massacres of Kurdish guerrillas (known as Peshmerga) and civilians which followed the end of the Iran-Iraq war are perhaps a more significant indicator of Iraqi policies towards the Kurds. Thousands of Kurds were killed by Iraqi army forces, amidst allegations that poison gas had been used; over 100000 were relocated to government-controlled towns (described by the Iraqi foreign minister as a 'reorganization of the urban situation in the mountainous and difficult country', hundreds of villages were destroyed and perhaps 100000 Kurds fled to Turkey."[29]

It was widely thought that Saddam Hussein engineered the March Agreement. There was enough evidence to show that neither him nor any other senior member in the Ba'th leadership were serious in their approach to solve the Kurdish question or to recognise Kurdish national rights though. Only time was able to uncover the truth behind such claims. David McDowall states that "it is difficult to believe that Saddam Hussein was committed to such a settlement as a permanent solution. Rather, he was preoccupied with the instability of the regime. President al-Baker and he needed time in which to consolidate, to achieve control over the military wing of the Ba'th, and hopefully to draw the Communists into co-operation until they could be discarded. In the event, Saddam Hussein himself travelled to Kurdistan to conclude an accord."[30]

The March Agreement became the foundation for every other round of negotiations the Kurds had with Iraq. It laid a strong foundation, in the eyes of Iraqi Kurds, for autonomy within the boundary of Iraq. In a demonstration of the real intention of the Ba'th Party, none of the following negotiations between the Kurds and the Ba'th leadership until 2003 resulted in similar achievements. One would wonder if Saddam Hussein thought that he made a mistake by signing the accord and did not want to repeat the same mistake again. David McDowall illustrates the articles of the agreement as follows:

---

[29] Hurst Hannum, *Autonomy, Sovereignty and Self-Determination* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 194.

[30] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 327.

"The essential articles of the accord were: 1. The Kurdish language shall be, alongside the Arabic language, the official language in areas with a Kurdish majority; and will be the language of instruction in those areas and taught throughout Iraq as a second language. 2. Kurds will participate fully in government - including senior and sensitive posts in the cabinet and the army. 3. Kurdish education and culture will be reinforced. 4. All officials in Kurdish majority areas shall be Kurds or at least Kurdish speaking. 5. Kurds shall be free to establish student, youth, women's and teachers' organizations of their own. 6. Funds will be set aside for development of Kurdistan. 7. Pensions and assistance will be provided for the families of martyrs and others stricken by poverty, unemployment or homelessness. 8. Kurds and Arabs will be restored to their former place of habitation. 9. The Agrarian Reform will be implemented. 10. The Constitution will be amended to read 'The Iraqi people are made up of two nationalities, the Arab nationality and the Kurdish nationality. 11. The broadcasting station and heavy weapons will be returned to the government. 12. A Kurd shall be one of the Vice-presidents. 13. The Governorates (Provincial) Law shall be amended conforming to the substance of this declaration. 14. Unification of areas with a Kurdish majority as a self-governing unit. 15. The Kurdish people shall share in legislative power in a manner proportionate to its population."[31]

Although the Ba'th Party signed this agreement as a tactical approach to strengthen itself before launching another offensive against the Kurds, the Kurds' benefit from March Agreement was significant. It boosted Kurdish nationalism and gave them an elevated feeling of pride and achievement. Hence, the Kurds were able to lay the foundation for a new era where the Kurdish nationalism was boosted through advances in art, music, education and publications, as well as a flourishing of Kurdish nationalism, linked to recent increased pride and a sense of belonging.

6.5   Kurds' Honeymoon (1970 – 1974)

The biggest problem between the Kurds and Iraqi government, despite the signing of March Agreement, remained the lack of trust. Nearly ten years of bloodshed and the number of failed negotiations left great marks on the way both sides perceived each other. It is worth mentioning that it was the Ba'th Party which played with time and started distancing itself from the obligations of the March Agreement. The events of 1971 ended the slim chance of trust which might have existed between the two sides. The

---

[31] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 327-328.

central issue was a demographic one. Both parties agreed to postpone the census (article 14) for disputed areas which was planned for December 1970 until the spring of next year, 1971. In the spring of 1971, the Ba'th regime postponed the census once again but this time it was a unilateral decision. The government started its Arabization policy indirectly before carrying out any future census. That's why Mullah Mustafa accused the government of resettling Arabs in the disputed areas, Kirkuk, Khanaqin and Sinjar, and informed the government he would not accept the census results if they indicated an Arab majority.

The Ba'th Party did not change its policy towards the Kurd as it was still determined to weaken the Kurdish movement. The Ba'th leadership were more eager than ever to force the Kurds into compliance with its policies against them. The Kurds were suspicious about the government's intention towards them, and the Ba'thists, on the other hand, suspected the Kurds were plotting against them. Subsequently, one of the main problems between the Iraqi regime and the Kurds remained the lack of trust. Who would blame the Kurds if they don't trust the Ba'thists? The Ba'th Party tried to assassinate the Kurdish leader, Mustafa Barzani, at a time when it was supposed to be a period for reconciliation and implementation of the autonomy agreement? According to Jonathan Randal,

> "On September 29, 1971, another effort was made to assassinate Barzani – in a bizarre plot known as the 'case of the exploding Mullahs'. A delegation of Shiite and Sunni divines planning to visit Barzani was enlisted by the regime to sound out his views; some of them were prevailed upon to strap tape recorders to their bodies 'to catch his every record,' but unknown to them the recorders were packed with explosives. The secret police figured correctly that Barzani's well-known respect for clerics would keep his guards from frisking the visitors. As soon as the meeting started, agents doubling as the delegation's drivers detonated the charges by activating switches in their vehicles. The clerics were sent to their maker, and bits of flesh remained stuck to the ceiling and walls for days. Barzani escaped shaken but otherwise unhurt, thanks to the fortuitous presence of a tea server who shielded him and was killed in the blast."[32]

---

[32] Jonathan Randal, *Kurdistan - After such Knowledge, what Forgiveness* (London: BLOOMSBURY, 1997), 222.

Ideology and practices of Ba'th Party showed that it was not serious in its stated plan to solve the Kurdish problem peacefully and grant the Kurds their rights, and Ba'th Party leadership did not translate their promises to the Kurds into practice. They tried to distance themselves from any solid commitment to the Kurds' national rights within the Iraqi constitution. Gunter states that

> "When the government issued the new, provisional constitution in July 1970, it did not include the amendments concerning "the national rights of the Kurdish people" as promised by Article 10 of the Manifesto. The provisions concerning the Kurdish language in Article 1 were honored only in a very limited manner, while the pledge in Article 8 to halt the policy of "Arabizing" the Kurdish lands was not maintained. Indeed, in September 1971 Baghdad expelled 40,000 Faili Kurds – who had lived for generations in Baghdad or south of Khanaqin – on the grounds that these Shiite Kurds were really Iranian nationals. Assassination attempts also were made against Barzani's son, Idris and then Barzani himself; The Ba'th was the prime suspect. Saddam Hussein frequently used this tactic in his rise to power."[33]

The Ba'thists accused Barzani of being the reason for the collapse of the negotiations and the failure of the March Agreement's implementation. They accused Barzani and the Kurds of not being loyal to Iraq and not meeting the duties of their Iraqi citizenship and responsibilities. The Kurds' duty, in their eyes, was to accept the homogenization of Iraq into a singular Arab identity. In these circumstances, nothing could bridge the gap between the two sides and any good will that had remained was lost. Gunter elaborates by stating that "according to the Ba'thists, on the other hand, "the factors endangering the process of the reconstruction of peace. Constituting a danger to the security of the state and to our future cooperation were the fault of Barzani's Kurds... From here the government's indictment went on to list a long litany of Kurdish violations of the March Manifesto. The role Iran was playing in encouraging Barzani was particularly resented."[34]

Day after day, the fragile trust between the two sides was fading. It is natural that, in a situation with a complete lack of trust, one side would be suspicious of every move of the

---

[33] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 17.

[34] Gunter, *The Kurds of*, 18.

other. So, the Iraqi government and Mullah Mustafa were thinking about how best to weaken each other, once the fighting resumed. McDowall argues that "the year 1972 proved to be a year of bad faith on both sides. Mullah Mustafa had not fulfilled his side of the bargain. He had refused to close the border with Iraq's adversary, Iran… In August 1971 he had appealed to the United States for aid and had renewed his appeal in March 1972. Having survived an assassination attempt Mullah Mustafa may have felt justified in responding to the overtures of Baghdad's greatest enemies, but he was clearly cheating on the 'trust and mutual confidence' he advocated in public."[35]

Since guns were silent in Iraqi Kurdistan, the Ba'th Party started consolidating its grip on power on one hand, and implemented a number of long-term strategies to strengthen the regime on the other. To do so, the Ba'th Party needed money, a strong army and international support. According to Human Rights Watch's report, "in April 1972, The Ba'th regime signed a fifteen-year friendship treaty with the Soviet Union; two months later nationalized the Iraq Petroleum Company; and with the October Arab-Israeli War, Iraq's oil revenue soared tenfold."[36]

Since trust did not exist between the two sides anymore, any point of strength on one side was seen as a threat by the other side. The nationalisation of oil by the Ba'th Party was a great step in bringing in more revenue and hence strengthening the regime. Mullah Mustafa was not happy with that. The United States, Iran and Israel were not happy either. Therefore, they needed to do something to achieve balance again. McDowall argues that

> "On 1 June 1972 Iraq nationalised its oil facilities, thus gaining enormous
> financial power. For the Kurds this heightened apprehensions that Kirkuk's
> 'Kurdish' oil would be turned into 'Arab' oil. For the United States it
> provided a more important reason to undermine the Ba'th regime, for it could
> be toppled, a 'new regime might let us back into oilfields… Mullah Mustafa
> showed the same naivety over his relations with the US that he had
> previously done with the British... The Pike Commission Report to the House

---

[35] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 330.

[36] Human Rights Watch/Middle East, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide – The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 23.

of Representatives on 19 January 1976 stated: Both Iran and the US hope to benefit from an unresolved situation in which Iraq is intrinsically weakened by the Kurds' refusal to give up their semi-autonomy. Neither Iran nor the US would like to see the situation resolved either way'."[37]

Kirkuk remained the key issue in the debate about the boundaries of the autonomous region. The Kurds insisted on including the city of Kirkuk while Baghdad was ready to compromise and to agree on joint administration for the city as long as it was accountable to Baghdad. According to McDowall, "the government was still willing to go by the 1957 census, to allocate Chamchamal and Kalar divisions to the autonomous region, and allow a mixed administration for Kirkuk town answerable to Baghdad. Mullah Mustafa countered that such an administration should still be answerable to a Kurdish autonomous government. Neither side was willing to budge. Mullah Mustafa still claimed Kirkuk to be the capital of the autonomous region."[38] Human Rights Watch's report shows that

> "It was oil that proved to be the Achilles' heel of the autonomy package that was offered to the Kurds by Saddam Hussein, the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) member in-charge of the Kurdish affairs. On paper the manifesto of 11 March 1970 was promising. It recognized the legitimacy of Kurdish nationalism and guaranteed Kurdish participation in government and the teaching of the Kurdish language in schools, but it reserved judgment on the territorial extent of Kurdistan, pending a new census. Such a census would surely have shown solid Kurdish majority in the city of Kirkuk and the surrounding oil fields, as well as in the secondary oil-bearing area of Khanaqin, south of the city of Suleimanyeh. But no census was scheduled until 1977, by which time the autonomy deal was dead."[39]

Despite the tactical reasons behind agreeing to the March Agreement by the Ba'th Party, it was a significant triumph for Kurdish nationalism for all Kurds, particularly in Iraqi Kurdistan. The period of 1970-1974 is considered to be a golden era for the flourishing of Kurdish nationalism. During these four peaceful years, Kurdistan witnessed economic growth and development; Kurdish art, music, education and publications made significant progress. Large number of Kurds received professional training in military and police

[37] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 331.

[38] McDowall, *A Modern History of*, 335.

[39] Human Rights Watch/Middle East, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide – The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1995), 22.

academies. Many Kurdish students were offered scholarships and travelled abroad to gain post-graduate qualifications in various fields in arts and science. Finally a great sense of pride and belonging was developed amongst the Kurds in Iraq and elsewhere.

6. 6   Kurdistan Burning (1974 - 1975)

One does not need to be a rocket-scientist to deduct the true reason behind the failure of the Ba'th Party in implementing the March Agreement with the Kurds. It would have contradicted its ideology, had it agreed to grant the Kurds any sort of autonomy that was truly considered as a de-centralization of the authority in governing Iraqi Kurdistan. The Ba'th Party believed in imposing a homogenous state based on centralized education and administration system for all Iraq. McDowall analyzes the situation and states that "in 1970 the KDP and the new Ba'th government reached an accord which reflected the government's own sense of insecurity and the Kurd's basic demands. The agreement failed for several reasons. For most of these was that the government's true instincts were to centralize. Autonomy was a temporary ploy while it gained enough strength to impose direct control. Within the Ba'th Party there was strong ideological disapproval of making major concessions to the Kurds."[40]

Towards the end of the fourth year of March agreement between the KDP and the Ba'th Party, it became clearer that the two sides would not achieve an agreement on the terms that they initially accepted in 1970. The boundaries of autonomous Kurdistan remained to be one of the biggest obstacles in reaching the agreement. Iraq's Ba'th Party would not allow the Kurds to have the oil-rich fields of Kirkuk as part of their Autonomous region of Kurdistan. The view of the Ba'th Party's in power-sharing was different from the version that the Kurds had in mind. The Ba'thists never believed in power sharing and de-centralization of administration. Nevertheless, they were ready to allow others to participate in some minor responsibilities to build a centralized homogenous state of Iraq with Arabic identity. Barzani, on the other hand, did not show any flexibility in the discussion about Kirkuk. Perhaps, he was misled by the 'promises' of aid and support

---

[40] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 323.

from the Americans and the Iranians. Mohammed Reza Pahlawi, the Shah of Iran, and the Americans did not want the Kurds to reach any agreement with the Ba'th regime because this would have strengthened Iraq and subsequently affected the balance of power in the Middle East. According to McDowall,

> "The 1970 Agreement was never implemented, however. Its implementation encountered immediate difficulties when it came to determining the borders of the Kurdish region. Baghdad would never agree to sharing or relinquishing the oil-producing areas of Kirkuk and Mosul, and political power-sharing agreements meant little when Iraq was ruled by a Ba'th Party dictatorship. What Baghdad apparently had in mind when it spoke about Kurdish participation in government, parliament, and other political bodies, was the Kurds' equal right to rubber stamp decisions taken by the Ba'th Party. Perhaps these difficulties could have been overcome. We will never know, however, since Iranians, CIA, and Mosad agents in contact with Barzani provided him with the weapons and the encouragement to forsake the agreement and its difficulties. The Shah of Iran wished to weaken Baghdad and had no desire to see the successful negotiation of Kurdish autonomy in Iraq, and the latter two also found it in their interests to foment problems for the revolutionary regime in Iraq."[41]

The Kurdish honeymoon did not last after the end of the four years period agreed by the Kurds and the Iraqi government. They agreed to discuss the details and implementation of the agreement during that period. It has been the nature of the Ba'th Party to agree with any demands by its opponents when it feels that it needs some tactical time. By February 1974 it became clear that the Iraqi government was no longer serious about the agreement and would not implement all the fifteen articles of the original March agreement. Hurst Hannum confirms that

> "While this agreement was a significant advance over any previous recognition of Kurdish autonomy in Iraq, Turkey, or Iran, full implementation proved impossible. While Iraqi Kurdistan enjoyed four years of relative peace, agreement could not be reached on the boundaries of the Kurdish autonomous region or on the issue of nationalisation of the Kirkuk oil fields. The Kurds wanted a proportional distribution of oil revenue, while the Ba'th regime insisted that revenues be allocated by the central government as state

---

[41] David Macdall, A Modern History of the Kurds (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 193.

assets. Clashes between the Kurds and the government resumed, as the Iraqi military greatly increased its presence along the Iranian borders."[42]

The Ba'th Party's main principle of running the affairs of Iraq was based on centralization and ruling with an iron fist. Hannum argues

"Hence, anything that contradicted this in their eyes was utterly unacceptable. 'Baghdad imposed its own version of autonomy by the deadline of March 1974. Under these provisions the Kurdish area would have an elected legislative assembly, based in Erbil, which would in turn, elect an executive committee. However, the president of the committee would be appointed by the president of Iraq who was also empowered to dismiss him and to dissolve the assembly whenever he chose. The Baghdad government would retain control of foreign affairs and security issues, as well as of oil and the regional budget. Furthermore, the area of the designated Kurdish region would exclude one-third of the distinctively Kurdish areas of Iraq, including the oil fields in the district of Kirkuk. Barzani rejected the proposal, but the government pressed ahead with its implementation."[43]

The announcement of the autonomy law by the president of Iraq, Ahmad Hassan al-Baker, practically ended the peace agreement between the KDP and the Iraqi government that had lasted for four years. It marked the start of another round of bloodshed and destruction. Gunter states that "in March 1974 the Ba'thists issued an autonomy law that significantly reduced the concessions previously offered Barzani. Renewed fighting broke out later that month and lasted until March of the following year, when Iraq and Iran signed the Algiers Accord."[44]

Barzani resumed fighting against Iraqi regime, hoping that the Americans would support the Kurds. Although Barzani claimed that the Americans promised to support him, there is no documentation that substantiates such a claim. According to McDowall, "Mullah

---

[42] Hurst Hannum, *Autonomy, Sovereignty and Self-Determination* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 192.

[43] Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 204.

[44] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 18.

Mustafa had staked everything on the support promised him by the USA and Iran. If you will give us arms to match those [Iraqi] arms, we will fight he told the Americans in March. Otherwise, we will make peace. We do not want to be massacred. Without the American promises he said later, we would never have become trapped and involved to such extent."[45]

When the fighting broke out, the KDP managed to mobilise most of the Iraqi Kurds to the Kurdish nationalist cause. Most of those who were able to carry arms joined the KDP and the Kurdish armed forces in the areas under the control of Barzani. The KDP managed to deploy tens of thousands of regular Peshmerga forces and just as many irregular Peshmerga units from the peasants and army deserters who preferred to stay in their villages. This was by far the largest organized armed forces for the Kurdish people by any party or leadership. McDowall concludes that "by April 1974 Mullah Mustafa probably had about 50000 trained Peshmerga and possibly another 50000 irregulars. Kurds, including army deserters, had been flocking to his banner once war seemed inevitable. His forces were trained for conventional war but he was short of heavy weapons. Against such forces Baghdad could deploy about 90000 troops, backed by 1200 tanks, armoured vehicles, and 200 aircraft."[46]

Soon after the announcement of the Autonomy Law and the denial of the Kurds' basic national rights by the Ba'th Party, the Kurds responded out of a feeling of nationalism, showing a willingness to participate in their struggle for national rights, which would include fierce fighting with the mighty forces of Iraq. The readiness for sacrifice for such cause demonstrated a shining example of a reactive nationalism which was developed as a result of the Ba'th Party's policy against the Kurds. Fierce fighting broke out between the two sides. Iraq deployed tens of thousands of troops, and started a massive military operation to re-capture all the villages and towns that were under the control of the Kurds. Iraq implemented scorched earth policy in its campaign. Thousands of Kurds were

---

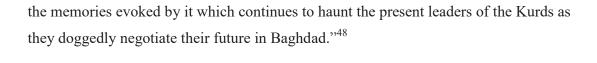[45] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 336.

[46] McDowall, *A Modern History of*, 337.

killed and many more thousands were wounded. A similar number of army personnel and military forces lost their lives or wounded between March 1974 and March 1975.

After months of fighting, Ba'th Party leadership realised that it could not defeat the Kurds militarily to end the 'Kurdish problem'. So, they decided to make considerable concessions to the Shah of Iran in return for ending his support the Kurds. Charles Tripp declares that "unknown to Barzani, negotiations began between Tehran and Baghdad. The outcome was the dramatic announcement in Algiers in March 1975 that Iran and Iraq had agreed to resolve their differences. Largely on the initiative of Saddam Hussein, Iraq accepted Iran's claim that the Thalweg should form the common boundary of the two states in the Shatt al-Arab and in exchange Iran had withdrawn all military assistance and had closed the border. Barzani's forces, heavily reliant on Iranian support, could not resist the renewed Iraqi offensives and the revolt collapsed within weeks."[47]

The Kurdish nationalist movement was at its peak in Iraq from March 1970 to March 1975. After the collapse of negotiations with the Iraqi government in March 1974, tens of thousands of Kurds left their villages, towns and cities and joined the Kurdish movement. Among those new recruits were thousands of students, teachers, lawyers, army officers and workers. This massive number created a new situation for the Kurdish movement. The KDP acted quickly and swiftly. It reorganized its Peshmerga forces in access of 100,000 men and set up local administration, schools and hospitals to run the affairs of people in the areas under the control of the movement. These institutes played significant role in boosting the morale of people and were considered as the first establishments to run the affairs of Kurds in that part of Kurdistan. Mohammed Ahmad and M Gunter conclude that "to the Kurds in the 1970s, this was a golden period and probably looked as stable, if not more stable, than anything they had yet experienced. Its collapse in the space of days in the summer of 1975 should therefore be placed the context of the social and political advances made in the five years beforehand. It is surely this comparison and

---

[47] Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 204.

the memories evoked by it which continues to haunt the present leaders of the Kurds as they doggedly negotiate their future in Baghdad."[48]

---

[48] Mohammed Ahmed & Michael Gunter, *The Evolution of Kurdish Nationalism* (California: MAZDA, 2007), 105.

7.   Battleground Kurdistan (1975 – 1985)

7.1   Collapse of a Dream (Algiers Accord) – 6th March 1975

From the day the agreement was signed between Saddam Hussein and Mohammed Reza Shah, it soon became clear that the Kurds would pay the price. Nevertheless, Barzani's decision to end the movement was a huge surprise to many Kurds, and was highly disappointing. What made this argument stronger was that Barzani allowed the KDP Politburo to hold a meeting and make their decision. Soon after that Barzani led a meeting of the KDP's Political Bureau and some military commanders and announced his decision to end the movement. He ordered the Peshmerga forces to stop fighting, lay down their guns and surrender to the Iraqi authorities or to flee to Iran. Gerard Chaliand and David McDowall conclude "on the night of March 18, during a new and a broader meeting of the Political Bureau and the military leaders, Mustafa Barzani informed his followers of his personal decision not to continue the struggle, but instead to retreat to Iran."[1]

According to Noshirwan Amin, "on the 6th March 1975 during the OPEC annual meeting Hawari Bomidion, the then Algerian President, announced that the two "brother countries", Iran & Iraq signed a treaty to end all hostilities between them. Although the Shah of Iran and Saddam Hussein's agreement did not mention specifically the Kurds but it was obvious that it was an agreement between both sides to end the Kurdish movement. On 19th March 1975 the collapse of the Kurdish movement was announced. This was the biggest tragedy in the Kurds' modern history."[2]

Serious land disputes had existed between Iraq and Iran for a long time. There were a number of occasions that the two countries discussed their differences without any breakthrough, but according to Michael Gunter,

---

[1] Gerard Chaliand & David McDowall, *A People Without A Country* London: Zedbooks, 1993), 173.

[2] Noshirwan M Amin, *La Kanari Danoubawa bo Xri Nawzang (Kurdish) – From the Danaube Shore to the Nawzang Valley* (Berlin: Postfach, 1997), 30.

"On March 6, 1975... Iran and Iraq signed the Algiers Accord under which Iraq recognized the middle of the Shatt al-Arab River as the boundary between their two states, while Iran undertook to halt its aid to Barzani. The cut-off aid came as a severe shock to its (the Kurds) leadership and made it impossible for the Kurdish rebellion to continue. At the time Barzani justified his disastrous reliance on the Shah and the US by arguing that "a drowning man stretches his hand out for anything." However, later in exile, he admitted: Without American promises we would never have become trapped and involved to such an extent." In reply, Kissinger simply stated that covert action should not be confused with missionary work."[3]

Barzani ended the Kurdish movement, of which he was the shining symbol, with a shocking announcement. He and few members of his immediate family – including his sons – travelled to the USA and were granted asylum. While in exile, Barzani suffered from a deteriorating health and developed a lung cancer. Subsequently, on March 1, 1979 he passed away, and was buried in the town of Shno in Iranian Kurdistan. Despite Barzani's decision to end the Kurdish movement, there were still thousands of Kurds, many poets, intellectuals and writers who viewed Barzani as the most important Kurdish nationalist and a symbol of the movement. Sherko Bekas states that "Mustafa Barzani has been the leader of Kurdish nationalism since 1963."[4]

Falakadin Kakayee declares that "Barzani became the legend and symbol of Kurdish Nationalism. He stayed as a symbol and never changed. He never lost himself; he was defeated but stayed firm."[5]

The Ba'th Party in Iraq achieved what the previous Iraqi regimes had failed to achieve by ending the Kurdish armed movement. Following the collapse of the movement, the Iraqi army occupied every village, hill, valley, and peak of mountain in Iraqi Kurdistan – many of them for the first time. They started capitalizing on their success by implementing a very harsh policy against the Kurds. They also continued strengthening their grip on power and the army. According to McDowall,

---

[3] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 29.

[4] Interview with legendary Kurdish Poet Sherko Bekas, 18/8/2006, Suleimanyeh.
[5] Interview with Falakadeen Kakayee, the Minister of Culture and Education in the KRG, 21st August 2006, ErbilErbil.

"After its suppression of armed resistance, the regime moved quickly to strengthen its grip on the region. It was a profoundly bitter period for the Kurdish population, for the regime created a security belt along the Iranian and Turkish borders, which progressively widened from 5 kilometers to eventually 30 km in places. This involved the razing of at least 500 villages in the first phase and may reached 1400 villages by 1978. At least 600000 and probably very many more men, women and children were deported to 'Mujama'at', collective resettlement camps… Others were sent to southern Iraq, to Diwaniyeh, Naseriyeh and Afak… The government also used the opportunity to settle the demographic balance in disputed areas. According to Kurdish sources one million residents were removed from the disputed districts of Khanaqin, Kirkuk, Mandali, Shekhan, and Sinjar."[6]

It seems beyond belief that the Kurdish leadership was to lead such a large movement with tens of thousands of fighters and wide administration units on a large area of Iraqi Kurdistan and rely only on Iranian aid and support. That was a major strategic mistake. The Iranians had a history of hostilities with Iraq on a number of issues, mainly disputed lands on their borders. It is not difficult to realize that if Iraq met the Iranian demands on the disputed lands, their hostilities would fade away. Nevertheless, the Kurdish leadership continued pursuing the same strategy. What made the situation worse was that they sent tens of thousands of the families of Peshmerga forces and villagers to camps in Iran, for which they could potentially be held as hostages if the Iranians so wished. According to Gareth Stansfield and Shorsh Resool,

"While the Iranian support to the Kurds in Iraq suggested a convergence of interests, the relationship was effectively that of a proxy whose interests overlapped only partially with that of the principal, Iran. The Kurds were fighting for autonomy within the north, perhaps even (although it was never overtly stated) independence. Iran had more wide-ranging geopolitical interests in its dealings with Iraq, including pressuring the Iraqi government to cede the Shatt al-Arab waterway in the south. Therefore the Iraqi Kurds were merely a tool employed by the Iranians to pressure the Iraqi government into actions deemed in the interests of Tehran."[7]

Failure of one side could be proof that another side's position or opinion was correct. The left and the radical Kurdish groups had been criticizing the tribal and feudal nature of

---

[6] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004, 339.

[7] Gareth Stansfield & Shorsh Resool, "The Evolution of Kurdish Nationalism", in *The Evolution of Kurdish Nationalism,* Mohammed Ahmed & Michael Gunter (California: MAZDA, 2007),107.

Barzani and most of KDP leaders. At the end of the 1960s, they predicted the failure of KDP's leadership in achieving Kurdish national rights. Komala was amongst the most sincere critics of such a leadership style. Noshirwan Amin declares that

> "When Ashbatal (collapse of the movement) happened Komala was already a strong but small organization. It managed to establish itself well. I personally was building more hope on Komala to carry on and lead the Kurdish struggle. We predicted that the tribal style leadership of the Kurdish movement could not continue and would abandon the struggle at a certain stage. Then it would be the role of Komala to take over and play its historic role. I was realistic and my hopes were based on the fact that Komala recruited some excellent members."[8]

Masud Barzani, the President of the Kurdish Region, has a different view regarding the reasons for the collapse of the movement, and justifies the decision made by his father, Barzani Mustafa, to end the Kurdish movement due to his age and the illness he suffered towards the end of his life. M Barzani commented on the Algiers treaty by saying:

> "I am concerned that when the evil people meet our people we will be alone, thus our people will suffer the most and they may eradicate the Kurds. I have also reached an age where it would be very difficult for me to engage in guerrilla warfare because it requires mobility and rapid movement from mountain to a mountain. Therefore, I realized that to continue fighting will not be in our interest. If there is anyone who can lead this type of fighting I am willing to do my best to help him. I can confirm that Barzani would have continued the fighting if it wasn't for his illness."[9]

M Barzani elaborates by saying "Mohammed Reza Shah met with Barzani on 11th March 1975. The Shah said to Barzani: I had to sign this treaty, otherwise I had to get involved in a fierce fighting with the Ba'th regime in Iraq and the Soviets would have supported

---

[8] Noshirwan M Amin, *La Kanari Danoubawa Bo Xri Nawzang (Kurdish) – From the Danaube Shore to the Nawzang Valley* (Berlin: Postfach, 1997), 41.

[9] Masoud Barzani, *al-Barzani Walharake al-Taharuryeh al-Kurdia (Arabic), Barzani and The Kurdish Liberation Movement* (Erbil: Khabat, 2002), 347.

the Iraqis with everything they could. The treaty is good for Iran and we consider it in our interest in the same way you found signing the agreement on 11th March in 1970."[10]

The collapse of Kurdish movement following the March Agreement was a critical event and can be considered as the turning point in the history of the Kurdish movement and the Kurdish people as a whole in Iraqi Kurdistan. It was the end of an era and the beginning of a new one. All the political and social aspects of the Kurds had changed dramatically. The collapse left obvious marks on the new history of the Kurds; it affected the situation leading to the resurgence of the Kurdish movement and all subsequent events. Subsequently different views and visions had emerged. Many aspects of Kurdish movement started changing and a number of new factors and events emerged as a result of that. The immediate aftermath of the collapse had large implication on the later events.

Many Kurds, arguably, blamed their leadership for loosing initiative and courage to continue the national struggle, relying solely on the Kurdish people. Despite the signing of the Algiers Accord, the Shah of Iran did not force Barzani to end the movement. All he did was to tell Barzani not to expect any more assistance from Iran in their fight against the Iraqi regime. He made this clear during the visit of Barzani and two members of the KDP's Politburo, Dr. Mahmud Osman and Muhsin Dizayee. Possibly Mohammed Reza Shah wanted to implement the treaty on one hand, but to keep the Kurdish question as a pressure card to blackmail and bargain the Iraqi regime to fully implement their agreement on the other hand. G Chaliand and D McDowall argue that "the Algiers agreement was greeted with amazement in Iraqi Kurdistan. Barzani was already in Tehran. When the Shah returned from Algiers, he presented the Kurdish leader with three choices: to surrender to the Iraqi forces before the end of the month when the general amnesty was declared by Baghdad would expire; to seek refuge in Iran; or to continue fighting with the frontier closed, policed by the Army and under Iranian-Algerian control as stipulated in the agreement."[11]

---

[10] Masoud Barzani, *al-Barzani Walharake al-Tahraruryeh al-Kurdia (Arabic), Barzani and The Kurdish Liberation Movement* (Erbil: Khabat, 2002), 347.

[11] Gerard Chaliand & David McDowall, *A People Without A Country* (London: Zedbooks, 1993), 172.

Jonathan Randal states that "the Shah reiterated that the Kurds could keep fighting, but without his support, and that Iran would welcome Kurdish refugees even then fleeing to take advantage of the formal two-week cease-fire ending April 1. But as Alam's diary revealed, the Shah was uneasy about criticism of his handling of the Kurds."[12]

The Ba'th Party tried to capitalize on the collapse of the Kurdish movement and the psychological defeat felt by the Kurds. The Ba'th regime enacted a number of measures in that regard. They placed enormous pressure on the Kurds to join the Ba'th Party ranks, deported thousands of Kurds to the south of Iraq, destroyed hundreds of villages on the Iraq-Iran and Iraq-Turkey border and deported its inhabitants to complexes in the plain lands near the main towns and cities. The Ba'th regime continued its Arabization policy in the city of Kirkuk and the surrounding areas. According to Martin van Bruinessen,

> "With the KDP now removed from the political equation and basing itself from Iran, the Ba'th Party sought to eradicate Kurdish nationalism by focusing upon the institutions Kurds had established, including their parties, and attempting to dilute notions of Kurdish nationalism that had taken hold in Kurdish political culture. Kurds were forced to join the Ba'th Party and enroll in state run social and professional unions and organizations. The Ba'th Party re-opened offices in almost every town and city in Kurdistan, and introduced Arabic as the official language in schools. Attempts were also made to reduce the numbers of Kurds enrolling in the military colleges, and the Arabization of Kirkuk continued non-debated. Iraqi government implemented every possible way to Arabize the city of Kirkuk and the surrounding areas. The targeting of the Kurds went even further than these attempts to quash Kurdish nationalism through the twin strategies of coercion and patronage, however. Foreshadowing the ruinous Anfal campaign of nearly a decade later, the Iraqi government created a security belt along the Turkish and Iranian borders destroying any village located within a swathe of land in places 30 kilometers across."[13]

The Ba'thists started a mass deportation campaign. M Ahmad and M Gunter confirm that "this action resulted in the wide-scale deportation of rural-dwelling Kurds into the vast

---

[12] Jonathan Randal, *Kurdistan - After such Knowledge, what Forgiveness* (London: BLOOMSBURY, 1997), 180.

[13] Martin Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State* (London: Zed Books, 1992), 19.

collective towns built near the major cities of Iraqi Kurdistan, or even to areas in southern Iraq."[14]

Against all odds, and despite the severe policies implemented by the Iraqi government to crush any sign of resistance by the Kurds, Kurdish nationalism showed a fair degree of strength. The will for sacrifice by most Kurds in addition to their high degree of national awareness, made it very difficult for the regime to expect victory. The Kurds started re-organizing themselves for another round of resistance to the Iraqi policies in Kurdistan. According to Ahmad and Gunter,

> "Despite these extensive efforts, Kurdish nationalism had become part of the political culture of the Iraqi Kurds. It was no longer an ephemeral idea, capable of being quashed by force or assimilation, no matter how hard the government of Saddam Hussein tried. From 1975 onwards, the Kurdish national movement was fractured, inchoate and desperate, but its ideals had been forged by the events of the 1960s and 1970s and Kurdish myths of nation were rediscovered and embraced in the stability engendered in the autonomous period. The tragic episodes which would happen in the 1980s only served to further harden Kurdish nationalist sentiment, even though in these dark years the prospects of repeating the successes of the early 1970s seemed bleak."[15]

The Ba'thists intended to make the Kurds feel they were second-class citizens and were not welcomed in Iraq. Dismissing hundreds of Kurdish army officers from the Iraqi army was just one of those harsh measures. They also started a new campaign to purge from the army any Kurd who was not considered 100% loyal to the regime. Soon after that, the Ba'th Party prevented Kurds from entering the military academy or the air force, regardless to their degree of loyalty to the regime. The Ba'thists had a free hand to continue working towards the formation of the state with a clear Arabic identity and to impose such a homogenization on the Kurds.

---

[14] Mohammed Ahmed & Michael Gunter, *The Evolution of Kurdish Nationalism* (California: MAZDA, 2007), 106.

[15] Ahmed & Gunter, *The Evolution of Kurdish,* 106.

7.2   After the Fall

The collapse of the Kurdish movement following the March Agreement was the end of an era and marked the emergence of a new one. It was a big blow to Kurdish nationalism. It ended a well-established party, the KDP, and a well-organized movement, as well as relatively successful administration in the areas under the control of the Kurdish movement, all in a matter of days. Barzani dissolved the KDP and gave KDP members and Peshmerga forces three choices: 1. Stay in Iran and live in refugee camps established by the Iranian government. 2. Go back to Iraq and surrender to Iraqi authorities. 3. Seek asylum in Europe and America. Not every KDP member did what Barzani and the KDP leadership asked, however. A number of senior KDP members and cadres refused to give up. Instead, they set up new groups. According to Gunter,

> "After Barzani's collapse in 1975, his KDP broke into several factions. One group joined a KDP splinter already cooperating with Baghdad. Prominent members included Habib Karim, the former secretary general, Dara Tofiq, a member of Politburo. Dr Mahmud Othman, a physician who had been a top Barzani aid and a member of Politburo, also broke with Barzani. Later he established his own party, the KDP/Preparatory Committee… The real heirs of Barzani's KDP proved to be his two loyal sons, the half brothers Masoud and Idris. In Iran they joined another former associate of their father, Mohammed Mahmud Abdurrahman, popularly known as Sami, to form the KDP/Provisional Command (KDPPC) in November 1975… At the ninth congress held in Iran in 1979, internal conflicts between the progressive Sami and the traditional Idris, who supported Islamic Iran, led to Sami leaving the party to establish his own Kurdistan Popular Democratic Party (PKDP)."[16]

Saddam Hussein continued implementing his chauvinist policy against everything Kurdish. As he now realized that the Kurds rejected his policy of homogenization, he intensified his efforts to impose this upon them by force. He intensified the Arabization campaign and deported more and more Kurdish national activists to the south of Iraq. The Ba'th Party opened branches and headquarters in every town and city in Iraqi Kurdistan and forced the Kurds to join its ranks. Anyone who refused such order would face terrible consequences. Andreas Wimmer states "a forced policy of Arabization was developed, the Kurdish faculty of the University of Suleimanyeh closed, Kurdish civil

---

[16] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 33.

servants, policemen and soldiers sent to Arabic-speaking parts of the country, and Arab men were given financial award when marrying Kurdish women."[17]

The vicious attempt by Saddam Hussein to impose the Ba'thist plan of giving Iraq an Arab identity and forcing the Kurds to accept such identity failed, and the Kurds reacted with defiance. If it was not for the policies of Saddam Hussein regarding Arabization, deportation and treating the Kurds as second-class citizens, armed struggle might has not resumed so quickly, but the anti-Kurdish policy created such fertile ground for Kurdish nationalism to blossom that the Kurdish national movement managed to mobilize people very easily.

7.3   Emergence of PUK & Other Kurdish parties

There were a number of parties and organizations operating in Iraqi Kurdistan when the Kurdish movement collapsed. The following groups, parties and organizations existed in Iraqi Kurdistan: two fractions of the Iraqi Communist Party, Kazheek (a nationalist Kurdish Party) and The Toilers League of Kurdistan (Komala), which was a Marxist-Leninist Kurdish organization. Nevertheless, the Kurdish people did not place much hope on any of the existing parties and organizations for various reasons. Obviously, the collapse of the movement and dissolution of the KDP created a pessimistic atmosphere among many Kurds, and the existing organizations did not have the ability to initiate a new movement, let alone to lead it. According to N Amin,

> "When the Kurdish movement collapsed the following parties were active in
> Kurdistan. The KDP was the largest Kurdish party in Iraqi Kurdistan and was
> leading the Kurdish movement. But all its organizations dissolved with the
> collapse of the movement. ICP, which split into two groups a long time
> before then. The central committee of the ICP was the main part of the party.
> It was supported by the Soviet Union and was in alliance with the Ba'th
> party. It was participating in the government and had a number of ministers.
> They had armed units and participated in fighting the Kurdish guerrilla
> (Peshmerga). The central command of the ICP was a smaller group and was
> subjected to a fierce attack from the Iraqi government. They had few armed
> groups and participated in the Kurdish resistance. Kazheek was a small

---

[17] Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict - Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 191.

nationalist Party. They had headquarters near the main headquarters of
Barzani the father and the KDP's main headquarters but did not have many
supporters or fighters. Komala was another small organization but was much
more organized and its members and cadres were well prepared for the new
challenges. Most of its members were part of Peshmerga force. Their political
activities were kept secret. At the beginning, they decided to carry on fighting
after the collapse of the movement. They contacted all the other existing and
active parties and organizations at the time but none responded positively to
their demands to continue fighting the Iraqi regime."[18]

Komala was the most radical nationalist organization of them all and its members were
very enthusiastic about the prospect of leading the Kurdish movement. Their ambition
reflected their eagerness and they managed to form small groups amongst the urban
intellectuals. Most of their members did not have fighting experience, but were ready to
take a chance. However, it has been shown that its members made up the core of PUK's
Peshmerga forces for the next 3-5 years. The rapid and unexpected collapse of the
movement by Mustafa Barzani and the KDP created fertile ground for Komala to recruit
new people and mobilize them to their ideology and agenda.

Following a number of intensive meetings and a number of seminars and roundtable
discussions, on 1st June 1975 (i.e. only three months after the collapse of the movement),
Jalal Talabani and a number of other nationalists, including members of Komala,
announced the establishment of a new organization called the Patriotic Union of
Kurdistan (PUK). Talabani was the secretary of Komala at the time of the announcement,
and the PUK was seen as an umbrella organization to encompass different groups and
people with different ideologies, provided their main goal remained Kurdish nationalism.
They were determined to lead the Kurdish struggle under a collective leadership style and
a new ideology to a different direction. N Amin describes the foundation of PUK as
follows:

"Jalal Talabani had set up a committee from himself, Dr. Fuad Ma'soum,
Adel Murad, Abdulrazaq Faili, Kamal Fuad, Omer Shekhmous and I,
(Noshirwan Amin - SR) to lead a new organization and continue the political-

---

[18] Noshirwan M Amin, *La Kanari Danoubawa bo Xri Nawzang (Kurdish) – From the Danaube Shore to
the Nawzang Valley* (Berlin: Postfach, 1997), 32.

armed struggle in Kurdistan. He called this committee The Founders of the PUK. Talabani wrote the first press release in Arabic on 5 May 1975, and after discussing it with Dr Fuad Ma'soum, Adel and Abdulrazaq, he published it. They sent it to Dr. Kamal Fuad to distribute it in Europe, who published it there on 1 June 1975, after making a few changes. The Syrian media published their press release and then it was republished in many languages, all over the world. Although people were very pessimistic and demoralized, the announcement of the establishment of the PUK had a large resonance in Kurdistan."[19]

The emergence of the PUK in June 1975 was a brave step forward and a big boost for the demoralized Kurds. In June 1976, PUK leaders urged their members in Iraq to set up small Peshmerga units and go to the mountains of Iraqi Kurdistan. The newly-established Peshmerga units started visiting villages and patrolling the main roads in Iraqi Kurdistan to present themselves to the people and explain their aims and objectives to mobilize people and boost their morale. Hence, they demonstrated and proved that the Kurdish armed struggle had resumed. McDowall states that "on 1 June 1975, Talabani and certain colleagues issued a statement in Damascus, announcing the formation of the PUK. The newly founded party, the PUK, was an umbrella organization for two Iraqi groups Komala, a clandestine Marxist-Leninist group and the Socialist Movement… In 1976, PUK began its partisan style operations. Ali Askari had received word from Talabani while in enforced residence at Ramadi and succeeded in escaping with his colleagues to the mountains."[20]

Romano illustrates the situation as follows, "going back to 1975, however, it appears that Talabani had in effect used Barzani's end of the armed struggle in 1975 as an opportunity to frame himself and the new PUK as the new torchbearer of Kurdish nationalism. Talabani's people began launching more sustained guerrilla attacks in 1976. Shortly

---

[19] Noshirwan M Amin, *La Kanari Danoubawa bo Xri Nawzang (Kurdish) – From the Danaube Shore to the Nawzang Valley* (Berlin: Postfach, 1997), 43.

[20] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 343.

afterwards, Barzani's sons likewise took up the torch and also renewed KDP guerrilla operations."[21]

The announcement of the PUK's formation gave the Kurds a burst of hope. The PUK, in the eyes of many Kurds, symbolized the heroic soldier who kept the flag of Kurdish nationalism held high in their fierce battle for survival. In addition to that, the PUK brought something new to the Kurdish Liberation Movement. Pluralism and united armed force of different groups were amongst a few new methods that PUK introduced to Kurdish armed struggle. The PUK was more like a front or an umbrella organization rather than a single political party. It hosted three different political groups with three different ideologies but had a united Peshmerga force and shared one slogan, "Democracy for Iraq and self-determination for Kurdistan". Komala, the Socialist movement and another group which included Kurdish nationalists across the Kurdish spectrum set up an alliance called PUK. Chaliand and McDowall confirm that "the first was PUK led from Damascus by Jalal Talabani and friends."[22]

It was easy for the PUK to recruit new urban and rural members from all classes and various social backgrounds. They aimed at the younger generation who were by default rebellious against the older generation. Despite the difficult and challenging circumstances, it did not take too long before some new local and national figures were made famous for the first time after the collapse of the movement.

Soon after the announcement of formation of PUK, Dr Mahmud Osman, who was a senior member of the dissolved the KDP (Politburo member), and some other former KDP members announced the establishment of the Preparatory Committee of the KDP. They published a report criticizing Barzani and KDP leadership's strategy. They analyzed the situation and blamed KDP leadership for the collapse of the movement. Soon after that some senior KDP members and former Peshmerga commanders announced the establishment of the Provisional Leadership of the KDP. This was despite the fact that the

---

[21] David Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 198.

[22] Gerard Chaliand & David McDowall, *A People Without A Country* (London: Zedbooks, 1993), 188.

KDP was officially dissolved following the collapse of the movement. According to McDowall,

> "Meanwhile other elements of the old KDP were beginning to recover from the trauma of defeat. In August 1976 Idris and Masoud Barzani, together with Sami (Mohammed Mahmud Abdurrahman) who had been Minister for the Northern Region, 1970-1974, and certain others met in Europe to launch the KDP-Provisional Leadership (KDP-PL).… The third group to take the field was led by Dr Mahmud Othman, once head of the KDP's Executive Bureau. Othman had disagreed with the decision to abandon the struggle in March 1975.… Finally, Pasok, a shadowy Party dating from 1959, reformed itself in September 1976 as a Kurdish Socialist Party. It wanted the independence of all Kurdistan, but was willing to work for autonomy for each country as an intermediate objective."[23]

It must be said that Komala members were not surprised by Barzani's decision to end the Kurdish movement. They predicted such an outcome long before the war had resumed in 1974. They mentioned such a possibility in their publications and argued in their publications that the Kurdish movement would collapse for four main reasons. First of all, the movement was relying on Iran for almost everything. Secondly, the party's leadership style was of a tribal nature and the mentality of Barzani was that of a tribal leader. Thirdly, the tribal-based leadership structure of the movement and the ultimate power that Barzani had over the KDP and the Peshmerga forces were a likely recipe for a disastrous outcome and finally, Barzani would consider his own and his tribal interest before a broader nationalist interest and the interest of the people of Kurdistan.

The readiness of people to participate in Kurdish the struggle for nationalism in those very difficult circumstances is an excellent example of the prominence that Kurdish nationalism had achieved. Recruiting youth and urban intellectual for the ranks of Kurdish underground organizations was not a difficult task, but was a very dangerous one. The PUK managed to handle the situation well and recruited a large number of urban intellectuals and some tribal leaders close to the Iranian borders. The Ba'th Party continued implementing its plans to capitalize on the success it achieved by signing the Algiers Accord and the collapse of the Kurdish movement.

---

[23] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 344.

The PUK brought a number of new things to the Kurdish movement that did not exist before, its structure allowing more than one organization under one chain of command between the newly created Peshmerga and their most senior commander Amin declares that "it was publicly and practically drumming up support from all the parts of Kurdistan to join forces and come together to achieve their national right. There is not one single party in the other parts of Kurdistan that we did not help; we shed blood on all the other parts of Kurdistan; we helped PKK to establish their headquarters in Syria, hosted Alai Rezgari and helped the Iranian KDP and Iranian Komala."[24]

The emergence of the PUK, KDP-PL and other Kurdish parties after the collapse of the movement showed the strength of Kurdish nationalism despite the negative impact of the collapse of one of the strongest and most influential armed movements in Kurdish history. It also came as a direct response to the vicious policy of the Ba'th regime against the Kurds following the collapse of the movement. They opposed Iraq's attempt to homogenize the Kurds into a state run by Arabs and with an Arabic identity. They continued demanding the recognition of Kurdish national rights.

7.4   New Kurdish Movement

Saddam Hussein and the other Ba'thists' celebration of the collapse of Kurdish revolution did not last long, and their dream of implementing whatever policy they wished upon Kurdistan was shattered when new Kurdish Peshmerga forces emerged. Hussein did not imagine the resurgence of armed struggle in Kurdistan against his regime. Amin elaborates on the subject and states that "during one of his meetings with George Habash, the general secretary of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Saddam Hussein said: Jalal Talabani may find it more likely to see a date palm grow on his head than be able to send seven Peshmerga to the mountains."[25] Surprisingly, the PUK was the

---

[24] Interview with Noshirwan Mustafa Amin, Analyst and director of Wsha Company for Media, 29/3/2005, Suleimanyeh.

[25] Noshirwan M Amin, *La Kanari Danoubawa bo Xri Nawzang (Kurdish) – From the Danaube Shore to the Nawzang Valley* (Berlin: Postfach, 1997), 93.

first armed Kurdish group that resumed fighting against the Ba'th regime. Gunter confirms that "in 1976 PUK also became the first Kurdish party to return Peshmerga to Iraq."[26]

The Kurds' resilience for opposing Iraq's homogenization, Arabization, deportation and Ba'thification was another example of the height that Kurdish nationalism reached at that time. Despite an obvious change in the balance of power in favour of the regime, and the quick and fatal consequence of any attempt by the Kurds against the regime, Kurdish readiness to sacrifice for their cause was intact. The re-appearance of Peshmerga forces gave a big boost to Kurdish nationalism and played a significant role in raising the morale of people to resist the regime's attempts to contain the Kurdish struggle for freedom. Therefore, whoever initiated such a step received the largest support amongst the Kurds. Anthony Smith states that "the sense of national identity is often powerful enough to engender a spirit of self-sacrifice on behalf of the nation in many, if not most, of its citizens. This is especially true of crises and wartime. Here one can witness the degree to which most citizens are prepared to endure hardships and make personal sacrifices, in defence of the nation, to the point of laying down their lives willingly."[27]

7.5   Kurdish Division

The hardship and difficult circumstances the Kurdish parties endured during those early years following the renewal of armed struggle led to many disagreements amongst the new emerging groups. The leader of the parties had differing views on many issues. Most of the Kurdish leaders tried to impose themselves and their view on others, not willing or able to adapt from the old style of practicing leadership. Tolerance, acceptance of criticism, and collective leadership had not been practiced by any of them before. Most of them came from a centralized style of Stalinist and traditional party structure background and believed that leaders must have glorious and unchallenged status within the party. They did not accept that others could share power with them. This led to division and bloodshed amongst those involved with the Kurdish movement, and for which the Kurds

---

[26] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 34.

[27] Anthony Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 156.

paid the highest price. The common problem amongst those leaders was the fact that they all had shortsighted visions and were not used to accepting others. Most of the new emerging forces had one thing in common--that they disagreed with the others. This period witnessed a number of such divisions. Foundation of United Kurdistan Socialist Party was another example of that. McDowall notes that "on the night of Nawroz (21 march) 1979 Resool Mamand led his KSM men, the bulk of PUK's fighters, out of Talabani's camp and allied with Mahmud Osman's KDP-PC, which was also signed near Nawkan. In August they formally declared a new Party, The Kurdistan Socialist Party."[28]

The KDP had its own problems, one of which was a conflict between the new generation and the old veterans. The emergence of the leftist ideology within the Kurdish movement, and the momentum it took following the collapse of Barzani's movement, was inevitable. Barzani, the father, had announced the end of the movement and had dissolved the KDP. His sons, Idris and Masoud, however, wanted to resume struggle in the same style that their father employed. This approach faced tough opposition from some senior KDP members who were not satisfied with that style of leadership. For obvious reasons, this led to some bitter disagreements. According to McDowall,

> "However, the KDP-PL still had its problems. At its Ninth Congress in Iran in November 1979, the party renamed itself the KDP. Several intellectuals led by Sami Abdul Rahman began to dissociate themselves from the party, dissatisfied with the traditionalism implicit in Barzani leadership and its supporters, by close ties forged by Idris with the Khomeini regime and by the serious of clashes with KDP Iran which was seeking autonomy from Iran. As a result of these ties, the KDP was now largely engaged in defeating KDPI inside Iran on Tehran's behalf. In due course Sami and fellow dissidents seceded, to form the Kurdistan Popular Democratic Party (KPDP) in 1981."[29]

The success of the Iranian revolution in establishing the Islamic Republic of Iran was a serious concern to the Ba'th regime in Iraq. Saddam Hussein became concerned that his regime's fate might be similar to that of the Shah at the hands of the Iraqi Shiite. He took advantage of the chaotic situation in Iran and the meltdown of the Iranian army and

---

[28] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 345.

[29] McDowall, *A Modern History,* 346.

attacked Iran. On 22nd September 1980, Iraq launched a series of attacks on Iran from different directions, initiating a war that lasted the following eight years and drained Iraq's human and financial resources dramatically. Iranian Kurds were confronted with an absolute rejection of their national rights and defied the new rulers by initiating armed struggle in Iranian Kurdistan, similar to that of Iraqi Kurdistan. The two main Iraqi Kurdish parties were divided with regard to their stance towards the new rulers of Iran. The KDP supported the Iranian regime in their campaign against the Iranian Kurds, while the PUK sided with the Iranian Kurds. Assisting Iranian Kurds in their struggle against the Islamic Republic of Iran by PUK was a shining example of Kurdish nationalism. In November and December 1982, PUK dispatched thousands of its Peshmerga force to help the KDP of Iran (KDPI) and Komala to defend their headquarters and the liberated areas of Iranian Kurdistan from the advancing Iranian forces. The PUK Peshmerga was engaged in fierce and direct fighting with the Iranian troops. This act by the PUK cost them dearly as the Iranians launched their attacks later on in Iraq through the border corridors that hosted PUK headquarters. Iran also prevented PUK members and leadership to use Iran as a route to communicate with the outside world.

In the early 1980s, the PUK helped the Turkish Kurds set up a number of training camps near their headquarters in Nawzeng, Zaleh and Sheneh. Alai Rezgari and Kawachi group were amongst them. The PUK had established good relations with other Turkish Kurdish parties since its foundation in 1975. One issue that all the four neighboring countries, Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Syria had agreed on since the end of World War I was to prevent the Kurds from achieving their national rights and setting up their own independent state. Romano argues that "Ankara, Tehran, Damascus and non-Kurdish Iraqis are of course increasingly worried of growing pan-Kurdish sentiment, which accounts for their hostility to any Kurdish state in the region. While many Kurds would like to see pan-Kurdish sentiment produce a situation where in their leaders refuse to be made the pawn of these powers and played off against each other."[30]

---

[30] David Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 251.

Ironically, at the time when some Kurdish parties were assisting other parties in different parts of Kurdistan, they were also fighting each other in their area of Kurdistan! Hence, internal fighting between various Kurdish parties had become a characteristic of the Kurdish movement in the1970s and early 1980s. There were occasions when there was some sort of agreement between the fighting fractions to interrupt or end their internal fighting. However, fierce fighting could resume at any time because of an isolated disagreement or a minor clash between two Peshmerga units, and then spread to other regions. McDowall confirms that "in April the ICP, KDP and KSP launched attacks on PUK positions in Erbil governorate. The following month PUK launched surprise counter-attacks, inflicting particular damage to the Communists, killing 50 and capturing another 70. In some circles PUK was suspected of working in tandem with Baghdad."[31]

One cannot ignore the influence and intervention of neighbouring countries in stirring up division amongst the Iraqi Kurdish parties.

7.6   Northern Bureau of Ba'ath Party in Kirkuk (NB)

On 24 April 1982, a spark of an uprising started in the town of Qaladezeh in the form of a massive demonstration. People stormed to the streets expressing their anger and frustration at the government's policy against the Kurds and not responding to Kurdish national demands. Soon it spread to almost every town and city – including Kirkuk, except Duhok and Zakho. It was a direct challenge to the authority of the Ba'th Party and its Arabization and Ba'thification policy.

Saddam Hussein dispatched an envoy of Kurdish ministers to Iraqi Kurdistan to calm the situation and talk to people. They held mass meetings in almost every town and city and listened to people's demands. People responded by openly demanding an end to their oppression by the Ba'thists, the release of political prisoners and a general amnesty.

---

[31] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 347.

People also urged the government start negotiations with Kurdish parties to grant the Kurds their national rights.

It was then that the Iraqi government realized that they needed to have a main office/headquarters in Kurdistan to oversee implementation of its policies. They also wanted to monitor the situation closely and to have a centre where all different apparatuses – party, army, intelligence and security would report to and be able to respond quickly to unforeseen developments. This centre would be accountable to the Ba'th leadership in Baghdad. According to Haji,

> "The Regional Command of the Ba'ath Party in Iraq divided the country into five sections: The South; Middle; Medium Euphrates, Baghdad and Northern Bureau in Kirkuk. Saddam Hussein appointed a member of the Regional Leadership Council of the Ba'ath Party as the General Secretary for each Bureau. The first General Secretary for Northern Bureau was Sa'di Mahdi Saleh. He was also a member of RCC. This would give him more power over other intelligence and security apparatus to rule the region with a fist of iron."[32]

7.7   Deportation, Village Destruction & Complexes

The deportation process in a Kurdish political dictionary is defined as deporting inhabitants of villages and towns forcefully from their places and settling them in other places away from their place of origin. Iraq chose certain places around the main cities in the plains areas to settle the deportees. There were three types of deportation or in other words there were three reasons for deporting Kurds from their villages and towns in Iraq. Some villages were deported for their 'strategic location', while there were other villages where residents were deported because they were located close to oil fields. The final and the largest campaign included those village residents who were deported for 'security reasons', as the Iraqis claimed. The Ba'th regime started deportation process as part of their Arabization campaign from the early 1960s. Mass deportation began in 1963, then 1977 as part of the Algiers Accord, following the collapse of the movement. The third

---

[32] Shorsh Haji Resool, *Anfal – Kurdu Dawlati Iraq (Kurdish), Anfal – The Kurds and the Iraqi State* (London: Dar al-Hikma, 2003), 56.

largest deportation campaign was after the collapse of negotiation between the PUK and Iraq in 1985 until the appointment of Ali Hassan al-Majid. The fourth largest campaign occurred from March 1987 until the end of Anfal campaign on 6 September 1988. According to Amin Mineh,

> "The purpose of the deportation policy in Italy and France in North Africa and the Americans in Vietnam was solely for military purpose and to isolate the guerrilla forces in those countries. However, the same policy by the Ba'th regime in Iraq was for that purpose as well as a chauvinist intention to frame the Kurds in Iraq and try to assimilate Kurds into an Iraqi Arabic identity. Deportation policy was one of the Ba'th regime's pillars in their strategic policy against the Kurds. It is little wonder that when they seized power in 1963, they immediately started deportation and Arabization of Kurdish villages close to the oil fields of Kirkuk, Diala and Erbil. When they returned to power again in 1968 they continued the policy they started in 1963. They planned this policy very carefully and spent billions of Iraqi Dinars to implement it."[33]

Early in 1977, Iraq started deporting the villages close to the border with Iran, Turkey and Syria. This campaign was part of the Algiers agreement between Saddam Hussein and Mohammed Reza Shah. S Resool confirms that "Iraq destroyed and deported 1242 villages during this campaign."[34]

People of those villages were forced to settle in complexes in the plains, close to the cities and towns (but away from their original homes). The villagers lost their jobs and skills in cultivation, livestock and farming and were not allowed to go back to their villages. Instead they were given substantial amount of money as compensation without offering any opportunity to work or invest their cash. N Amin concludes that "on 21st August 1976, Saddam Hussein laid down the Iraqi government's policy regarding destroying all of the Kurdish villages located within 20 kilometers beltway on the border with Iran, Syria and Turkey. In his speech to the Iraqi Parliament he admitted that they

---

[33] Amin Mineh, *Stratigi Amni Iraq - Sekuchkai Ba'sian Tarheel u Ta'reeb u Tab'ees (Kurdish), Iraq's Strategic Security – Ba'th Party's Trine* (Slemani: Wazarati Roshnbiri, 1999), Ba'th Party144-145.

[34] Shorsh Resool, *Destruction of a Nation* (New York: Zahawi Publishing, 1990), 115-125.

would go ahead with that strategy as part of their agreement with Iran and to eliminate any chance of a Kurdish armed struggle."[35]

The deportation process has become a major phenomenon in Iraqi Kurdistan, and members of almost every village were subjected to deportation at some point during 1961-2003 by the Ba'th regime. One of the main purposes of the deportation process in Iraqi Kurdistan was to change the demography there and reduce the presence of the Kurds as the government Arabized most of those regions. According to Haji,

> "The Iraqi government started deporting the residents of villages on the
> border between Iraq and neighboring Iran, Syria and Turkey at the beginning
> of 1977. It evacuated all the villages within a 10-20 mile zone. Deporting
> those villages was different from that of the strategic places and the oil fields.
> The Iraqi regime destroyed all the villages, dynamited water wells and
> springs and cut down all the trees in the forests and orchards. This was to
> eliminate any chance of residents thinking to return to their destroyed villages
> in the future. The regime did not have any plan to facilitate the change in the
> lives of farmers their and working style. Destroying those villages and
> conglomerating the villagers in settlement complexes was similar to the steps
> implemented later by Ali Hassan al-Majid prior to the start of Anfal
> campaign. The regime took such a drastic policy for a number of purposes: 1)
> to deprive the farmers from their economically independent employment and
> to force them to rely on the regime for their living. 2) To mobilize the
> villagers to fight the Kurdish movement. 3) To eliminate them later after the
> other scattered groups were dealt with."[36]

Hundreds of villages were wiped from the map in all the governorates of Iraqi Kurdistan within one to two years. Human Rights Watch confirms that "government statisticians provided Human Rights Watch/Middle East with figures for Suleimanyeh. The 1977 census had counted 1877 villages in Suleimanyeh; by the time of 1987 census, this

---

[35] Noshirwan M Amin, *La Kanari Danoubawa bo Xri Nawzang (Kurdish) – From the Danaube Shore to the Nawzang Valley* (Berlin: Postfach, 1997), 79.

[36] Shorsh Haji Resool, *Anfal – Kurdu Dawlati Iraq (Kurdish), Anfal – The Kurds and the Iraqi State* (London: Dar al-Hikma, 2003), 36-37.

number was down to just 186. Almost, 1700 villages had been disappeared from the official map."[37]

Village destruction policy took a different dimension after the Northern Bureau (NB) of the Ba'th Party was opened in Kirkuk. According to Haji,

> "On 29th June 1985, Sa'di Mahdi Saleh, the first General Secretary of the Northern Bureau of the Ba'th Party in Kirkuk, issued directive number 4684 which included a number of directives. He instructed all of the military and security units and apparatus to: 1. Impose an economic blockade on the villages – food and petrol were not allowed to reach the villages and the farmers' products must not be allowed into the towns and cities. 2. Withdraw all schools, medical centers and any other government offices in all villages. 3. Cut off electricity, water and all other services from the villages."[38]

Despite those directives and village destruction campaign, the Iraqi government could not uproot the resistance as they had announced and planned for. Ultimately, they placed the blame on the performance of Sa'di Mahdi Saleh and the way he implemented the orders. Not surprisingly, on July 1985, Mohammed Hamza al-Zubeidi was appointed as the General Secretary of the NB. Resool argues that "every time the Iraqi government failed to implement 100% of its policy it was looking for a scapegoat to blame. In the case of their failed effort to uproot the Kurdish resistance, they blamed the General Secretary of the Northern Bureau of Ba'th Party for it. Therefore, in July 1985, the Iraqi regime appointed Mohammed Hamza al-Zubeidi as the General Secretary of the NB in Kirkuk."[39]

Al-Zubeidi introduced some new and tougher measures to accomplish the aims. He went further and declared all the villages as "Prohibited Areas" and issued directives to army units to destroy any village they come across in their attacks on the Peshmerga forces. Al-Zubeidi insisted on toughening the economic blockade. According to Resool,

---

[37] Human Rights Watch/Middle East, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide – The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 59.

[38] Shorsh Haji Resool, *Anfal – Kurdu Dawlati Iraq (Kurdish), Anfal – The Kurds and the Iraqi State* (London: Dar al-Hikma, 2003), 209.

[39] Resool, *Anfal – Kurdu Dawlati*, 57.

"On 12th August 1985, al-Zubeidi laid out his plans 'to restore peace and stability in Iraqi Kurdistan', during his public meeting in Duhok. He declared the villages and areas outside the main towns and cities as 'Prohibited Areas'. This was followed immediately by an economic blockade on the villages. No food or petrol was allowed to reach the villages and no products of the farmers were allowed to reach the towns and the cities. He issued directives to expel the families of Peshmerga to the 'Prohibited Areas'. Al-Zubeidi ordered the army to randomly bomb all the villages; The Iraqi Air force also started using fixed wing fighter jets to bomb the villages. He urged villagers to leave their villages and to move to the complexes designated to house the villagers. Then he started another vicious military campaign against the villages and on the Peshmerga."[40]

The village destruction campaign continued well into the weeks leading up to the Anfal campaign. Army units attacked the 'Prohibited Areas' almost daily. They were accompanied by army engineering units, which had bulldozers and explosives to destroy any village they come across on their way to the 'Prohibited Areas'. The Iraqi army including infantry, armored units and the Air force continued bombardment of the villages and on many occasions they uses chemical weapons in their attacks. Human Rights Watch's report confirms that "five days after the Balisan Valley's chemical attack, the infantry troops and bulldozers went to work on hundreds of villages in Iraqi Kurdistan. According to Resool's authoritative survey, the army obliterated at least 703 Kurdish villages from the map during the campaign of 1987. Of these, 219 were in the Erbil area, 122 in the hilly place known as Germian to the southeast of Kirkuk and 320 in various districts of the governorate of Suleimanyeh. Badinan, too, was hit, although less severely."[41]

Despite the vicious deportation campaign, the villagers continued to resist the Ba'thist policy. The army attacked and destroyed a number of villages on a daily basis until after the Anfal campaign, and tried to deport its inhabitants. They failed to accomplish their mission because some villagers would flee to other areas and build hamlets to live in

---

[40] Shorsh Haji Resool, *Anfal – Kurdu Dawlati Iraq (Kurdish), Anfal – The Kurds and the Iraqi State* (London: Dar al-Hikma, 2003), 59.

[41] Human Rights Watch/Middle East, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide – The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 49.

rather than accompanying army units to complexes under the control of the regime. As soon as the army units withdrew from the area, the villagers would go back to their villages and start re-building their ruined houses and hamlets. Resool declares that

> "The villagers whose villages were attacked by the Iraqi army in the second half of the 1980s split into two main groups. Most of the people fled their villages and headed to faraway villages. Soon after the army left they went back to their villages and built new hamlets around their original villages. The second group of the villagers stayed in their villages when the army units arrived. Eventually they were taken by the army to the newly setup complexes to be their permanent houses. The location of the complexes for any regions' villagers was selected according to instructions from local security headquarter (Amn)."[42]

7.8   Iran - Iraq War

The Kurdish nationalism movement had a number of opportunities to flourish in the past century. One of such opportunities was the eight long years of Iran-Iraq War. However, the Kurds could not seize these opportunities in the best possible way. Gunter states that "in September 1980 Iraq invaded Iran. After initial Iraqi successes, the war bogged down into a long stalemate and thus created tremendous potential opportunities for the Kurdish national movement in Iraq. Indeed, for much of the 1980s the Iraqi Kurds partially ruled themselves as Saddam fought for his very existence against the attacking Iranians… And the end of the war dealt another cruel blow to the Kurdish hopes."[43]

Most of the countries around the world wished for Iran to be defeated in its war with Iraq. None of the superpowers wanted Iraq to collapse at the hands of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and then to have a similar extremist Shiite regime be founded in Iraq. Therefore, Iraq received aid, support and assistance from many countries around the world in the form of technology, money, arms, and intelligence. There were some countries that wanted to see the war continue in order to drain both countries resources – Israel for example. McDowall confirms that "in December 1983, Saddam had been visited by the

---

[42] Shorsh Haji Resool, *Anfal – Kurdu Dawlati Iraq (Kurdish), Anfal – The Kurds and the Iraqi State* (London: Dar al-Hikma, 2003), 72.

[43] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 37.

US Middle East Special Envoy who informed him that the defeat of Iraq would be contrary to his government's regional interests. In the early months of 1984 this view was translated into the provision of substantial assistance by the US, and by other industrialised countries, notably the USSR and France, which also feared the destabilising consequences of an Iranian victory."[44]

The Iran-Iraq war was a double-edge sword for the Kurdish cause and movement. While the engagement of Iraq in the battlefield with Iran eased the pressure on the Kurds in general and Peshmerga forces and the villagers in particular, politically it placed the Kurdish parties in Iraq in front a difficult test and in a dilemma. They were confronted with a number of serious questions which they could not avoid. Which side of the war should they support: their enemy of Iraq against the neighboring Iran or the reactionary force of the Islamic regime, which would eventually seek establishing a similar regime in Iraq? Could they stay neutral while Iraqi Kurdistan became a battlefield between the two fighting sides? What would be the consequences of siding with the losing side? There were many questions and very few options that were discussed inside the corridors of the Kurdish parties and between various groups and parties. Not surprisingly, the Kurds were not united and did not have a charismatic leader who could unify and rally all of them to achieve a consensus. Eventually, various Kurdish parties took different positions and subsequently it led to new alliances and more factionalism amongst them. According to McDowall,

> "By September 1980 when Iraq attacked Iran, Iraqi opponents of the regime found they now had to choose allies among a plethora of fractious Kurdish groups. In mid-November various Damascus-based groups declared the establishment of an Iraqi Patriotic and Democratic Front, pledged to overthrow the Ba'th regime. The main signatories were the PUK, ICP, KSP and the pro Syrian Ba'th. The PUK was delighted to lead a front from which the KDP had been excluded. One may imagine Talabani's anger to learn that on 28th November, a rival and stronger part of ICP, and also the main part of

---

[44] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 350.

196

KSP (led by Resool Mamand) and PASOK has established a Patriotic Democratic Front with the KDP in Kurdistan, in clear opposition to PUK."[45]

The Iranian Kurdish parties faced a similar situation and had to choose between the two regimes in the war. It must be said that the Iranians had clearer view and a more direct position in that regard. The Iranian Kurdish parties had good relations with the PUK and most of the other parties except the KDP. Therefore, the view on forming an alliance with Iran against the Iranian Kurds was another reason for the factionalism amongst the Iraqi Kurds. McDowall concludes that "the KDP, under Mullah Mustafa and now under Idris, was busy harrying KDPI as quid pro quo for Iran's support. This behavior by the KDP had sickened many Kurds who felt that a cardinal principle of Kurdish struggle was that Kurds should not betray each other. On the other hand PUK, while willing to undermine the KDP, gave the KDPI its support, even assisting it defend Mahabad against Iranian forces."[46]

7.9   PUK's Seizure of Opportunity (1984 – 1985 Negotiation)

PUK had been fighting on a number of fronts for many years. It was in real confrontation with all members of the Democratic National Front (DNF) – KDP, ICP and Socialist Party on one hand and the Iraqi forces on the other hand. The PUK had placed itself in a difficult and unmanageable position by allying with the Iranian Kurds against the Iranian regime too. Similarly, the Iraqi regime was in a difficult situation – having to fight the Iranians and to worry about the new battle fronts in Iraqi Kurdistan that the Iranians intended to open. The Iranians attacked from Haji Umran and intended to open new fronts in Qaladezeh, Penjwin and Chwarta. McDowall analyzes the situation on the ground as follows:

> "Yet Iran's motives were ambiguous. On one hand its incursion was aimed against Baghdad, on the other it was aimed against KDPI and those Iraqi Kurds pre-eminently PUK, who supported it. Thus, Iran's thrust created alarm in Baghdad, which feared it might be unable to withstand a combined Iranian-Kurdish offensive. It also posed a threat to PUK which had never

---

[45] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 346.

[46] McDowall, *A Modern History of*, 346.

made much secret of its distaste for the Islamic Republic. The immediate effect of the Iranian's advance was to push PUK headquarters out of the border area and nearer Iraqi forces. Protesting the effect of Iranian 'liberation' in Chwarta and Penjwin, PUK now faced the danger of being crushed between the mill stones of Baghdad and Tehran. Quite apart from the losses incurred through internecine warfare with rival Kurdish parties or in attacks on government troops. It desperately needed a break."[47]

The Iraqi government also needed to convince the Kurds to ally with Iraq in its war against Iran or at least to somehow neutralise them. The Kurdish parties and their Peshmerga forces had engaged a large number of Iraqi Army in their fight against government forces. Also, tens of thousands of Kurds deserted the army and headed to the 'Prohibited Areas'. The Iraqi regime did not want them to fall into the hands of the Kurdish Peshmerga which would mobilise them or be recruited by the Iranians. They might have wanted to ask the Kurds to defend the Kurdish territory against the Iranian advances. In other words, they needed a pause too. McDowall states that

"Saddam's first task was to placate the Kurdish population. He had already allowed the Kurds to serve in Kurdistan rather than be deployed against Iran on the dreaded southern front. He had also tried to stem the flow of Kurdish desertion by offering an amnesty to deserters and allowing Kurdish deportees to the south back home… Saddam also needed to drive a wedge between the Kurdish rebels and Iran. Foreseeing the danger, he had put out separate feelers to the Barzani brothers, Talabani and other party leaders as early as summer 1982, when the tide had clearly turned in favour of Iran. He particularly feared the thrust along the Hamilton Road from Haji Umran to Rawanduz and towards Shaqlawa. If Shaqlawa fell, Erbil and the plain would no longer be safe."[48]

Iraq tried to agree on a ceasefire with all of the Kurdish parties and enter into negotiations with them. However, it was harder for the government to convince the KDP to abandon Iran and involve it in direct talks with Iraq for many reasons – one of which was the strong tie between the two sides and the presence of tens of thousands of KDP members and their families in Iran. Hence, they turned to Talabani to start negotiations. According to McDowall,

---

[47] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 348.

[48] McDowall, *A Modern History of*, 348.

"His negotiation with Barzani proved to be fruitless, because he was unwilling to provide the gesture of good faith the KDP demanded. Saddam may have concluded that the KDP was too closely involved with Tehran to be free to negotiate. The KDP helped in Iran's seizure of Hajj Umran was in words of one western diplomat, 'a strap in the back that Saddam will never forget.' Saddam revenged himself on the Barzani clan… Soldiers stormed the camps (Qushtapa) where the Barzani people lived at dawn seizing all males over the age of thirteen… Up to 8,000 Barzani males were removed from Qushtapa and other settlements, including jash… In December, PUK and Baghdad announced a ceasefire. This would allow negotiations to establish a government of national unity that would include the ICP and PUK.[49]

The PUK sought to take advantage of the opportunity that had arisen from this attempt for a ceasefire. They also wanted to show the Kurdish people and other Kurdish parties that they were seriously engaged in negotiations to achieve some Kurdish national rights while waiting to see the outcome of the war on the front lines. The PUK realised the scale of criticism they endured by announcing a ceasefire and entering negotiations with Saddam without the approval of the other parties. McDowall elaborates by stating that

"The PUK's demands were primarily (I) an extension of the autonomous region to include Kirkuk, Khanaqin, Jabal Sinjar and Mandali, (ii) a halt to Arabization of disputed areas and the unfettered return of displaced Kurds, (iii) the removal of the cordon solitaires along the Iranian and Turkish borders; the allocation of 30 percent of oil revenue to the development of Kurdistan, (iv) security to be the responsibility of a formally constituted Peshmerga forces, (v) the release of political prisoners, (vi) the dissolution of the 20,000 or so jash."[50]

The Iraqi regime was a master in negotiation games and tactics with regard to the Kurds. They would pretend that they were willing to listen to any thing. Once the serious talks started and were made public then they change their tone and start playing the game. Gunter argues that "at first Iraq seemingly agreed to alter the autonomy law in favour of the Kurds and to extend it to other areas. Although PUK came under heavy criticism from the Democratic National Patriotic Front, as well as the KDP for dealing with Baghdad, it replied that the cease-fire offered was a necessary breathing space and a chance to

---

[49] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 349.

[50] McDowall, *A Modern History of*, 350.

achieve longstanding Kurdish goals. It is doubtful, however, that either Baghdad or PUK viewed their negotiations as anything more than a way to gain time."[51]

Kirkuk was one of the major points of debate between the PUK and the government. The PUK aimed to achieve what Barzani failed to while Saddam insisted on not giving up Kirkuk. Obviously, they did not agree on every other issue discussed between them either. McDowall argues that "Saddam dragged his feet for there were issues on which he was not ready to compromise. One of these was the fate of Kirkuk. If Saddam yielded Kirkuk, then Talabani would indeed have outdone Mullah Mustafa. But Saddam could hardly cede the core of Iraq's productive wealth. Do not insist on Kirkuk being a Kurdish town and we shall not insist on it not being Kurdish,' Saddam reportedly told Talabani."[52]

Once Saddam was sure that Western and Eastern countries would not allow Iran to triumph in the war against Iraq, he decided that he did not need the Kurds anymore. He originally initiated the negotiation as a tactical step to neutralise the Kurds and perhaps to engage them in his fighting against Iran. McDowall confirms that "assured of sufficient assistance to save off defeat, Saddam no longer needed to make concessions to the Kurds."[53]

The PUK and the Iraqi regime still needed to continue negotiations, but it soon collapsed without any achievement. Although they were desperate to have a ceasefire, the Ba'th Party was not ready to respond to their demands, and the PUK was not ready to fulfil its obligation in terms of defending the regime. It was widely thought that Turkey played a major role in persuading Iraq not to make any compromises with the Kurds. According to McDowall,

> "Both sides were reluctant to return to conflict. For a moment in October it even seemed to PUK that an agreement was close. But that month the Turkish foreign minister visited Baghdad and, so PUK believed, warned that any agreement between Baghdad and PUK would lead to the closure of Iraq's

---

[51] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 39.

[52] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 350.

[53] McDowall, *A Modern History of*, 350.

sole oil outlet through Turkey. At any rate, the ceasefire collapsed and PUK returned to the battlefield in January 1985. For Baghdad, the ceasefire had been useful. While it lasted, it had been able to transfer four of the six divisions from Kurdistan to the southern front."[54]

On 23rd January 1985, Sa'di Mahdi Saleh, the then general secretary of Northern Bureau of Ba'th Party, ordered a group of Kurdish collaborators (jash) to entice Mama Reesha, a legendary PUK commander in Kirkuk area to assassinate him. They implemented the plot very carefully and murdered him. This happened while PUK was officially engaged in negotiation with the regime in Baghdad. It reminded the Kurds about the failed attempt to assassin Mustafa Barzani in 1971 while the KDP was negotiating with the Ba'th Party. The first thing he did was the assassination of Mama Reesha, a legendary PUK commander in Kirkuk and Germian area.

On 15 February, the PUK ended its negotiation by attacking and capturing a number of army posts and bases in Suleimanyeh region.

---

[54] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 351.

8.   Tragedy and Triumph (1985 – 1991)

8.1   Kurds Organizing their Home – Iraqi Kurdistan Front

The new situation following the collapse of the PUK – Ba'th Party negotiations placed the PUK under tremendous responsibility. Tareq Aziz, the deputy Prime Minister warned a PUK delegation that they would use anything in their possession to bring the PUK and the Kurdish movement to their knees if the negotiation failed because they did not support Iraq in its war with Iran.

The PUK had an uphill battle in terms of reconciliation with the other Kurdish parties and the Islamic Republic of Iran. What made the situation worse was that the PUK needed a source for weapons and aid, as well as a corridor to the outside world and both had to be Iran. The PUK leadership tried to make some contacts with the Kurdish parties – including the KDP – through some mediators before their negotiation with Saddam reached a deadlock. Fierce fighting, intensive attacks, and counter attacks were expected between the PUK and the Iraqi forces following the collapse of the negotiation. Each side would try to prove to the other side how much they had lost by failing to reach an agreement. According to McDowall,

> "The PUK faced severely strained circumstances. It had already forfeited the support of Syria and Libya by its talks with Iraq. Its conflict with its rivals had deepened with its betrayal, as these rivals saw it, of the struggle against Saddam… While the KDP and PUK continued to denounce each other, there was a growing realisation that they could hardly afford such internecine conflict. Even as Talabani had been negotiating with Baghdad at the end of 1983 in fact, some Kurdish intellectuals had started trying to bring about reconciliation between the two parties. This began a process of dialogue which, behind the public utter criticism, led to the eventual joint declaration of the KDP, PUK, KSP and ICO in 1986 calling for unity against the regime… Talabani also made his peace with Ali Akbar Rafsanjani, then Iranian Parliamentary speaker, undertaking to cease assisting the KDPI. By 1986, the PUK, like the KDP, was receiving weapons and financial support from Iran in order to draw Iraqi troops away from the southern front where Tehran still hoped to break through to Basra and bring the war to a triumphant conclusion."[1]

---

[1] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 351.

Soon Iran realised that the PUK had cut every tie with Iraq and was engaged in fierce fighting against Iraqi forces in Erbil, Kirkuk and Suleimanyeh governorates (Soran region) while the KDP was engaged in major battles in Duhok governorate (Badinan region). Hence, Iran wanted establish very close relations with its old ally, the KDP as well as, the PUK because it would benefit its strategy in the war with Iraq. Nevertheless, Talabani and Barzani met face to face in Tehran for the first time in many years. This was the beginning of a real reconciliation between the two fighting sides. McDowall elaborates "in November 1986 Masoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani finally met in Tehran in order to form a coalition. It was ironic that Kurdish co-operation was achieved under the aegis of a regional government dedicated to the frustration of Kurdish national aspirations. In February 1987, the KDP and PUK issued a joint statement announcing their intention to strive to form a Kurdistan National Front."[2]

The Kurdish parties and people of Iraqi Kurdistan alike realised the importance of an united front to face the dangers that were coming from the Ba'th regime. This was another example of growth of Kurdish nationalism as the main leading parties in Kurdish national struggle healed their wounds and established new relations to achieve their national goals. Iraq responded to the new relations between the PUK and KD by intensifying its Arabization campaign in and around the city of Kirkuk. It also started a vicious campaign of village destruction and heavy attacks on the villages. Iraq made its intention clear to eradicate the Kurds by appointing Ali Hassan al-Majid as the general secretary of Northern Bureau of Ba'th Party in Kirkuk to 'implement RCC and Ba'th Party leadership's policy in the north of Iraq'. Ali Hasan al-Majid's first beacon to the Kurds was the use of chemical weapons against the civilian Kurds. The chemical attacks left no doubt about the intention of the Ba'th Party to eliminate the Kurds. The chemical attacks resulted in a wave of panic and horror amongst the villagers and Peshmerga forces. The new development put the Kurdish leadership in a very serious position to meet their national obligations, to bury their differences, and to prepare themselves to protect their people from the danger that was coming from Baghdad. A positive outcome from such a drastic situation was the formation of the Iraqi Kurdistan Front (IKF) in May 1987 to include the PUK, KDP, KSP, KPDP, PASOK, Assyrian Democratic Movement, The Toilers' Party and the ICP. McDowall states that "in May1987, these intentions became reality with the formation of a Iraqi Kurdistan Front

---

[2] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 351.

composed of the five-foremost Kurdish groups, the KDP, PUK, KSP, KPDP, PASOK, The Toilers' Party, ICP and the Assyrian Democratic Movement. A joint command was established to oversee the political and military activities."[3]

With every anti-Kurdish measure by the Ba'thists, the Kurds reacted by enhancing their position and organizing themselves to face the new challenges. The IKF was a necessity for all Kurdish parties at that critical time to abandon their differences and work together to protect their nation and lead the struggle for their national rights. The IKF was a response to the demands of the people and the situation. The foundation of IKF ended the internal fighting and the tense relations between various rival parties, but it fell short of unifying the Peshmerga force, finance, logistic and diplomatic affairs. According to N Amin,

> "Although the foundation for the Iraqi Kurdistan Front was laid before Anfal, the actual work of Iraqi Kurdistan Front materialized after the Anfal operations. It was an organization for cooperation between various parties and exchanging views on different political matters. It did not become an organization that could unite the fighting forces (Peshmerga), finance, media and diplomatic affairs of the people of Iraqi Kurdistan. Every party member of the Front had its own organization structure, Peshmerga, media, financial system and was free to support itself through any means it saw as appropriate. Every party had its own representative abroad and was free to make diplomatic relations with any regional or international power. Decision making in the Iraqi Kurdistan Front had to be unanimous, i.e. every party had the right of veto to block any decision."[4]

Therefore, at the time when the Ba'th Party was committing genocide against the Kurds, and the Iraqi army was using chemical weapons against the civilian Kurds, the Kurdish leadership showed a degree of wisdom and were trying to heal their wounds, cement the gap between them, and bypass their differences. Kurdish nationalism grew stronger as the Ba'th Party intensified its efforts to destroy the Kurds' determination to protect themselves and fight for their national rights.

---

[3] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 352.

[4] Noshirwan Mustafa Amin, "Mufawazati Barai Kurdistani u Ba'th la 1991 (Kurdish), Negotiations of 1991 Between the Iraqi Kurdistan Front and the Ba'th Party", *Rozhnama,* February 25, 2008, 10th series.

8.2   Ali Hassan al-Majid

Ali Hasan al-Majid was a cousin of Saddam Hussein and came from the same village of Aujeh. He was originally a policeman, but was supported and promoted by Saddam Hussein. Al-Majid held a number of senior posts in the party and the government before he took his most senior post. He was a member of the RCC and a member of the Iraq's Regional Command of Ba'th Party. On 16th March 1987 the RCC issued decree number 160 to appoint Ali Hassan al-Majid as the General Secretary of the Northern Bureau of Ba'th Party in Kirkuk. The decree carried the name and signature of Saddam Hussein. This was the beginning of a new era for the Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan in general and for the villagers and rural areas in particular. In its report, Human Rights Watch published the decree as follows:

> "In accordance with the provisions of article 42, paragraph (a), and article 43, paragraph (a), of the constitution, and in order to execute what was decided in the joint meeting of the RCC and the regional command of the Ba'th Party on 18/3/1987, The RCC decided in its meeting on 29/3/1987 the following: First: Comrade Ali Hassan al-Majid, member of the Regional Command of the Ba'th Party, will represent the Regional Command of the Party and the Revolutionary Command Council in implementing their policies in all of the northern region, including the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan, in order to protect security and order and guarantee stability and the implementation of the autonomy law in the region. Second: Comrade [al-Majid], member of the Regional Command, will have the authority over all the state's civil, military and security apparatuses to carry out the decree, in particular the authorities of National Security Council and the Northern Affairs Committee. Third: The following authorities in the northern region fall under the comrade's authority and must implement all the decisions and directives issued by him, as by this order: 1. The Executive committee of the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan. 2. The governors and the heads of administrative units under the ministry of local government. 3. The foreign intelligence apparatus, the internal security force, and military intelligence. 4. The Commands of Popular Army. Fourth: The military commands in the region must respond to the comrade, member of the regional command, concerning everything pertaining to the first paragraph of this decision Signature   Saddam Hussein   Revolutionary Command Council President."[5]

---

[5] Human Rights Watch/Middle East, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide – The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 296.

8.3   Prelude to Genocide

8.3.1   Chemical Attacks

The appointment of Ali Hassan al-Majid, member of the Regional Command of the Ba'ath Party, can be considered as the turning point in the Ba'th Party's policy against the Kurds. He was sent to Kurdistan to implement the 'Ba'th's ideology and policy.' The Iraqi media referred to solving the Kurdish problem once and for all. Al-Majid knew why he was sent and his mission was very clear for him. The Ba'th Party, often selective in expressing their views about the Kurds, never admitted its true policy towards the Kurds in public. In his mission, al-Majid said that he came to implement the 'Autonomy Law' and to 'bring back security and peace.' Resool confirms that "according to the decree number 160, Ali Hassan al-Majid had all of the authority of Saddam Hussein in Iraqi Kurdistan. He was given the power to direct and order the military, first and fifth corps, jash forces, popular army and all security apparatuses in Iraqi Kurdistan to implement the Ba'ath leadership's policy and accomplish his mission. His mission was to eradicate the rural Kurds and uproot Peshmerga forces from Iraqi Kurdistan. A copy of this decree was sent to every office, army unit and security apparatus in Kurdistan."[6]

The Ba'thist plan became obvious. The Kurdish group who first showed their complete rejection to the homogenization of Iraq and its Arabic identity were specified to be rural Kurds. By now, rural Kurds were considered the subordinate group who refused homogenization, and therefore, they needed to be excluded and then to be eliminated. Al-Majid's first step was to uproot the Peshmerga forces so that he could accomplish his next step, elimination of the rural Kurds.

According to the language of the Genocide Convention, the Iraqi regime's aim had been to destroy the Kurds in part and it had done so with intention. Intent and act were combined in the implementation of Ba'ath Party policy against the Kurds. The Iraqi government, and through the planning and its implementation by Ali Hassan al-Majid, followed the same pattern that the Nazi Germany did in Holocaust. Human Rights Watch's report states that "as Raul Hilberg observes in his monumental history of the Holocaust that: There is only one way in which a scattered

---

[6] Shorsh Haji Resool, *Anfal – Kurdu Dawlati Iraq (Kurdish), Anfal – The Kurds and the Iraqi State*, (London: Dar al-Hikma, 2003), 69.

group can effectively be destroyed. Three steps are organic in the operation: Definition → Concentration → Annihilation. The Kurdish genocide of 1987-1988, with Anfal campaign as its centre piece fits Hilberg's paradigm to perfection."[7]

Ali Hassan al-Majid clearly defined his mission and he drew up a road map to implement the Iraqi leadership's policy in Kurdistan. He also made his intention clear to everyone he met after his appointment as the Secretary General of the Northern Bureau of the Ba'th Party. His mission was to destroy the rural areas of Iraqi Kurdistan and to kill all its inhabitants. Joost Hiltermann confirms that "no one expressed his intention better than al-Majid himself. In a speech to the party faithful in 1987 he warned that no one in the rural Kurdistan would be spared, not even the allied Mustashars and their followers if they failed to leave their villages: I told the Mustashars that they might say they like their villages and that they won't leave. I told them: I cannot let your village stay. I will attack it with chemical weapons. Then you and your family will die. You must leave right now."[8]

Ali Hassan al-Majid ordered the use of chemical weapons against Kurdish people for the first time in the history of Iraq. On 14 April 1987, the Iraqi air force attacked the villages of Bargalou and Sargalou in Suleimanyeh governorate with Chemical weapons. This was followed by another air attack the following day on the villages of Sheikh Wassan and Balisan near the town of Khalifan – Erbil. This attack resulted in the killing of 324 men, women and children and the wounding of hundreds more. The wounded villagers were transferred to Erbil for treatment by their relatives, but were never seen again. According to McDowall,

> "Al-Majid was vested with virtually absolute powers which he soon used. Within 24 hours of the PUK's capture of positions in the Dukan valley near Suleimanyeh in April, al Majid responded with chemical attacks on Kurdish villages in Balisan valley, where PUK regional command was also located. Following the muffled explosion of gas canisters, white, grey, and pinkish smoke drifted across the villages, accompanied by a smell of apples and garlic, in the words of one survivor… Survivors who sought medical attention in Erbil were seized, taken away and all

---

[7] Human Rights Watch/Middle East, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide – The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 4-5.

[8] Joost Hiltermann, *Poisonous Affair – America, Iraq, and the Gassing of Halabja* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 95.

males executed, a practice that became routine as the regime began to extirpate Kurdish village society."[9]

Other chemical attacks on other villages and regions of Kurdistan continued. The following chemical attacks are confirmed by HRW and other organizations: Bargalou and Sargalou on 14 April 1987; Sheikh Wassan and Balisan on 15 April 1987; Haladen, Yakhsamar and Bargalou on 7 May 1987; Malakan & Beleh on 27 May 1987; Ja'afaran, Takia, Qaradagh and Balakagar on 26 May 1987.

On 20 June 1987 Ali al-Majid issued the infamous order number 4008, which was considered as gospel for dealing with anyone found in the 'Prohibited Areas' (areas outside the towns and cities of Iraqi Kurdistan) at that time and during the Anfal campaign later.

According to Human Rights Watch's report, order number 4008 states briefly that:

> "1. All the villages in which the saboteurs – the agents of Iran [PUK], the offspring of treason [KDP], and similar traitors to Iraq – are still to be found shall be regarded as prohibited for security reasons. 2. The presence of human beings and animals is completely prohibited in these areas and shall be regarded as operational zone and troops can open fire at will without any restriction. 3. Travel to and from those zones are completely prohibited. 4. The Corps Commands shall carry out random bombardment using artillery, helicopters, and aircrafts at all times of the day or night in order to kill the largest number of persons present in those 'Prohibited Areas'. 5. All persons captured in those villages shall be detained because of their presence there, and they shall be interrogated by the security services, and those between the ages of 15 – 70 must be executed after obtaining any useful information. 6. Those who surrender to the government or party authorities shall be interrogated by the competent agencies for a maximum period of three days, which may be extended to ten days if necessary…7. Everything seized by fighters (jash) and soldiers are considered theirs to keep with the exception of heavy, mounted and medium weapons."[10]

Iraq intensified its attacks on the villages. The number of known villages that were destroyed by the Iraqi regime before Anfal was 1,648 (This figure does not include the villages that were destroyed in 1977 on the Iraq-Iran border following the Algiers Accord - SR).

---

[9] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 353.

[10] Human Rights Watch/Middle East, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide – The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 55.

8.3.2   1987 Census

Arab nationalists (the Ba'th Party, in this case) tried to impose Iraq's Arab identity on the non-Arabs of Iraq and anyone refusing such a trend would be excluded. The Ba'ath leaders legitimated their decision in excluding the rural Kurds during the 1987 census when they were prevented from going to registration centers in towns and cities under the control of the state. They also barred census officials from traveling to the villages to register villagers. Hence, they lost their Iraqi citizenship, according to another decree from the Revolutionary Command Council. Heather Rae states that "the civilizing process is thus the concentration of violence under the control of state, where it is used to guard the perimeters of national community and the condition of social order. Bauman emphasizes how this carries a potential for the state to turn on its own subjects or citizens, and how this can play a role in the constitution of corporate identity within the state, as political elites define those who belong within its boundaries and those who are 'strangers' to be expelled or annihilated."[11]

Excluding villagers from Iraq's general census was one of the most critical policies that Ali Hassan al-Majid implemented, and it stripped rural Kurdish populations of their citizenship following their inability to register in the general census of October 1987. Iraq's general census was designed to be held once in a decade, the most recent one held before the Anfal operation having been held in 1977.

Ba'th Party leaders paid particular attention to the 1987 census because it would pave the way to excluding the Kurds who refused to accept the Arabic identity of Iraqi state and legitimate their elimination and would be able to reap the results of the Ba'th Party's Arabization process in Kirkuk and other Kurdish disputed areas. According to Rae,

> "The Northern Bureau Command ordered that mass seminars and administrative meetings shall be organized to discuss the importance of the general census, scheduled to take place on 17 October 1987. It shall be clearly emphasized that any person who fails to participate in the census without a valid excuse shall lose their Iraqi citizenship. They shall also be regarded as army deserters and as such shall be subject to the terms of the Revolutionary Command Council decree 677 of 26 August

---

[11] Heather Rae*, State Identities and the Homogenization of People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 33.

1987. The importance of this provision can scarcely be overstated. For RCC decree 677 stipulated that the death sentence shall be carried out by party organizations, after due verification, on any army deserters who are arrested. Failure to register under the census, in other words, could in itself be tantamount to the death penalty."[12]

By the day of the census, 17th October 1987, most of Iraqi government's plans had been accomplished, regarding the elimination of those who refused the Arabic identity of Iraq. Resool confirms that "the rural Kurds were not registered during the census because 1. No census official would have been able to travel to the rural area because it was declared 'Prohibited Areas'. 2. From 21st June 1987 and according to document no. 3650 of 3rd June 1987 no one should have been living in their villages. Anyone found present in those areas must have been killed."[13]

After completion of the census on 17th October 1987, the Ba'th Party pursued a strict policy towards the Kurdish villagers. Human Rights Watch's report confirms that "on 18th October, the day after the census, Taher Tawfiq, Secretary of the RCC's Northern Affairs Committee, issued a memorandum to all "Security Committees"'[14] in Kurdistan reminding them that aerial inspection would ensure that directive 4008 was being carried out. "Any committee that fails to comply would bear full responsibility."[15]

After the census was held, all villagers in Iraqi Kurdistan must have lost their Iraqi citizenship in the eyes of the Iraqi authorities - and become subject to the decree number 677. They would also be dealt with according to directive number 4008, especially paragraph five. Moreover, those who would be found in those areas, which were declared operational zones, would be treated as spies/traitors while the country was at war. Now that the area was identified and the people were defined then their presence in their villages were declared unjustified and illegal. The next step

---

[12] Heather Rae, *State Identities and the Homogenization of People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 56.

[13] Shorsh Haji Resool Anfal – Kurdu Dawlati Iraq (Kurdish),(Anfal – The Kurds and the Iraqi State (London: Dar al-Hikma, 2003), 79.

[14] Each town/city had a Security Committee, which was composed of representatives from: Security police directorate, Ba'ath Party headquarters, army unit, military intelligence and the governor of the town/city.

[15] Human Rights Watch/Middle East, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide – The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 59.

would obviously be forcing them into concentration camps and eliminating them. This would clearly lead to the next step – the start of the Anfal campaign. Human Rights Watch's report confirms that

> "Under this bitter regime, the inhabitants of the 'Prohibited Areas' struggled to survive. During Ali Hassan al-Majid's first eight months in office, the ground work for a final solution of Iraq's Kurdish problem had been laid. Its logic was apparent; its chain of command was set in place. But the events of 1987 were just a preliminary step, a former Istikhbarat officer explained, because the war was still going on. The Iraqi government was not so strong and many troops were tied up on the front. They postponed the anger and hate in their hearts, but only until the beginning of 1988, when the major winter offensive that Baghdad had feared failed to materialize and Iran's fortunes on the battlefield began rapidly to decline."[16]

8.4   Anfal Campaign

Definition: According to Human Rights Watch's report, "Anfal, the spoil, is the name of the eighth *Sura* (verse) of the Qur'an. It is also the name given by the Iraqis to a series of military operations that lasted from 23rd February to 6 September 1988."[17] It reminds the Kurds of one of the darkest days in their recent history. The Anfal was planned by the Ba'th Party leadership in Baghdad and was implemented under the command of the notorious murderer, Ali Hassan al-Majid. The Iraqi government proudly gave this name to a series of horrific attacks carried out by the Iraqi army against the Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan from 23rd February – 6th September 1988. It lasted 197 days to cover the entire geographical area of Iraqi Kurdistan and was completed in eight stages.

The Anfal campaign was part of the Ba'th Party's determination to remove any obstacle in front of the homogenization of Iraq into an exclusive Arabic identity. They had the authority, through the centralized administration, to legitimize their actions. The Ba'th Party labeled the Kurds traitors for rejecting the Arabic identity of the state of Iraq. They accomplished their plan in stages. First, they were able to do so by targeting Kurds in rural areas before eliminating the entire Kurdish population who refused any Ba'thist policies. Saddam Hussein proudly named

---

[16] Human Rights Watch/Middle East, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide – The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 60.

[17] Human Rights Watch/Middle East, *Iraq's Crime of*, 60.

this campaign Anfal to falsely give himself the role of Prophet Mohammed in his war against the 'infidels' – in this case the Kurds.

The appointment of Ali Hassan al-Majid was a prelude to the Anfal operation. The well-known and repeated use of chemical weapons before and during the Anfal leaves no doubt about the intention of the Ba'th regime towards rural Kurds. Romano argues that "the gassing of villages such as Halabja was only incidental to a more organized, sinister, and less visible campaign begun in February of 1988, however. Saddam named the campaign al - Anfal and appointed his cousin Ali Hassan al-Majid to pursue a large-scale Iraqi government campaign, carefully planned and executed, to exterminate a sizable portion of Iraq's Kurdish minority. Saddam's attempt at genocide consisted of eight Anfal operations."[18]

The word Anfal entered the Kurdish political dictionary on 19 March 1988 when the Commander of the First Anfal operation, Lt. General Sultan Hashem, announced in his telegraph to Saddam Hussein the end of the operation to capture the headquarters of the PUK's political bureau. He mentioned the word Anfal in his message as the name of the operation. It is worth noting that the name of the first attack on PUK headquarters in Jafati valley was also Anfal. The second stage of the attacks on Qaradagh area which followed the first stage was called the Second Anfal and the attack on Germian was called the Third Anfal, and so on. The statement of completion of each stage of Anfal was published in official Iraqi government media.

Ever since these events, the people of Iraqi Kurdistan use the word Anfal to express the meaning of elimination, eradication, annihilation or destruction. If a person talks about something that has been completely destroyed or a group of people who have vanished or if an armed group was to kill innocent people, it would be referred to in Kurdish literature as being 'Anfaled.'

---

[18] David Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 200.

8.4.1 FIRST ANFAL[19] - Jafati Valley (23 February – 19 March 1988)

The first Anfal was aimed at PUK Political Bureau headquarters in Jafati valley. Iraq started the campaign by targeting the PUK headquarters for the following reasons:

- To destroy the Peshmerga force by killing and wounding the maximum number as most of PUK forces were ordered by the PUK leadership to defend the area.

- To demoralize Peshmerga forces in other areas of Kurdistan and to deal a large psychological blow to their followers by capturing their leadership headquarters and perhaps in the process kill or capture some of their leaders and this would be a big psychological blow.

- To destroy communication between the leadership and other centers of command and Peshmerga forces and create chaos among them.

- Ultimately to facilitate the completion of the campaign in other areas for the government and reduce resistance from the Kurds by first destroying their main headquarters and killing, arresting, or dispersing their leadership.

The target area of First Anfal was Jafati valley in Suleimanyeh governorate and the surrounding hills, mountains and villages. It bordered the towns of Dukan, Bengrd, and Mawat, the river Zab, the complex of Kareza the Azmar Mountain, the city of Suleimanyeh, and the villages of Suseh and Surdash. The Iraqi army attacked the area from nine different directions.

The first Anfal started in the early morning of 23 February 1988 with heavy conventional and chemical bombardment of the area from all the main operation centers, namely Dukan, Suseh, Suleimanyeh, Kareza and Bengrd. The army units started to advance to their targets under the cover of heavy bombardment. The heavy bombardment by artillery, rocket launchers and aircrafts continued for more than three weeks until the end of this stage. A large number of Peshmerga and villagers were killed and wounded during this stage of Anfal. According to the

---

[19] The Iraqi government called this stage of the campaign Anfal without any number being attached to it. But when the other stages of Anfal were called Second, and Third, then it makes sense to call this stage First Anfal.

PUK, they estimated the number of Peshmerga and villagers were killed to be 220 and more than 600 injured.

The Peshmerga forces were committed to defending the area vigorously, but fighting intensified day after day with additional Iraqi troops and fresh reinforcements continually joining the fight. Naturally, the Peshmerga forces did not have any re-enforcements, as most of the fighting force of the PUK was engaged in the battle. Moreover, the number of casualties in the ranks of Peshmerga was increasing and their stock of ammunition was running out. The PUK forces were mostly a mobile force and had not engaged in conventional warfare before. They were not trained to do so anyway. Therefore, although the Iraqi army inflicted heavy losses as well, the balance began changing dramatically in favor of the attacking forces.

The PUK's politburo realized that they would not be able to defend the area indefinitely, so they began moving some of their forces to set up other temporary headquarters, closer the Iranian border. They also asked the villagers and the families of Peshmerga who lived in the area to leave before the Iraqi army captured the only safe corridor to Iran in Gojar and Galala mountains and negotiated with the Iranian government to accommodate civilian and Peshmerga families who wished to go to Iran. The vast majority of the villagers and Peshmerga families left their homes and their belongings and headed towards Iran in the snowy mountains of Asos and Zheelwan. Tens of elderly people and children froze to death, their bodies simply left in the snow. Thousands of livestock, goat, sheep, cattle and horses also froze to death.

The PUK leadership considered opening another front to ease pressure on Jafati area, but the only other Peshmerga force was made up of only a few hundred Peshmerga in the area of Halabja. They asked the Iranian government to give some logistical support, in case those Peshmerga decided to engage in an operation in the town of Halabja and the surrounding areas. The Peshmerga of the PUK, Socialist Party and KDP attacked Halabja, and within few hours they captured the town and all of the surrounding villages and complexes. Iraq's retaliation was horrifying and shocking. The town of Halabja was bombarded with nerve and mustard gases, killing more than five thousand men, women and children in a few minutes and wounding thousands more. The effect of that attack was catastrophic and the scope massive. According to Human Rights Watch's report, "the Iraqi counterattack began midmorning 16 March with

conventional air strike and artillery shelling from the town of Sayed Sadeq. Most families in Halabja had built primitive air-raid shelters near their homes. Some covered into these, others into the government shelters… In the afternoon, at about 3:00, those who remained in the shelters became aware of an unusual smell. Like the villagers in the Balisan Valley the previous spring, they compared it most often to sweet apples, or to perfume, or cucumber."[20]

Celebration for liberating Halabja and the surrounding areas following the successful joint operation between the IKF's forces and the Iranians did not last long, and the mood quickly became that of tragedy. The people of Halabja had witnessed one of the most horrifying crimes of the twentieth century. On 15 March 1988, PUK and Iranian forces captured the town of Halabja… The following day Iraqi forces retaliated by shelling the town for several hours. During the afternoon those in air-raid shelters began to smell apple and garlic. Unable to prevent the entry of the gas, they stumbled out into the street. Approximately 5000 civilians died. Baghdad's savagery at Halabja had a shattering effect on Kurdish morale.

By 19 March, Iraqi forces had reached every village and mountain in the area, including the headquarters of the PUK Politburo in Yakhsamar and Bargalou. Lt. General Sultan Hashem sent a telegraph to the office of the Army Chief Command, announcing the completion of the operation. Iraq's Armed Force Command issued statement number 3087 on 19[t] March 1988, detailing the completion of the Anfal operation in the Jafati valley. The statement was published on 20 March in Iraqi newspapers and was also announced on radio and state television.

Iraq's victory had two very different impacts on either side. While it was a big boost to the morale of Iraqi army and other armed forces, it had a drastic impact on the Kurdish resistance. The Peshmerga forces not only lost the main headquarters of Jafati valley, the main hospital, main prison and radio station, but psychologically they were defeated, and realized that the campaign would soon spread elsewhere. Attacking troops looted all the villages of the Jafati valley before razing them to the ground, exploding all water springs, uprooting large trees, and burning all forests and orchards in the area.

---

[20] Human Rights Watch/Middle East, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide – The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 70.

Forces of First Anfal[21]

Attacking Forces

Iraq had used massive number of troops in this stage of the Anfal campaign. The following forces were used: air force (used both fixed wing aircrafts and helicopters); artillery units; armored divisions; infantry; administrative and special forces as well as Kurdish collaborators (jash). Iraq had employed a number of very experienced army commanders for this operation. The operation was commanded by the Lt. General Sultan Hashem but was directed by Ali Hassan al-Majid. Adnan Kheirullah Tulfah, the Minister of Defense and Izzat al-Duri, Deputy Chairman of the RCC visited Suleimanyeh during the first stage of Anfal to follow the progress made on the ground during the operation. Resool gives details of the forces as follows:

> "According to the statement number 3087 of the Armed Forces Command, the following units participated in the operation: The Command Forces of Badr, the Command Forces of Qa'qa', the Command Forces of Mua'tasam, all the Afwaj al-Difa' al-Watani - National Defense Battalions (pro-government Kurdish militia – jash) of the First Command of the National Defense Battalions which included: Battalions no. 4, 21, 22, 26, 35, 37, 42, 46, 47, 55, 60, 61, 62, 64, 66, 69, 70, 72, 73,74, 75, 79. 80. 81, 82, 83, 85, 86, 90, 91, 92, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 104, 106, 112, 115, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 124 and 125. In addition to those units, the First Brigade Special Forces of First Corps, second Brigade Special Forces of fourth Corps, First Brigade Special Forces of sixth Corps, three battalions of Brigade number 72 Special forces, Infantry Brigade number 19, Infantry Brigade number 445, Infantry Brigade number 26. Special units (Kurdish militia run by Military Intelligence) number: 29, 68, 87, 119 also participated in the attacks on the area. All the artillery and armored divisions of the above mentioned army units participated in the attack along with the air force. The total number of Iraqi forces participated in the first stage of Anfal could be estimated as 120,000 personnel."[22]

---

[21] Names, numbers and details of all the Iraqi forces which participated in all the stages of Anfal were derived from the captured Iraqi documents which are now stored in the Archives of University of Colorado - USA. The information about the Peshmerga forces are based on my own knowledge and the investigation that I conducted earlier as well as talking to members of Peshmerga forces of the other parties.

[22] Shorsh Haji Resool, *Anfal – Kurdu Dawlati Iraq (Kurdish), Anfal – The Kurds and the Iraqi State*, (London: Dar al-Hikma, 2003), 146-150.

Defending Forces

The PUK leadership had predicted the attack following the intelligence it received from its own sources and the army buildup in the area was another indication of an imminent attack. Therefore, the PUK had called almost all its fighting forces to be removed from all three Malbands[23] in Soran region (Erbil, Kirkuk and Suleimanyeh).

The PUK politburo set up a command centre in the area to oversee the situation. Each Teep[24] was given the responsibility of defending a particular mountain, position or a village. They were asked to arrange for food and ammunition supply as well as having a contingency plan. The PUK forces were estimated between 2,500 and 3,000 Peshmerga[25]. There was a Peshmerga unit of the Kurdish Socialist Party, two units of KDP Peshmerga, a unit of the United Socialist Party of Kurdistan, and a unit of the ICP.

8.4.2 SECOND ANFAL – Qaradagh Area (22 March - 2 April 1988)

Iraq started the Second Anfal on the Qaradagh area immediately after the completion of the first Anfal. The Iraqi army started their campaign quickly to prevent the Peshmerga forces from the Qaradagh area, which were at the time in the Jafati valley to return to Qaradagh and defend the area. The Iraqi government had fresh forces and calculated military plan to launch the campaign

---

[23] PUK had four Malbands. They were responsible for political and military affairs in the areas they were dedicated to be, normally a governorate. 1st Malband was for Suleimanyeh and was based in Qaradagh. 2nd Malband was for Kirkuk and based in Jafati valley; 3rd Malband was for Erbil and was based in Smaquli valley and the 4th Malaband was for Duhok governorate and based in Zeweh. Each Malaband, except the 4th Malband, had between 10-15 Peshmerga brigades called Teep. Each Teep had between 150-250 Peshmerga.

[24] Teep was a PUK Peshmerga unit of about 150-200 fighters operating in a geographical area to fight the Iraqi army. PUK had 25 Teep during Anfal operation in Iraqi Kurdistan.

[25] The PUK was considered as the main political party in Soran region (Erbil, Kirkuk and the Suleimanyeh governorate) before and during Anfal campaign. They had a large number of Peshmerga compared to the other parties as well as a wide network of organization amongst villagers and the people in the cities and towns. KDP on the other hand was the dominant Kurdish force in Badinan (Duhok governorate) region. The number of their Peshmerga forces was much higher than all of the other Kurdish parties. They also enjoyed strong support from the villagers and people in the towns and complexes around that region. However, all other parties had a substantial number of Peshmerga forces distributed along all the governorates of Iraqi Kurdistan.

to occupy Qaradagh region too. They also wanted to capture the high lands and mountains in the region before launching their campaign onto the plane lands of Germian.

The target area of Second Anfal was Qaradagh area in Suleimanyeh governorate and the surrounding hills, mountains and villages. Its approximate boundaries were the city of Suleimanyeh, the mountains of Glla Zarda, the towns of Bazian, Qaradagh, Darbandikhan, Zarayan and Arbat, and the complex of Nasr. The Iraqi army attacked the area from six different directions. McDowall states that 'A week later al-Majid initiated Anfal II, to destroy all Kurdish presence in Qaradagh, south of Suleimanyeh, a mountain range already surrounded by Iraqi forces. Once again chemical attack on one village after another preceded ground action.'[26]

This stage of Anfal started under the cover of a heavy bombardment on PUK and KDP headquarters of in Qopi Garagh and on other villages in the area. According to eye witnesses and victims, conventional and chemical weapons were used in those attacks. According to Human Rights Watch's report,

> "By now the hillsides were alive with people fleeing Anfal. The army's ground assault had begun on the afternoon of 23rd March. Troops from the army's 43rd Division, backed by Jash and Security Emergency forces, converged from four different directions on the area between Qaradagh and Darbandikhan, driving the villagers from their homes like beaters flushing out game birds… The mass exodus was mainly to the north, where people hoped to find sanctuary in Suleimanyeh or in one of the camps along the main highway… By this time Military Intelligence [Istikhbarat] had received orders from the Northern Bureau to set up special temporary camps to house those who were displaced. The roundup during the last week of March, however, was much less systematic than those in the later phases of the Anfal operation.'[27]

The morale of Peshmerga forces and villagers had been shattered, following the capture of the Jafati valley. People and Peshmerga forces were thinking of a way of escaping from the area, rather than organizing resistance. Nevertheless, some Peshmerga units and villagers engaged Iraqi forces in some very fierce fighting.

---

[26] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 358.

[27] Human Rights Watch/Middle East, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide – The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 80.

The chemical attack on the town of Halabja terrified people to their core. They were completely unable to protect themselves from such a horrific weapon without adequate tools and medicine, and therefore, almost everyone tried simply to run away from the dangerous zones. Families and small children were especially unprepared for the terrifying situation they found themselves in.

The villagers and families of Peshmerga headed to three different directions. Some chose to hide in the caves, valleys and peak of nearby mountains. Another group who had relatives in Suleimanyeh and the surrounding towns and complexes tried to seek refuge with them. The third group, who were mainly Peshmerga, headed toward Germian.

The Iraqi army advanced in all directions and began looting and destroying villages, arresting people, and setting up camps for those they were arresting. The majority of those who headed towards Suleimanyeh and the towns in the area were arrested and put in temporary camps before being sent to the Security Police Directorate (*Amn*) in Suleimanyeh and then to Tobzawa[28].

Many people who were hiding in the area were deceived by the jash and Ali Hassan al-Majid, as Majid had given a verbal promise to some jash commanders that anyone surrendering would be pardoned. Jash commanders passed along Majid's falsehood, and many people came out of hiding as a result and were arrested and sent to Tobzawa. They were never seen again.

The safest group of people at this stage were those who had headed to Germian along with the Peshmerga forces. Not surprisingly, as soon as they arrived in Germian, they faced the Third stage of Anfal. Subsequently, most of those who survived the Second Anfal and reached Germian were either killed or arrested during the Third stage. According to McDowall, "the hills were thronged with fleeing people. The majority, moving north towards Suleimanyeh, were rounded up and taken to assembly areas where their names were recorded and their valuables and IDs removed. Male and female were segregated. The males were driven off to undisclosed

---

[28] Tobzawa is the name of an army base near the city of Kirkuk. It was the collection and concentration point for those who were arrested in the Second, Third and Fifth Anfal. They were registered there before they were sent to unknown destinations.

locations and exterminated. On the southern side of Qaradagh a more comprehensive policy prevailed: hundreds of women and children also disappeared without trace."[29]

Forces of the Second Anfal

Attacking Forces

Iraq had prepared another massive force for this stage of the Anfal. The Iraqi army was one of the biggest armies in the world at the time, with ten Corps. The quality and type of the forces, who participated in the Second Anfal, were almost the same as the ones used in the First Anfal.

The operation was commanded by the Major General Ayad Khalil Zeki and was directed by Ali Hassan al-Majid. Resool illustrates the forces of this operation as follows:

> "According to the statement number 3109 of the Armed Forces Command, which was based on the telegraph sent by the Major General Ayad Khalil Zeki, the following army and militia units participated in the operation: The Command Forces of Ausama Bin Zaid, the Fist Army Command, the First Command of the National Defense Battalions, all the Afwaj al-Difa' al-Watani - National Defense Battalions (pro-government Kurdish militia –Jash) of the 3rd Command of the National Defense Battalions, the Command Force of Qaradagh Sector, the Emergency Forces of Suleimanyeh, and the following Afwaj al-Difa' al-Watani - National Defense Battalions participated in the Second Anfal: Battalions no. 3, 6, 9, 19, 31, 33, 34, 40, 41, 52, 62, 74, 75, 77, 78, 81, 88, 97, 98, 162, 168, 199 and 200. The following brigades and battalions of the Iraqi army were mentioned in the documents related to the Second Anfal: Infantry brigades no. 1, 20 and 22 of First Corps, the Fifth Mechanical division, special units no. 29, 68, 87 and 119 of the Emergency Forces of Suleimanyeh, many Afwaj al-Difa' al-Watani - National Defense Battalions, who participated in the First Anfal, also participated in the Second Anfal. All the Artillery and Armored units/divisions of the above mentioned army units participated in the attack along with the Air Force in addition to the chemical weapons."[30]

---

[29] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 358.

[30] Shorsh Haji Resool, *Anfal – Kurdu Dawlati Iraq (Kurdish), Anfal – The Kurds and the Iraqi State*, (London: Dar al-Hikma, 2003), 151-153.

According to the Presidential decree number 807 on 9th August 1988, a number of Jash and Jash commanders were rewarded by Saddam Hussein and were given medals of Bravery for the 'heroic' role they played in the Second Anfal.[31]

Defending Forces

There wasn't an organized Peshmerga force with a clear plan to defend the area. There were a few PUK units in the First Malband headquarters, along with some scattered Peshmerga units and local commanders who did not participate in the First Anfal. Some of the Peshmerga units who returned from First Anfal did not arrive to their villages when this attack started. Moreover, they were exhausted and demoralized. There were about 200 Peshmerga of the ICP and about 100 KDP Peshmerga who belonged to the 3rd and 4th Sectors of Suleimanyeh and Kirkuk.

8.4.3 Third Anfal – Germian plane (7th – 20th April 1988)

The Iraqi army waited five days before it launched the Third Anfal. It is thought that the delay occurred for two reasons: 1. To allow the army complete their search in the caves, valleys and villages of Qaradagh (Second Anfal) to capture anyone who might be hiding there. 2. To allow the forces of Second Anfal to complete the destruction of villages and transfer detainees to the designated places before joining the new attacking forces of the Third Anfal.

The Iraqi army attacked the area from thirteen different directions. The target area of Third Anfal was all the plane lands of Germian in the south of Iraqi Kurdistan which extends to the border with Arab lands in the middle of Iraq. Its approximate boundaries are the cities of Kirkuk, Tuzkhurmatoo, Kifri, Kalar, Darbandikhan, and the mountains of Qaradagh, Takia, Chamchama, and Qarahanjeer. McDowall confirms that "with Anfal III in mid-April the scene shifted to Germian, the area south of Kirkuk and adjacent to the west side of Qaradagh, which had also been a stronghold of the PUK."[32]

---

[31] A copy of the presidential decree, which includes all of their names and ranks, is available.

[32] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 358.

This stage of Anfal did not start with a chemical attack, as in the First and Second Anfal. The most likely reason for this is that the troops attacked the region from many directions and penetrated into different depths in the area. This made the situation unclear, regarding the exact positions of the enemy and friendly forces.

Most of the Peshmerga forces who fled the Second Anfal headed to Germian. Most of the Germian Peshmerga, who were in Jafati valley, arrived back to Germian and their villages by now. Hence, there were a large number of Peshmerga forces in Germian at that time. However, they were demoralized and had already been through two big defeats of the First and Second Anfal. The Peshmerga forces did not have one command centre which could direct them. They were rather scattered in hundreds of villages and hamlets. Nevertheless, the Peshmerga and the armed villagers had no option but to fight for their lives.

According to Army correspondence, the Peshmerga forces and villagers were engaged in fierce fighting with the attacking forces, and they killed and injured hundreds of soldiers, officers and Jash. The distinctive character of the Third Anfal remains to be the capture of tens of thousands of men, women and children. According to Human Rights Watch's report,

> "It is possible to reconstruct the battle plan of the Iraqi army in Germian in some detail, thanks to a sequence of thirty-three 'secret and urgent' military intelligence cables that give an hour-by-hour update of conditions on the battlefield. These documents depict a series of enormous pincer movements, with troop columns converging from at least eight points on the perimeter of Germian, encircling Peshmerga targets, and channeling the fleeing civilian population towards designated collection points by blocking off all other avenues of escape. The cables describe 120 villages 'stormed and demolished' or 'burned and destroyed' almost none of these villages is described as military target… On 4th May, the General Security Directorate issued orders for anyone who had surrendered in combat areas of the first three Anfal operations to be rounded up by the army and given into its custody for case-by-case evaluation."[33]

The people of Germian split once again into three groups. Some stayed in their villages and were either killed on the spot or had been arrested and transferred to camps and Security police in the nearby towns before being sent to Tobzawa. There were two large groups of Peshmerga. They

---

[33] Human Rights Watch/Middle East, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide – The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 89 & 115.

were the Peshmerga of the Second Anfal and the survivors from Germian, along with their families. Some villagers and their families joined those Peshmerga forces. They headed back to the areas of the Second Anfal (the Qaradagh area) and crossed the main road between Kirkuk and Suleimanyeh, heading towards the Aghjalar and Koysinjaq regions. A large number of villagers were hiding in caves and valleys of Germian. They were mislead by Jash and surrendered to the army and Jash forces after they were told that Ali Hassan al-Majid issued an amnesty. The fact was that the Jash either tricked those villagers or misinterpreted the instructions.

Ali Hassan al-Majid issued directive number 434 on 13 April 1988, regarding the treatment of those who surrendered to the Iraqi troops. It states that those who surrender from outside zones of the First, Second and Third Anfal must be arrested by the unit which they surrendered to until further notice. It also emphasizes the fact that those who surrendered in zones of the First, Second and Third Anfal must be dealt with according to directive number 429 on 12th April 1988, which states that they must be sent to the Directorates of the Security Police. [34]

There was another directive, directive number 297 on 15 March 1988, issued by NB and Ali Hassan al-Majid. It states that those families who surrendered to the army units must be detained by the military intelligence (Istikhbarat) in special camps that are supervised by elements from the military intelligence of the First and Fifth Corps.

The third Anfal is one of the worst tragedies faced by the Kurdish people in the last century. Tens of thousands of men, women and children were arrested by the Army or surrendered and were never seen again. Hundreds of Peshmerga forces were made to surrender to the Iraqis. Hundreds of villages were burnt and razed to the ground. Entire properties, vehicles, agricultural tractors, cattle and hundreds of thousands of sheep were looted during this stage of the Anfal. A very large area of Iraqi Kurdistan was completely emptied of its inhabitants. Its water wells were dynamited so they would never be inhabited again. McDowall describes the fate of those w who were captured, "once again all adults or teenage males captured began their nightmare

---

[34] According to the previous directives and correspondences, anyone who was sent to the Directorates of Security Police were registered and sent to Tobzawa camp. They were registered once again and sent to unknown destinations.

journey to the execution grounds. In southern Germian, where PUK resistance was fiercest, thousands of women and children were also taken for execution."[35]

By 19th April 1988, Iraqi troops advanced from tens of directions and reached every village and hamlet in Germian. The office of the Iraqi Army Chief of Staff announced the completion of this stage of Anfal and issued a statement congratulating Saddam Hussein for that victory.

Forces of the Third Anfal

Attacking Forces

The third Anfal is one of the most extensive attacks by Iraqi army that took place in Kurdistan. A large number of forces were deployed to carry it out. This campaign was led, once again, by Lt. General Sultan Hashem and assisted by Brig. Gen. Bareq Abdullah al-Haj Henta. Resool gives details of the forces as follows:

> "According to the daily reports of the military intelligence (Istikhbarat) about the attacks, the following forces and units participated in this stage: Fourth division of the First Corps, Fiftieth division of the First Corps, Division number 33 (Infantry), Division number 27, Division number 46, Division number 21, the Command Forces of the Petroleum Protection Forces, Maghawir (Special Forces) Brigades number 65, 66, 68 of the Second Corps, Maghawir (Special Forces) Brigade number 10 of the First Corps, Brigade number 443, Battalions number 211, 212, 213 of Division number 32, Battalions number 1, 2, 3 of Infantry brigade number 444, First Battalion of the First Special Division, First Battalion of the 2nd Special Division, Mechanical Battalion number 18 of Maghawir Brigade number 70, First Maghawir Battalion of Division number 7, First Maghawir Battalion of Division number 17, Al-Abbas Armored unit, Al-Karama Tank unit, 12 Air force units of Unit number 55, The First Command of the National Defense Battalions, All of the Afwaj al-Difa' al-Watani - National Defense Battalions (pro-government Kurdish militia –Jash) which participated in the Second Anfal and all the Special units the Emergency Forces of Suleimanyeh. The following Jash Battalions also participated in the attacks. Battalion number: 2, 5, 18, 25, 35, 46, 75, 100, 101, 131, 139, 151, 197 and 199.'[36]

---

[35] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 358.

[36] Shorsh Haji Resool, *Anfal – Kurdu Dawlati Iraq (Kurdish), Anfal – The Kurds and the Iraqi State*, (London: Dar al-Hikma, 2003), 154-160.

According to Presidential decree number 1014 on 23 October 1988, a number of army officers, Security officers, pilots as well as some Jash commanders were rewarded by Saddam Hussein and were given medals of bravery for the 'heroic role' they played in Third Anfal.[37]

Defending Forces

There were a large number of Peshmerga forces present in Germian during the Third Anfal. All of the Peshmerga forces of the PUK, KDP and ICP who withdrew from Qaradagh went to Germian. Most of the Germian forces who were in the First Anfal had arrived back in their places along with a large number of villagers who were armed with light weapons. But once again all these forces did not have one command centre or even a commander who could lead them. It was almost impossible to organize such a scattered force.

Peshmerga forces were scattered around all of Germian, having entered from different directions and at different times. There were more than twenty fronts where fighting was taking place. Iraqi forces penetrated deep into the area and managed to cut off the communication route between the Peshmerga units. Each unit or group of Peshmerga was acting according to their judgment of the situation. Both Peshmerga and villagers were fighting to save their and their families' lives because they had no other choice. The main problem remained to be the lack of re-enforcement for the Peshmerga and the limited ammunition they had in possession.

8.4.4   Fourth Anfal – Kirkuk & Koyeh Areas (3 May – 7 May 1988)

The scale of the Third Anfal was huge in terms of the number of forces participating in the operation, the area of the operation and the number of people killed or arrested. Therefore, the Iraqi regime paused for awhile before launching the Fourth Anfal. It needed time to thoroughly search the area of the Third Anfal for any survivors who might have been hiding. It also needed time to register, transfer and deal with the tens of thousands of men, women and children who were arrested in the operation. It designed and implemented a thorough plan to leave forces in the area to fully control the operation zone. Furthermore, it also needed to give its forces a break

---

[37] A copy of the Presidential decree, which includes all their names and ranks, is available.

before re-organizing them again and merging them with new forces that were necessary for this stage of Anfal.

The target area of the Fourth Anfal was all areas located north of the city of Kirkuk, the valley of the river Zab, the region of Koysinjaq in Erbil governorate. Resool states that "its approximate boundaries were the city of Kirkuk – Chamchamal, Takia, Piramagroon (Suseh), Dukan, Khalakan, Koysinjaq, Degala (Shorsh), Qashqa, Altunkopri, Aghjalar, Redar (Shwan) and Taqtaq were included within the area covered by this stage of the Anfal."[38]

The Iraqi regime launched the Fourth Anfal in that area for a number of reasons. According to Resool "it wanted to hunt those Peshmerga and families who fled the Second and Third Anfal and arrive in the Kirkuk and Koysinjaq area. It also wanted to close that gate of communication and travel for Peshmerga and villagers between Suleimanyeh and Kirkuk areas with the Erbil region as most of the Erbil area was still under the control of Peshmerga."[39]

The Iraqi army attacked the area from thirteen directions. Human Rights Watch's report identifies the plan and states that

> "As in Germian, it appears that the army pursued a strategy of envelopment, attacking the fourth Anfal area with at least a dozen separate task forces from several directions at once. Fragmentary handwritten field reports of the fourth Anfal from the commander of the First Army Corps, Lt. General Sultan Hashem, show that troop columns hit the Lesser Zab Valley at first light on 4th May, twelve hours after the chemical bombing of Askar and Goptapa. Some, operating out of Koysinjaq, attacked the villages along the north bank of the river; other converged on the south bank from Suseh and Chamchamal; two conveys moved out of Taqtaq."[40]

The Iraqi army wanted to squeeze the Peshmerga forces and the villagers in those areas. They aimed at closing every escape route from this area towards the mountainous valleys of Smaquli,

---

[38] Shorsh Haji Resool, *Anfal – Kurdu Dawlati Iraq (Kurdish), Anfal – The Kurds and the Iraqi State*, (London: Dar al-Hikma, 2003), 105-108.

[39] Resool, *Anfal – Kurdu Dawlati,* 104.

[40] Human Rights Watch/Middle East, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide – The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 120.

Nazanin and Balisan to the north of the town of Koysinjaq and east and north of Shaqlawa and Rawanduz which was another strong hold of Peshmerga.

This Anfal was launched with a brutal chemical attack on the village of Goptapa (the official name is Koktapa and Askar in Aghjalar district) on 3 May 1988. The bombardment resulted in the killing of 154 men, women and children and wounding hundreds more. Goptapa is the biggest village in the area and located on the top of a hill that could be seen from the surrounding villages. The impact of the chemical attack in Goptapa was devastating.

Almost all the villagers who were in the area witnessed the chemical attack on Goptapa. This created panic, horror, confusion and a chaotic situation in the whole region. People began fleeing towards the nearby towns and complexes, before the start of operations. Some others started looking for hiding places, while some chose to stay in their villages and the surrounding areas waiting for their fate. Peshmerga forces decided to avoid any confrontation with the advancing forces, realizing it would be an unbalanced battle anyway, and any result would almost certainly be in favor of the Iraqi side. They were attempting to gain time until they reached the areas of the Fourth Malband of the PUK in the Smaquli and Nazanin valleys. All but one of the battles between the Iraqi army and Peshmerga were light and lasted for only a few hours and occurred when Peshmerga positions were discovered by the Iraqi troops.

Two units of Peshmerga, who fled from Germian, engaged themselves in a fierce fight with the Iraqi army on the upper hills of Takaltu in Koysinjaq plain. They fought thousands of Iraqi troops for nine hours. Eight Peshmerga were killed and more than twenty were wounded, but this battle saved the lives of thousands of Peshmerga and villagers by delaying the Iraqi troops' advance for an entire day. The following night, most of the people and Peshmerga left the area and were able to reach safety.

Thousands of people were arrested during this stage of the Anfal. On 14 May 1988, about 1200 people were arrested inside the town of Koysinjaq following a curfew imposed by the Iraqis. The military intelligence of the Petroleum Protection Division carried out the search inside

Koysinjaq. According to McDowall, "out of sight, possible, 30,000 Kurds were taken away. In the areas of greater resistance women and children too were taken to the execution grounds."[41]

Within five days, the Iraqi troops advanced from multiple directions and reached every village and hamlet in the area of 4 Anfal. They completed searching the area and captured thousands of people and transferred them to Tobzawa.

On 7 May 1988, the First Corps Command sent telegraph number 1807 to the office of the Army Chief Staff to announce the completion of Fourth stage of Anfal.

Forces of Fourth Anfal

Attacking Forces

The Fourth Anfal was another massive attack of Iraqi army on Iraqi Kurdistan. Various units and different types of forces participated in this operation. The forces included many from the previous stages of Anfal and some new army units. According to Resool,

> "According to the telegraph number 1807 and the daily reports of the Military Intelligence (Istikhbarat) –Eastern Sector and other correspondences about the attacks, the following forces and units participated in this stage: all of the forces belong to the Naser Division Command, all of the forces belonging to the 46th Division Command, the Command Forces of the Petroleum Protection, all the Afwaj al-Difa' al-Watani - National Defense Battalions (pro-government Kurdish militia – Jash) of the First Command of the National Defense Battalions, the Command forces of the Headquarters of the First Corps, all the special units of the Emergency Forces (Tawari') of Suleimanyeh, Kirkuk and Koysinjaq, infantry Brigades number: 448, 110 and 46, Special Forces (Maghawir) Brigades number: 1 belong to First Corps, 65, 66 & 68, Special Forces (Maghawir) Division number 10, armored Division number 46, Special Forces (Maghawir) Battalion 1 – belong to Division number 28, the forces of Koysinjaq Sector, the Forces of Suseh Sector. The following Jash Battalions were specifically mentioned along with their targets: 1, 20, 23, 37, 51, 55, 72, 78, 79, 81, 85, 86, 98, 99, 107, 132, 171, 172, 175, 195, 204, 207, 211, 212, 237, 248 and 257. This stage of Anfal was once again led by the Lt. Brig Sultan Hashem

---

[41] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 358.

assisted by the notorious murderer Brig. Gen. Bareq Abdullah Haj al-Henta and was closely monitored and directed by Ali Hassan al-Majid.'[42]

Defending Forces

The situation in the areas of Fourth Anfal was different from the areas of the Second and Third Anfal. There were a large number of Peshmerga forces present in the area. It was a mixture in terms of quality, their morale and their commitment. The PUK had the following battalions in the area: 21 Kirkuk, 25 Khalkhalan, 93 of Koysinjaq, 99 of Bitwen. Those units participated in the First Anfal and were rested for about five weeks. They were meant to be fighting in their areas. The second group was those Peshmerga (PUK forces and other parties' forces such as the KDP, ICP and some Islamic Peshmerga movements), who had fled the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Anfal. They witnessed massacres; they had tasted defeat and they were exhausted and wanted to leave the area and head towards the Iranian border. The chemical attack on Goptapa had demoralized the entire Peshmerga forces and villagers of those areas, so there was no intention or motivation in those areas to fight the Iraqi troops, who arrested thousands of men, women and children, with little resistance. By 7 April, most of the forces crossed the main road between Koysinjaq-Kirkuk and Koysinjaq-Erbil and arrived in the Smaquli valley.

8.4.5   Fifth, Sixth & Seventh Anfal – Erbil Area (24 May – 26 August 1988)

These three stages of Anfal were combined. This campaign covered three valleys as well as a number of very high mountains in the mountainous region and terrain of Erbil. The mountains of Safin, Hawreh, Karokh, Handren and Qandil are situated in this area. Each of the valleys of Smaquli, Nazanin and Balisan is home to many villages.

This was the strongest (and the only) area where the PUK and the other parties still had headquarters and strong positions in the Soran region. The Peshmerga forces were preparing themselves for fierce resistance in the area as the PUK leadership realized the dangerous and devastating consequences of their defeat and might be forced to flee to Iran, and so they prepared themselves as thoroughly as possible and stocked up on a ammunition.

---

[42] Shorsh Haji Resool, *Anfal – Kurdu Dawlati Iraq (Kurdish), Anfal – The Kurds and the Iraqi State*, (London: Dar al-Hikma, 2003), 161-164.

It is thought that Iraqi regime intended to capture the whole area in one stage, but the terrain of the area and the strong resistance by the Peshmerga made the Iraqi troops complete the operations in three stages. This theory seems to hold up as a very likely possibility because the Iraqi troops attacked the area from all the three stages of Anfal simultaneously. Human Rights Watch's report affirms that "after the completion of Operation Anfal V on 7 June 1988, preparations and plans were embarked upon for Operation Anfal VI General Zerb writes. A cleansing operation was planned to crush the saboteurs in Alana and Balisan valleys (Anfal VI). This plan was sent to the army chief of staff on 30th May 1988 in my strictly confidential and personal communication 1049. This first plan did not materialize… The main reason for the decision to suspend the campaign temporarily seems to have been the obstinate resistance of eh PUK around Korak Mountain."[43]

The target area of the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Anfal was the mountainous areas located to the north and north-east of the city of Erbil extending to the border with Iran. Its approximate boundaries were the city of Erbil, the towns of Degala (Shorsh), Koysinjaq, Chwarqurna, Rania, Choman, Rawanduz, Khalifan, Harrir, Shaqlawa, and Salahadin, the villages of Hizop and Pshtashan, the complex of Sangasar, and the mountain of Qandil. McDowall confirms that "during the summer months, three more Anfal operations (V, VI, and VII) were carried out to remove PUK forces in Balisan and the mountain recesses east of Shaqlawa. In certain cases the population was persuaded to turn themselves in on the spurious promise of pardon. It made difference to their fate."[44] The Iraqi army attacked the area from sixteen different directions.

As the Peshmerga forces were preparing for their last stand against the Iraqi forces, senior Iraqi army commanders were drawing up their plan to destroy the remaining forces of the PUK and other parties in the area. They planned to cut off Peshmerga's withdrawal route before attacking the main forces at the strongholds of Balisan and Smaquli. Because of this, they began their first attack from the rear on 24[t]May 1988. It was launched from the town of Rawanduz, and soldiers fanned out towards the villages of Faqeyan, Akoyan and Garawan.

---

[43] Human Rights Watch/Middle East, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide – The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 137.

[44] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 358.

On 15 May, before the actual attack started, the Iraqi air force attacked the village of Wareh near Betwata with chemical weapons. The attack resulted in the deaths of 22 men, women and children and maiming more than 10 people. This attack had the fingerprint of the other stages of Anfal. The Iraqis always wanted to spread a wave of horror amongst people and Peshmerga forces before they started the operation. The people and Peshmerga could not protect themselves and their families from such a deadly weapon. They had absolutely no means to defend against it. The people of Balisan valley had already had a bitter experience after the attack of 15 April 1987 on the village of Shekh Wasan, which killed and wounded hundreds of villagers. Human Rights Watch's report affirms that

> "At dusk on 15 May [1988], the people of Wara were preparing for the 'id al-Fitr', the festival that breaks the fast of Ramadan. Some of the former residents of the village, now living in Hartal, saw two airplanes fly low overhead, but they paid little attention to them, never thinking that Wara might be their objective. The nearest Peshmerga units immediately realized what was happening, however, when they saw the Jash lighting fires on the darkening mountain peaks – a sure sign that chemicals were being used. The people in Hartal were stunned when the first survivors came running to them, two hours later, to report that Wara had been hit with gas. They were obviously dying… Then, in the early afternoon of 23rd May, waves of aircrafts dropped chemicals in Balisan, Hiran, and other neighboring valleys."[45]

The chemical attack encouraged the Peshmerga and the villagers to ask families to leave the area. They gave them the option of either sneaking into the towns and seeking refuge with relatives or heading towards the Iranian border where they would be accommodated and looked after by the Iranians. This allowed the Peshmerga to have a free hand and to focus on the fighting, rather than worrying about the fate of their families and the villagers.

It must be said that no villagers or Peshmerga were arrested during the attacks of these stages of Anfal, with the exception of the mass arrest that occurred in the town of Rawanduz. On 15 June 1988, the Iraqi regime imposed a curfew in the town of Rawanduz and began searching the town for the villagers who sneaked to the town from the 'Prohibited Areas'. The search was lead by Gen. Amer al-Zubeidi, the commander of the army division number 45. Hundreds of people were arrested during that day.

---

[45] Human Rights Watch/Middle East, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide – The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 133.

Forces of the Fifth, Sixth & Seventh Anfal

Attacking Forces

It is difficult to know the exact number of forces which participated in these attacks, due to the nature of these combined stages. There exists correspondence and telegraphs about these three stages but were not as clear as the telegraphs of the previous stages of Anfal.

Iraq amassed a large number of Army units from the Fifth Corps and the National Defense Battalions (Jash) in many locations around the basin of these stages of Anfal. The area was within the jurisdiction of the Fifth army corps. Nevertheless, many army units from other corps and other areas were deployed for those attacks. Resool confirms that

> "According to the telegraph number 23 of the Security Committee of Salahadin on 26 May 1988 and a number of correspondence from the military intelligence and army units of the Fifth Corps, the following forces and units participated in this stage: Army Division number 5, Army Division number 37, Army Division number 45, Army Division number 46, The Mobile Forces of the Second Corps, Brigade number 119 of the Army Division number 27 – First Corps, Brigade number 66 (Special Forces) of the Second Corps, Brigades number 19, 91 and 452 of Division number 37, Brigade number 36 – Fifth Corps, Brigades number 76, 82 & 98 of the Army Division number 40, Brigades number 420, 702, 116 and 434, Armored Brigade number 80, Battalions number 1 and 2 (Special Forces) of the Second Corps, Tank Units 7th Nisan & Ahfad al-Karrar. The following Jash Battalions and many others also participated in these attacks: 42, 46, 69, 79, 83, 91, 102, 104, 124, 126, 140, 175, 204, 212, 214, 238, 241, 249, 259 and 318."[46]

Defending Forces

The defending forces in the area of these stages of Anfal were different from the previous ones. The political will and the political situation were different too. This was the last free area under the control of the PUK in the Soran region. Therefore, the PUK made better preparation to defend this area than in other stages of Anfal.

---

[46] Shorsh Haji Resool, *Anfal – Kurdu Dawlati Iraq (Kurdish), Anfal – The Kurds and the Iraqi State*, (London: Dar al-Hikma, 2003), 165-168.

Most of the forces of the Third Malband of the PUK and the other parties had only witnessed the First Anfal. Since the end of the First Anfal, they stayed in their region and were not involved in any confrontation with Iraqi forces. All Peshmerga units were given responsibilities of defending specific villages, mountains and areas. They were well equipped with ammunition. The most important point was that they were determined to defend the area for as long as they possibly could.

The PUK called upon its entire fighting forces: all the units of the third Malband and some of the units of the Kirkuk area who withdrew from Fourth Anfal few weeks earlier. There were also hundreds of Peshmerga forces of the KDP, ICP, the Socialist Party and from local Islamic movements.

However, the fighting took too long and the Iraqi forces gradually progressed to their target positions. On many occasions, they were pushed back but then advanced once again. The Iraqis were determined to destroy this last Peshmerga force in the Soran region, but the Peshmerga forces put up a hearty resistance. Resool states that "Lt Gen. Younis Mohammed al-Zerb, admitted in his analysis of these stages of Anfal that Iraq could not implement the plans properly because of the rigid resistance they faced in their attacks."[47]

At the middle of these stages of Anfal, a new political development emerged that changed the balance of force, and subsequently the outcome of the operation. This new development had a significant impact on the situation if not physically than certainly psychologically. At the beginning of August, Iran agreed to a ceasefire with Iraq and the Iran-Iraq war was over. According to Human Rights Watch's report

> "Although the Iraqi regime grappled with the delays to the sixth and seventh Anfal, events elsewhere were giving the Peshmerga fresh cause for alarm. On 17th July, then Iranian President Ali Khamenaei notified UN Secretary General Javier Perez Cuellar that his country was willing to accept U.N. Security Council Resolution 688. As far as the PUK was concerned, Iran's decision to end the fighting was a breach of the terms of their October 1986 Tehran agreement, which had stipulated that neither

---

[47] Shorsh Haji Resool, *Anfal – Kurdu Dawlati Iraq (Kurdish), Anfal – The Kurds and the Iraqi State*, (London: Dar al-Hikma, 2003), 169.

party would make a unilateral deal with Baghdad. They were, however, powerless to do anything about it."[48]

On 26 August, the Iraqi forces captured every village and mountain in the area and the Office of the Army Chief Command announced the end of the Seventh stage of Anfal. These stages of Anfal were led by the commander of the Fifth Corps. But it was in the middle of the campaign when he was transferred and the campaign was led by his deputy. Ali Hassan al-Majid was directly involved in the operation.

8.4.6   Eighth (Final) Anfal – Badinan Region (28 August – 3 September 1988)

By the end of the Seventh stage of Anfal, every single village in the 'Prohibited Areas' of the governorates of Erbil, Suleimanyeh and Kirkuk to the east of the river Big Zab had been destroyed. Every base and headquarters of Peshmerga had been captured and destroyed. The main forces of Peshmerga were forced to leave the Iraqi Kurdistan and head towards the Iranian border. The only place left to be attacked was Badinan region, governorate of Duhok. Badinan was the stronghold of the KDP, which had more than two thousand Peshmerga in the area. There were other forces of the PUK, the Islamic movement, and the ICP. McDowall states that "on 25 August Anfal VIII began with chemical and high explosive bombardment on the villages and valleys in which fleeing civilians and Peshmerga were concentrated... Thousands were asphyxiated in the precipitous valleys through which they fled. On 29th August in Bazi Gore approximately 2,980 fugitives were gassed, and their bodies subsequently burnt by government troops. Elsewhere all captured males were exterminated. Amnesty International was inundated with reports of hundreds of civilians being deliberately killed."[49]

On 19 July 1988, Iraq started an attack on the mountain of Khwakurk, which is the point where the Iraqi, Iranian and Turkish borders meet. It housed one of the main headquarters of the KDP. This was not part of previous Anfal stages, but rather was a preparation for the Final Anfal. Iraq planned to capture those areas and cut the withdrawal and reinforcement routes from the Peshmerga forces of Badinan before it started the final stage.

---

[48] Human Rights Watch/Middle East, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide – The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 138.

[49] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 359.

Badinan, the areas of the Final Anfal, covers a large area. The highest mountains of Iraqi Kurdistan such as Gara and Matin are situated in Badinan, and deep valleys and scattered villages can be seen throughout this mountainous region. According to Resool, "the target area of the Final Anfal was all of the mountainous areas located to the west of the river Zab and the east and north of the city of Duhok. Its approximate boundaries were the city of Duhok –the town of Zakho – the Turkish border to the north then to the East – the town of Sherwan Mazen – the town of Barzan – the town of Dinarteh – the town of Atroush – the town of Zawita. The Iraqi army attacked the area from ten different directions."[50]

The Final Anfal started with fierce chemical attacks on a number of villages in Begova area and the villages of Kanimasi, Balouha, Bawarka Gavreh, Mergeti, Gize, Gelnaske, Birjini, Bilijana, Tilakro, Tilakro, Rouseh and Zeweh.

On 28 August, the Iraqi army began their campaign to capture the villages, valleys and mountains of Badinan from a number of directions. They progressed rapidly, deep into the area. According to the report of the Deputy Commander of the Fifth Corps, Lieutenant General Younis Mohammed al-Zerb[51], the Iraqi forces managed to control most of the area as early as 30 August 1988. They completed their campaign of capturing every village and location on 3 September 1988 but announced the completion of the last stage of Anfal only on 6 September 1988.

Thousands of people of Badinan were arrested during the Final Anfal and were divided into three groups. One group had stayed inside their villages and was an easy target for Iraqi forces to capture. The majority of the villagers headed towards the Turkish border and managed to get to safety while remaining residents hid around their villages, valleys and in the mountains. The majority of the third group managed to remain hidden until the 6 September when general amnesty was announced and they were spared.

---

[50] Shorsh Haji Resool, *Anfal – Kurdu Dawlati Iraq (Kurdish), Anfal – The Kurds and the Iraqi State*, (London: Dar al-Hikma, 2003), 117.

[51] Litenant General Younis Mohammed al-Therb, produced a very detailed report about the Final Anfal. It includes details about the plan and implementation, the forces that participated and analysis of the campaign.

Those who were arrested before the amnesty were treated in the same way as those who were captured in previous stages of Anfal. i.e. they were handed over to the Security Police (*Amn*) then sent to the army base of Nizarkeh [52]. 'They were registered in Nizarkeh before men and women were separated and the males were sent to the town of Sullamiyeh to the south of Mosul. They were sent to their destination from there and were never seen again.'[53]

Forces of 8th (Final) Anfal

Attacking Forces

Resool gives details of the forces as follows:

> "According to a report by the deputy commander of the Fifth Corps, Lt. Gen. Younis Mohammed al-Zerb, the following forces participated in the final Anfal: The Brigades number 29, 93, 120, 418, 436 and 605 of the 4th army division, the Brigades number 2, 72, 509, 606 of the 7th army division and the First Special Forces Brigade of First Corps, the Brigades number 35, 79, 102, 118, 502 & 846 of the 35th army division, the Brigades number 420, 702 of the 45th army division and First Special Forces of the Fifth Corps, the Brigades number 103, 114, 706 of the 41st army division & First Special Forces of the 6th Corps, the Brigades number 84, 238 and 435 of the 29th army division, the Brigades number 77, 417, 506 of the 38th army division & the 2nd Special Forces Brigade of Fifth Corps, the Brigades number 14, 42, 501, 503 & 805 of the 42nd army division. More than 150 Battalions of the National Defense Battalions (Jash) also participated in that stage."[54]

Defending Forces

As stated earlier, Badinan was the stronghold of the KDP. It had most of its best fighters in the area. Resool confirms that "most of the defending forces of this area were belonging to the first sector of the KDP, estimated at around 1500 strong. The KDP force in Badinan was considered to be the strongest they had. There were also about 300 PUK Peshmerga that had headquarters

---

[52] The army base of Nizarkeh for those who arrested in the Final Anfal was similar to Topzawa for those who were arrested in Second, Third and FourthAnfal.

[53] Shorsh Haji Resool, *Anfal – Kurdu Dawlati Iraq (Kurdish), Anfal – The Kurds and the Iraqi State*, (London: Dar al-Hikma, 2003), 127.

[54] Resool, *Anfal – Kurdu Dawlati*, 169 - 172.

other than those of the KDP. The ICP also had a large presence in the area as well as the fighters of the Islamic Movement."[55]

Despite the large presence of Peshmerga forces in Badinan, it appeared as if they did not have a plan to defend the area and fight the Iraqi troops. The first chemical attack at the beginning of the battle added another factor to the lack of motivation to fight the Iraqi forces. It must be said that some individual or isolated units in some areas of Badinan were engaged in some very fierce fighting with the Iraqi forces and resulted in a number of casualties from the attacking forces.

The attack was led by the commander of the Fifth Corps and was directed by Ali Hassan al-Majid. Izzat al-Duri also visited the city of Mosul during the Final Anfal.

8.5   International Response

The Kurds could not comprehend the reason for the silence of the international community regarding the horrendous crimes of the Iraqi government. At first, the majority of Iraqi Kurds thought that the international community was not aware of the Iraqi army's atrocities against the civilian population of the rural areas of Iraqi Kurdistan, but Kurdish party leaders soon realized that Western countries, especially the USA, was fully aware of the Anfal campaign and the use of chemical weapons. This silence of the international community led the Iraqi Kurds to feel that the Iraqi regime had a free hand to do what it desired and that they were abandoned by western and eastern powers alike. According to McDowall,

> "Nothing more clearly illustrated the vulnerability of the Kurdish people than the international failure to take any substantive measure to restrain Iraq from its chemical attacks. It was not as if the world did not know of these attacks. Within a week of Iraq's first use of gas against the Kurds, PUK issued press statements, and formally appealed to the United Nations. Some victims came to Europe for treatment. The evidence was incontestable. Reports were also carried in the International press, but no action was taken. The industrialized world was anxious that Iraq should prevail against Iran and was unwilling to jeopardize this objective by the application of international conventions."[56]

---

[55] Shorsh Haji Resool, *Anfal – Kurdu Dawlati Iraq (Kurdish), Anfal – The Kurds and the Iraqi State*, (London: Dar al-Hikma, 2003), 172-173.

[56] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 361.

The horrifying images of the chemical attack on Halabja during the first stage of Anfal had finally awakened the world's consciousness, and covered front pages of newspapers all over the world. However, even this did not make any of the powerful countries or even United Nations, to stop Saddam from carrying out similar attacks in the future. Iraq was defiant and continued using chemical attacks as late as six months after the Halabja attack. Nothing more was needed to make the Kurds believe that they were completely alone in their struggle against one of the most brutal regimes in the world. Nevertheless, they not only refused to give up, but continued in their resistance to defend themselves and carry on with their national demands. McDowall states that "the chemical attack on the town of Halabja was the worst single violation of the 1925 Geneva Protocol on the use of chemical weapons since Mussolini had invaded Abyssinia in 1935. As the Financial Times reported on 23 March, the international community's response to the Kurds' mounting cries of alarm has so far been a deafening silence. On 26th March Iraq implicitly admitted using gas. In April a distinguished group of British scientists tried to send detectors and decontaminators to Kurdistan, but were forbidden by manufacturers acting on British government orders."[57]

There is no place for humanity and conscientiousness when profit and business matter. This was painfully evident in the case of the Kurds' struggle against the Ba'th regime. As Kurds in Iraq were subjected to genocide amongst other human rights violations perpetrated by the Iraqi regime on a massive scale, western companies were in competition to win reconstruction contracts for the aftermath of the Iran - Iraq War. Not surprisingly, the relevant governments did not want to jeopardize those interests by taking any position against Saddam Hussein. McDowall affirms "it was clear that many states of the industrialized world were trading in sensitive materials with Iraq and had little intention of curtailing their arms sales on account of their UNSCR 620 or the 1925 protocol. Barely a year after Halabja, Britain, France, Italy, Greece, Portugal and Turkey as well as Eastern countries and Latin American states participated in the first Baghdad International Exhibition for Military Production. The US was already engaged in the sale of sensitive equipment to Baghdad."[58]

---

[57] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 361-362.

[58] McDowall, *A Modern History of*, 363.

During that unthinkable situation, the Kurds did not give up hope in their struggle for their national tights. People of Kurdistan rallied behind their leaders, helped and supported the returnees who surrendered to the Iraqi regime, and donated to the movement financially, all which kept the flag of Kurdish nationalism flying high. Even the Kurdish collaborators renewed their loyalty to the Kurdish movement through smuggling thousands of Peshmerga and families of villagers to safety and by allowing Peshmerga units to temporarily hide in their homes and headquarters.

8.6 Aftermath of Anfal & Invasion of Kuwait

The Situation in Iraqi Kurdistan after Anfal Campaign

Despite the atrocious nature of Saddam Hussein, he sometimes portrayed himself as a compassionate leader. Resool states that "on 6th September, the Iraqi regime announced the completion of the Final Anfal by proclaiming a general amnesty. On 8 September Iraq issued another amnesty. According to the content of those amnesties, those Kurds who would have been pardoned and those who would surrender afterwards would be treated as second-class citizen. Nevertheless, those two amnesties saved the lives of thousands of people in Badinan region (Duhok governorate)."[59]

The timing of the amnesty could not have been better for the Ba'th Party. They intended to bring back those who fled to neighboring Iran and Turkey, humiliated and demoralized. Under those circumstances, the Ba'thists thought, the returnees would accept anything that the Ba'th regime would impose on them including the Arabic identity of Iraq. Thousands of people who were living in camps in Iran and many who were inside Iraq surrendered to the Iraqi authorities following the September general amnesties. Those who surrendered were forced to go to the complexes of Jazhnikan and Barhushter. According to Resool, "those two camps were recently set up to house those who were arrested during Anfal but were pardoned in the amnesty and those who surrendered afterwards. Life in those camps was unbearable. Some of the others were housed in the complexes of Daratou & Bnaslawa, Bayinjan and Hajiawa. The standard of living

---

[59] Shorsh Haji Resool, *Anfal – Kurdu Dawlati Iraq (Kurdish), Anfal – The Kurds and the Iraqi State*, (London: Dar al-Hikma, 2003), 129.

in those camps was almost the same as that of Jazhnikan and Barhushter. None of those who surrendered during those amnesties were allowed to go back to their towns and live with their families. They were sent to one of the above mentioned ones."[60]

The fate of tens of thousands of people arrested during Anfal campaign was unclear. Many thousands of them were sent from Tobzawa and Nizarkeh to Nugra Salman[61] in the south of Iraq and to Sullamiyeh to the south of Mosul. Some stayed in Sullamiyeh and Nugra Salman while many of them were transferred to their unknown destination. The relatives of the disappeared people could not ask about their fate. Even those who managed to look for some news through their contacts within the Iraqi officials faced a brick wall because no one wanted to tell them the truth.[62]

Not a single village in the 'Prohibited Areas' survived the Anfal campaign. Iraqi Kurdistan's rural area had become completely empty. Directive number 4008 was still in force. Anyone found in those areas were dealt with according to paragraph five of that directive. Apart from few small Peshmerga units in Erbil, Suleimanyeh and Kirkuk there were not any presence of Peshmerga in the entire Iraqi Kurdistan.

The Ba'th regime continued its brutal policy against the Kurds. In June 1989, Iraq decided to destroy the town of Qaladeza and five nearby complexes after the completion of Anfal campaign. It pressurized the Kurds to join the Ba'ath Party. Arbitrary detention continued and the regime also continued its policy of Arabization in Kirkuk and other places in Kurdistan. All of these measures made the Kurds more steadfast in their demands for national rights. The Kurds resisted the Ba'thists plan to uproot the will of struggle and sacrifice among them.

---

[60] Shorsh Haji Resool, *Anfal – Kurdu Dawlati Iraq (Kurdish), Anfal – The Kurds and the Iraqi State*, (London: Dar al-Hikma, 2003), 130.

[61] Nugra Salman is a small village and a notorious prison on the border between Iraq and Saudi Arabia in the desert. There is a military compound which was used to keep those were in custody and prisoners who were not allowed regular visits from their families.

[62] After the fall of Ba'th regime hundreds of mass graves were discovered in the south of Iraq and Kirkuk, containing the bodies of men, women and children wearing Kurdish clothes.

The world and the international community turned a blind eye to the plight of the Kurds and to the Iraqi government's atrocities. Under those circumstances, Iraq invaded Kuwait and a new Iraqi era began, one that brought great change not only for Kurds, but the entire world as well. McDowall states that "at the end of February [1988], Jalal Talabani formally accused the regime of genocide, with 1.5 million already deported and twelve towns and 3000 villages razed. Yet the west was generally inclined to dismiss Kurdish claims of genocide, either because they were politically inconvenient... It was only in the aftermath of the Gulf War that evidence collated by Middle East Watch showed that previous Kurdish claims were not only incontrovertible but also in many cases an under-statement of the ordeal through which Iraq's Kurds were then passing."[63]

It was only when Saddam invaded Kuwait that western countries recognized the Kurdish claims of the crimes committed by Ba'th regime against them. According to Gunter, "on the eve of the 1991 War, the US Department of State reported that "an estimated 250,000 to 300,000 Kurdish villagers were forcibly relocated in 1988, since 1987, an estimated 500,000 people have been uprooted."[64]

Iraq emerged from the war with Iran with one of the strongest armies in the region, in excess of nine hundred thousand soldiers. Saddam Hussein could not bear the responsibility of the problems which resulted from the war, and he thought that with his mighty war machine, he could blackmail the Gulf countries into paying off some of his debts. Once he realised that he must carry the burden and face the consequences of his eight years war with Iran alone, he decided to invade Kuwait.

On 2 August 1990, Iraq's army occupied Kuwait. The invasion and looting of Kuwait was the beginning of a new era and brought many events to the region that affected Iraq's international relations, the future of the region and the Kurds, and the entire Middle East. It was another golden opportunity for the Kurds to seize.

The US did not stay neutral to the new development in the Gulf because it affected the oil fields and supply to not only the West, but the rest of the world. They paid a great deal of attention to

---

[63] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 357.

[64] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 47.

this event, and led a coalition of Western, Arab, and Muslim countries to liberate Kuwait and punish Saddam Hussein.

The Kurdish national movement received a huge blow during the Anfal campaign when the Iraqi army drove Peshmerga forces out of Iraqi Kurdistan. Although the Ba'thists did everything they could to capitalise on that triumph through implementing long-term and un-relentless policies against the Kurds, the Kurds did not give in. Instead, they organised themselves and waited for the right opportunity that would afford them the best chance to achieve their national goals. The Kurdish movement, through the IKF, managed to capitalise on this golden opportunity and led a massive uprising in driving the Iraqi regime out of Iraqi Kurdistan. This was the beginning of a new era for Kurdish nationalism and the following events led to even more surprising outcomes.

9.   From Defeat to Achievement (1991 – 2003)

9.1   Critical Moments

By the end of 1988, the Kurdish armed movement in Iraqi Kurdistan declined to a level that some observers saw the situation similar to that which followed the collapse of the Kurdish movement in March 1975. Iraq had captured every village, mountain and valley in Iraqi Kurdistan. The Iraqi army had rounded up more than 100000 men, women and children. More than 4200 villages were destroyed. All of the Peshmerga forces of all of the Kurdish parties were driven out of Iraq except for a few small PUK units that remained in Erbil, Suleimanyeh and Kirkuk. Thousands of Peshmerga and tens of thousands of villagers had surrendered to the Iraqi authority after the announcement of the general amnesty on 6 September 1988. According to Resool,

> "By the spring of 1989, the entire Kurdish population of Iraqi Kurdistan were forced to live in the main cities and towns and eighty-two complexes close to the cities. It is a striking testament to the horror and scale of the Anfal campaign that there remained not one single village standing in Iraqi Kurdistan. In March 1989, Ali Hassan al-Majid ordered the demolition of the town of Qla'dezeh and the four nearby complexes, Twasuran, Pemalk, Zharawa, and Sangasar to be completed by May 1989. The Politburo headquarters of all the Kurdish parties were outside Iraqi Kurdistan and the entire Peshmerga forces were driven out of Iraq except for some guerrilla units. Ali Hassan al-Majid was promoted to the post of Minister of Defense and Hassan Ali Ameri became the General Secretary of NB of Ba'th Party... Iraq continued its Arabization policy in and around Kirkuk, Makhmour… The morale of ordinary people was very low. However, the Kurdish parties urged people to continue resisting Iraq's policies. The international community, Western countries in particular, turned a blind eye to the plight of the Kurds in Iraq."[1]

Despite the difficult situation following the defeat of the Kurdish parties, the elite Kurdish intellectuals in the cities, poets, singers, artists and writers did not bow to the pressure of the new situation. On the contrary, they wanted to raise the morale of their people and tried to show people that there was a light at the end of the tunnel and that the struggle of the Kurds would continue perhaps even stronger as well as in a new form. People in the city of Erbil showed

---

[1] Shorsh Haji Resool, *Anfal – Kurdu Dawlati Iraq (Kurdish), Anfal – The Kurds and the Iraqi State*, (London: Dar al-Hikma, 2003), 131-133.

solidarity in helping displaced villagers who were brought to Jazhnikan and Barhushter camps following the September amnesty. The money, food and other logistical help given by people in Erbil was a shining example of the expression of nationalist belief at the time of difficulty. The Kurdish parties, on the other hand, showed unity and strength, urging people to resist, and vowed to continue in their struggle against the Ba'thists. McDowall states that

> "In the wake of state genocide in 1988, there was little left for the Kurdish leaders to lose. In July 1988 when defeat already stared them in the face, the KDP's central committee resolved to continue the struggle come what may, a decision confirmed when the party held its tenth Congress in December 1989. PUK clung to a miniscule border enclave from which it mounted attacks. Neither party had any difficulty in soliciting material support from the Iraqi Ba'th arch enemy, Syria. Operations were thus undertaken as far into Iraq as the Erbil plain and even inside Kirkuk town. The Iraqi Kurdistan Front now waged war by lightning raid and ambushes, without holding any territory at all. Both parties set up food and weapon caches in the mountains for the hundreds of guerrilla still willing to fight. Politically, it was crucial to national morale that guerrilla activities should be at a sufficient level to prevent Baghdad from hiding the fact of continued resistance. Talabani warned of escalating the struggle with attacks on a range of targets in Arab parts of Iraq."[2]

Although the Anfal campaign and the Iraqi regime's act of genocide against rural Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan came at an immeasurable price, it can be said that, in the final analysis, and years later, that it benefitted the Kurdish struggle for their national cause. It became a powerful frame for the universal grievances of the Kurds as the undeniable horror served as a force of cohesion, causing them to be united in demanding their national rights. Anthony Smith states that "the people and the land are united both as a result of a history of shared experiences and memories, of common joys and sufferings, which tie events to specific places – fields of battle."[3] After the full scale of the atrocity became clear to the international community and large segments of the community became convinced of the need for some sort of arrangement to protect the Kurds from future genocide attempts. The situation became - to some extend - similar to what happened to the Jews after the end of WW II.

Soon the underground cells of the Kurdish parties reorganized themselves and mobilized more people into their ranks. It became clear that Kurdish struggle for national rights would continue

---

[2] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 368.

[3] Anthony Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 56.

but probably would take a different shape with more emphasis on mass mobilization of people inside towns and cities in addition to armed struggle.

One's hardship is another's fortune. Saddam Hussein misjudged the invasion of Kuwait, and did not expect sanctions and a real threat of force if he did not withdraw from Kuwait. The invasion ended up as a miraculous respite for the Kurds and Saddam Hussein's foolish adventure, another golden Kurdish opportunity.

Unlike the attack on the Kurds, the USA and the whole world supported Kuwait because the Iraqi invasion posed a threat to the supply of oil from the Gulf. President George Bush, the elder, led a coalition of western, Arab and Muslim countries to liberate Kuwait. According to Romano, "other states' public and private attitudes towards Iraq changed on August 2, 1990, when Saddam ordered the invasion of Kuwait and thereby threatened to control much of the world's oil supply. According to Western framings, the people of Kuwait now had to be liberated from Iraq – the injustice of Baghdad's aggression would not be tolerated."[4]

Saddam Hussein realised that external threats might prove dangerous to his authority within Iraq, particularly in the north. Therefore, he dispatched a secret envoy to Kurdistan to initiate a new round of negotiations with the Kurds. Their leaders, Talabani and Barzani, feared a possible reprisal from Saddam if they collaborated with the West against him. However, neither did they want to associate themselves with Saddam at that critical moment. Instead, they tried to implement a cautious policy of 'wait and see'. McDowall affirms that "on the other hand nothing could be more dangerous than for the Kurds openly to side with the US-led coalition against an embattled Iraq, and both the KDP and PUK sought to dispel speculation that they were willing to participate in a US-inspired campaign to overthrow Saddam. Like Iran, they longed for Saddam's discomfiture but feared open association with the West."[5]

The Kurds could not have taken a better position. They were right to treat Saddam and his reprisal very seriously, as they had suffered through enough bitter experiences with him to know what was possible. Only few months earlier, he had gassed them in Halabja, which resulted in

---

[4] David Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 204.

[5] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 369.

the killing of 5000 men, women and children and maiming thousands more. The Kurds faced another disappointing reaction from the United States, however. On 6 March 1975, the US abandoned the Kurds following the Algiers Accord between the Shah and Saddam Hussein. McDowall argues that "nevertheless, as the US-led Coalition forces assembled their full might in Saudi Arabia and the crisis moved towards open conflict, the IKF continued to insist that the Kurds would stay neutral in a shooting war. It was fearful of attacking while Saddam still had the capacity to use chemical weapons. As Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri, Deputy Chairman of the RCC had warned the people of Suleimanyeh, 'if you have forgotten Halabja, I would like to remind you that we are ready to repeat the operation.'"[6]

Another threat looming on the horizon was the united position that the neighbouring countries would take against the Kurds should the Kurds seize the opportunity and announce any sort of secession from Iraq. These neighbouring countries, with Kurdish populations of their own had previously engaged in collective arrangement and agreement with the Ba'thists to eliminate any danger coming from the Kurds as a result of their struggle to achieve their national goals. McDowall confirms that "as the crisis deepened, President Ozal publicly declared that Turkey, Iran and Syria were in agreement that no Kurdish entity should be allowed to emerge from the Gulf crises."[7]

The Kurdish national leaders opened another front for demanding their rights. The current situation afforded them the opportunity to be pro-active and request support from international super-powers, and adopt diplomacy as a means to gain international support for their cause. This time, unlike the previous attempts, they faced the world as a unified force, with clear demands. They asked the international community to support their cause, to help them achieve their national rights and live peacefully on their land.

9.2   Kurdish Uprising in March 1991 – False Victory

Soon after the invasion of Kuwait, the IKF predicted that the Iraqi regime would face some serious crisesso they prepared themselves for a moment that might require them to organize and

---

[6] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 369.

[7] McDowall, *A Modern History*, 370-371.

coordinate their efforts. They started planning for possible scenarios. One of the most highly-predicted developments was a potential confrontation between Iraq and the West over the importance of the oil fields of the Gulf. A number of senior PUK members sneaked into the cities of Iraqi Kurdistan to quietly mobilise the Kurds. They started their work by closely monitoring the situation, re-organizing their underground cells and making contacts with the Jash commanders. The leaders of the IKF held a series of meetings on the border with Iran and intensified their efforts to liaise with the Iranian government, who was no less keen see Iraq engage in confrontation with western governments and the UN Security Council members. Kurdish leaders also met with Iraqi Shiites in Iran and discussed a possible role they might play if Iraq was attacked by the Americans and their Allies.

No one would be as eager as the Kurds, who had endured the defeat of the Anfal campaign, to wait for the right moment to take their revenge, and begin to regain the pride they were deprived off during the campaign. The radio broadcasting stations of the Kurdish parties played a significant role in mobilising people and raising the morale of the Kurds.

As soon as the ground attack started and the inevitable defeat of the Iraqi army became clear, the IKF took a decisive and a clever action as part of their national duty towards their people. The IKF decided to unite the Kurds under the national banner and announced a general amnesty for all Jash and other Kurdish collaborators and urged them to undertake their national duty and turn their guns against the regime and to support the Peshmerga and the civilian people in their uprising against Saddam. According to McDowall, "it was now that the Jash played a crucial role in the Kurdish struggle. On 29th January they had heard the Front's formal announcement of an amnesty for them."[8]

Following intensive failed diplomacy, the Allied forces attacked the Iraqi army in Kuwait and within three weeks, they managed to liberate Kuwait. Thousands of Iraqi army personnel were killed and tens of thousands were captured by the coalition forces. Thousands of army vehicles, tanks and artillery were destroyed. Iraq's Air force had either been completely destroyed or was paralyzed. Iraq's military, as well as its industrial infrastructure. The war cost Iraq's already

---

[8] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 371.

crippling economy billions of dollars and it was at its weakest position since the Ba'th Party came to power in July 1968. On 15 February 1988, President Bush urged the Iraqi people and the army 'to take the matter into their own hands' and topple Saddam Hussein.

The return of angry, demoralised and defeated Iraqi forces to the city of Basra triggered the first spark of an uprising that soon spread to all the Shiite cities and towns in the south and every town, complex and city in Iraqi Kurdistan. McDowall elaborates by stating that "with the Coalition's wholesale defeat of the Iraqi forces on 28th February, events inside Iraq began to move rapidly. Almost immediately, much of Shiite of southern Iraq rose in revolt, encouraged by mass desertions from the army. With most of Saddam's surviving forces committed to recovering the major towns of the south, unrest gathered pace in Kurdistan amidst Peshmerga attacks on army units."[9]

Iraq clearly overpowered the Kurds in its battles due to the mighty force of its army. However, with the first sign of the defeat of this force, the Kurds rose again and managed to expel it from their territory. Heather Rae states that "states that use force to repress groups for instance may appear strong, but their reliance on manifest coercion rather than legitimate authority more accurately implies weakness."[10]

The first blast of the uprising in Iraqi Kurdistan happened in the town of Rania, 150 kilometres to the north of Suleimanyeh on 4 March 1990. Within 24 hours the entire town and the surrounding army posts and army barracks fell into the hands of people and Peshmerga forces. A local Jash commander, Ali Nabi, who was a former PUK Peshmerga commander, played a key role in the start of the uprising and the liberation of the town. Soon they were joined by Peshmerga forces, which were waiting at the outskirts of the town along with some leaders of IKF. On 7 March the people of Suleimanyeh rose up and liberated Suleimanyeh. On 11 March the capital of Kurdistan, Erbil was liberated and on the 12 the city of Duhok was liberated. The entire Iraqi Army, Ba'th Party officials and Security Police in Iraqi Kurdistan were either killed or surrendered or fled. All the cities, towns and complexes fell into people's hand one after another.

---

[9] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 371.

[10] Heather Rae, *State Identities and the Homogenization of People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 41.

The number of casualties amongst Peshmerga and civilians were relatively small compared to the scale of victory they achieved. Heather Rae describes the scene of the events and the date in which the towns and cities of Iraqi Kurdistan fell into the hand of the people as follows: 'On 4th March this unrest exploded in a popular uprising in Rania. Other locations rapidly followed suit, with most of Kurdistan including Duhok, Erbil and Suleimanyeh in rebel hands by 10th March. On 13th March Zakho fell. As Masoud Barzani admitted, according to Rae, "the uprising came from the people themselves. We didn't expect it.' As a result, in the words of a spokesman, the Iraqi Kurdistan Front 'merely followed the people onto the streets. It has been hesitant to enter towns in case of massive retribution. It now preferred these to remain under civil control, and for the civil authorities to negotiate with local army units."[11]

The Kurds managed to liberate every town and city in Iraqi Kurdistan except Kirkuk in less than 10 days. However, they needed to improve their organization and monitor political developments before launching a decisive attack on Kirkuk. Once they realised that the Shiite had succeeded in the south, they launched their strike against Kirkuk and within 48 hours they managed to liberate it and drive all Iraqi army personnel and officials who refused to join the uprising out of Kirkuk and heading to the south. On 20th March the Peshmerga forces and people of Kirkuk managed to capture the last army post and security police headquarter in the city of Kirkuk. Rae argues that "in the meantime, the Kurds pressed forward, encouraged both by the apparent success of the rebel Shiite, and by the warning issued by the United States to Iraq against the use of chemical weapons against its own citizens. The Front held a line parallel with Kirkuk-Baghdad highway, including Kalar, Kifri, Tuzkhurmatu, Chamchamal, and the foothold of Kirkuk. Now it launched a major assault on Kirkuk itself, the jewel in the Kurdish crown. On 19th March, the town fell."[12]

Oppression and the brutal policies used by the Ba'th Party to force the Kurds to accept an Arab identity of Iraq only caused the ambitions of the Kurds to rise even higher. They expressed their anger at imposing a homogenous Arab state upon them by liberating their territory at the first opportunity including the long disputed oil-rich city of Kirkuk. Thus, the Kurds' pride and belief

---

[11] Heather Rae, *State Identities and the Homogenization of People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 371.

[12] Rae, *State Identities and the*, 372.

in their national struggle was revived and they looked ahead in hopes of achieving their national rights in the future. Gunter confirms that "most of the major cities in Iraqi Kurdistan fell without much resistance into the rebels hands in early and mid March: Erbil, Suleimanyeh, Jalaula, Duhok, Zakho and Kirkuk… Masoud Barzani had declared: I feel that the result of 70 years of struggle is at hand now. It is the greatest honour for me. It is what I wanted all my life."[13]

The willingness and commitment shown by people in the towns, complexes and cities of Iraqi Kurdistan during the uprising are the best indicators of the degree of people's loyalty to Kurdish national rights. The reaction of the Jash forces and their commanders to the statement of IKF to join the ranks of people against the regime is a true reflection of feeling for Kurdishness amongst them. That feeling made them risk their lives and jeopardise everything they owned for the cause of their people. The readiness of people to sacrifice their lives for their nation and for taking such risks against the dangerous regime of Iraq despite the price they paid as a result is another shining example of Kurdish nationalism that emerged as a reaction to the Ba'thist's tendency to homogenise and impose Arab identity on the others. According to McDowall,

> "Almost everywhere it was the local Mustashars [Jash Commander] who now wielded most power and who negotiated the departure of Iraqi forces unwilling to join the uprising…. Only a few Jash leaders opted to remain loyal to Saddam. The majority of Jash leaders were thus transformed from embarrassed collaborators with Baghdad into champions of the uprising. Kurdish forces expanded from 15000 to well over 100000 men in the space of a few days. It was not long before the Mustashars were assiduously recruited by member parties of the Front, each trying to enhance its strength on the battle field and vis-à-vis other Front members.'[14]

These short-lived days for the Kurdish people, Peshmerga forces and the leaders of Iraqi Kurdistan were the happiest days of their lives. Sherko Bekas admits that "nothing can describe those happy moments when I was told that Kirkuk was liberated. I was short of words and all I

[13] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 50.

[14] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 372.

did was to cry and cry because I was thinking about all those martyrs who sacrificed their lives for that day to come. I was lucky to see what I saw but they were not."[15]

Noshirwan Amin, Talabani's deputy, engineer of the 1991 uprising, expressed his view about the day they liberated Kirkuk as follows:

> "When we liberated Kirkuk, and as I was leading the attacking forces, I went to the headquarters of Ali Hasan al-Majid's Northern Bureau and saw people burning the Ba'th Party headquarters and Security Police offices. I was overwhelmed with joy and a triumphant feeling. I said to my comrades: This is the happiest day of my life; this is the day that many Kurds and I were waiting for all our lives because I see that Kirkuk has been liberated. Now, I believe that we took revenge of the Ba'th Party and achieved some of what our martyrs sacrificed their lives for. I wrote a telegraph on the bonnet of my car to Mam Jalal (Talabani) and Kak Masoud (Barzani) from Kirkuk, informing them of the liberation of Kirkuk and in my short message I congratulated the Kurdish people for that great achievement of Kurdish national struggle."[16]

The victories of the Shiite Arabs in the south and the Kurds in the north, not the least of which was the liberation of Kirkuk, caused the Americans to make a deadly decision that cost the Iraqi people in general, and the Kurds in particular, rivers of blood and tremendous hardship. The effects of the events following that decision can still be seen. The American administration announced that they were not willing to change the regime and that toppling Saddam Hussein had not part of their agenda, from the beginning of the war. Thus, they gave Saddam a green light to lunch a counter-attack on the Shiites in the south first to be followed by a fierce attack on the Kurds in the north. Many Kurds feared that this could be another deal similar to the agreement between Saddam Hussein and the Shah in March 1975 which resulted in the collapse of the Kurdish movement at the time. Within a few days, the Iraqi Army managed to crush the uprising and took its revenge on Iraqi civilians. According to Romano, "the US administration suddenly worried that a mass uprising in Iraq could lead to unexpected and difficult to control outcomes, backtracked on its earlier statements. Turkey was deeply worried that such an uprising could lead to a Kurdish state in the north, and the West also feared that if Iraq's majority Shiite

---

[15] Interview with legendary Kurdish Poet Sherko Bekas, 18/8/2006, Suleimanyeh.

[16] Interview with Noshirwan Mustafa Amin, Analyst and director of Wsha Company for Media, 29/3/2005, Suleimanyeh.

population came to control the country, it would ally itself with Shiite Iran. George Bush qualified his earlier statements, insisting he had not meant that Iraqis should revolt at that particular moment in time."[17]

Those few days, in the recent history of the Kurds, are very important. It proved that the Ba'th policy against the Kurds and all of the measures that been implemented against the Kurds failed to weaken Kurdish nationalism. Despite the Arabization campaigns, the Anfal operations, village destruction, deportation and arbitrary imprisonment, the Kurds managed to seize the first opportunity as it arose. This can be considered as a clear example of the strength of Kurdish nationalism during those dark days. It also proves that imposing a dominant group's identity (Arabs, in this case) on others is not only unacceptable, but creates a reaction in the form of a new nationalist sentiment and motivation from the non-dominant group (Kurds, in this case) to work towards achieving their national rights, they feel they deserve.

9.3 Exodus

The Iraqis launched their counter-attack against the Kurds only after they realised that the Americans did not want to see Kurds triumphant in the north and Shiite victorious in the south. The Iraqi regime re-organized its remaining troops and Republican Guard units, which were left intact far from the front lines of Desert Storm, and moved them south to crush the Shiite in the south before then heading north, starting from Kirkuk. McDowall states that "it now appeared that the US-led Coalition did not wish Baghdad to lose control of the country or, rather, as indicated in un-attributable briefings, it desired the defeat of the rebels before the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. It was also clear that the US wished to assure Turkey and Saudi Arabia that it would help neither the Kurds nor the Shiite."[18]

The Kurds relied too much on a false hope, the hope of the Americans' support or protection. In other words, they had perceived a political opportunity that did not exist. Despite this, one cannot blame the Kurds for their reliance on the Americans and the action they took because the defeat, that they had suffered at the hands of the Iraqi army during the Anfal campaign was too fresh and

---

[17] David Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 206.

[18] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 372.

could not be forgotten. They took the first available opportunity to achieve the rights due to them. The Kurds considered the situation as a golden opportunity to achieve what they failed to do so for many years. According to Gunter, "only the United States could have helped the Kurds to avert defeat by: 1) Continuing its war against Saddam longer so that more of his army would have been destroyed, thus depriving him of the capacity to crush the Kurds. 2) Preventing Saddam from using fixed winged airplanes and helicopters, which were so effective against the Kurds and were supposedly denied Baghdad by the terms of the cease-fire; and 3) giving actual military support to the Kurds. For a variety of reasons none of these options was taken."[19]

The US president actively urged the people of Iraq to rise against Saddam Hussein before the start of the war. Iraqis then planned and waited for the right moment to act. To their surprise, the Americans even tried to deny what they asked people of Iraq few weeks earlier. What the Kurds did not remember was the many other times that they had been betrayed by the super-powers. Despite this, it was the Kurdish nationalists' momentum and strength that made them seize any opportunity that presented itself. McDowall affirms that "Talabani and Barzani jointly accused President Bush: You personally called upon the Iraqi people to rise up against Saddam Hussein's brutal dictatorship. Bush had indeed announced just before the ground war began that 'there is another way for the bloodshed to stop, and that is for the Iraqi military and the Iraqi people to take matters into their own hands to force Saddam Hussein, the dictator, to step aside,' a statement subsequently broadcast to Iraq by the Voice of America."[20]

As the Iraqi forces approached, the Kurds were thinking of previous disasters and chemical attacks similar to Halabja. The rumors and the statements by the Iraqi officials made the Kurds panic. Gunter states that "for his part, Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri, the Deputy Chairman of the Ba'th ruling RCC, warned the Kurds: If you have forgotten Halabja, I would like to remind you that we are ready to repeat the operation."[21]

The failed uprising quickly led to a human tragedy on a large scale. History has repeated itself for the Kurds. The Kurds are used to betrayal, abandonment and promises that are both broken

[19] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 53.

[20] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 372.

[21] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 49 - 50.

and empty. They realised that Saddam Hussein had unleashed his forces only after he was allowed by the Allies to crush the Kurdish uprising. Despite tough resistance by the Kurds, the Iraqis had the upper-hand and gradually recaptured all of the cities, towns and areas where they were pushed out few days earlier by Kurdish forces and demonstrators. According to Gunter, "defeat proved as swift as victory. Indeed, in retrospect, the victory had been false because the territorial gains made by the Kurds had little strategic importance and could not be held once Saddam subdued the Shiites in the south and turned his modern army north. I reporting the Iraqi recapture of Erbil, the Kurds admitted that they had been outclassed by the Iraqi Army's tanks, heavy artillery, and helicopters."[22]

The Kurds lost their fight against the advancing mighty troops for two reasons: (1) The Iraqi forces were superior in numbers, gun power, and resources. (2) The Kurds were demoralised because Saddam was allowed to attack them while the Iraqi troops enjoyed a greater morale as they were assured that they would survive the crisis. The Kurds, of course, had already endured a bitter experience with the Iraqi army and feared the use of chemical weapons again. The first and the most important place the Iraqi army managed to re-capture was the city of Kirkuk. The fall of Kirkuk ruined Kurdish dreams. Then the Iraqi army gradually re-captured all of the cities, towns and positions that it lost few days earlier to the Peshmerga and the civilians. The defeated Kurds headed to the mountains on the border between Iraq and Turkey. The number of people who fled the towns and reached the Turkish border could be estimated at 1.5 - 2 million. McDowall confirms that "on 28th March the Iraqi counter-offensive, using heavy weaponry and airpower, compelled the rebels to abandon Kirkuk, then the other foothill towns of Erbil, Duhok and Zakho. As they advanced, government forces seized up to 100000 Kurds and Turkmen around Kirkuk, Duhok and Tuzkhurmatu. Panic spread as stories of atrocities began to circulate."[23]

Hundreds of thousands of men, women and children fled towards the Iranian and Turkish border. Thousands of cars, vans, pick-ups and lorries were stuck in the muddy mountainous roads. Elderly people and children made their journey in a miserable way while hundreds did not complete the journey and passed away. Many people had to carry their old parents into the steep

---

[22] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 52
[23] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 373.

mountains through snowy corridors. Thousands of people suffered from hunger, cold, exposure, and illness. This was another plight and a bitter experience of the Kurds in their recent history. Luckily for the Kurds the whole unfortunate journey was covered in graphic detail by international media because there were many well known journalists from all over the world in Iraqi Kurdistan who arrived early to cover the events of the uprising and aftermath of the Gulf War. McDowall concludes that "mass panic and flight gripped all Kurdistan. Over 1.5 million Kurds abandoned their homes in a mad stampede to reach safety either in Turkey or Iran. All the roads and tracks to the border rapidly became clogged. On the road to Turkey one journalist said he had seen nearly 500 fugitives killed by phosphorous bombs dropped from helicopters. People are burnt to death inside their cars. Iraqi helicopters are bombing civilians without letup. Similar scenes occurred on the road to Iran. The rebel forces largely disintegrated as fighters rushed to escort their families to safety."[24]

9.4   Safe Haven

The fleeing of millions of Kurds due to Saddam's aggression only few days after the Gulf War was a real embarrassment for the US administration, as well as Britain and their other allies. The images of hundreds of thousands of people in the mud and snow on the peaks of mountains between Iraq, Iran and Turkey hit the headlines. Those images stayed on the front page of every European and American newspaper for several days. Not so long ago, the Americans and its Allies were rallying the world against Saddam's incursion into Kuwait and so it would have been very difficult to ignore the situation and not to do anything about it. According to McDowall, "as such images of cruelty and distress came to dominate news reports around the world, public criticism of Coalition leadership which washed its hands of responsibility mounted. There was distasteful contrast between the Coalition's readiness to fight to protect the oil and reinstate an autocratic regime in Kuwait and its reluctance to protect Kurds and Shiite… The failure to protect the Kurds now threatened to soil the reputation of the Gulf victors."[25]

---

[24] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 373.

[25] McDowall, *A Modern History of,* 373.

British Prime Minister, John Major, suggested the establishment of a safe haven for Kurdish refugees to return to. This followed the visit by the American foreign secretary, James Baker, to the border between Iraq and Turkey. The safe haven was one international initiative that helped save lives of, perhaps tens of thousands of men, women and children. Its speedy setup was a moral obligation of the international community towards the plight of the Kurds. The US should have been the first party to initiate its establishment, but it was the United Kingdom, and specifically Sir John Major, who engineered the safe haven. Gunter confirms that "initially proposed by Turkish President Ozal and then picked up and advocated by British Prime Minister John Major, the concept of 'enclaves' later changed to safe havens in northern Iraq, where the refugees would be protected from being attacked by Saddam's forces, eventually caused the United States and the United Nations partially to reverse their position on interference in post war domestic Iraqi strife."[26]

Following the failed uprising and mass exodus, two new developments were considered to be the turning point for the Kurdish national movement during those difficult moments. They left great marks not only on the situation immediately following the Gulf War, but also for many years to come. The first event was the Security Council resolution 688, which clearly condemned the repression of the Iraqi population including most recently in Kurdish areas and demanded Iraq immediately to end that repression. It also demanded that Iraq permits immediate access to the country for international humanitarian organizations. This was the first time since 1925 that an international forum – the most important one – addressed the plight of the Kurds and drew up a resolution for it. The second event was a meeting between the Kurdish leadership and the American officials for the first time since 1974. It occurred after the US administration recognized them as an opposition group. Both events were considered a big boost to Kurdish nationalism due to the benefits these two developments brought to the Kurdish cause. It opened another venue for Kurdish nationalism. These events led to a blossoming of Kurdish nationalism because it brought the Kurdish cause to the international arena similar to what followed World War I. McDowall argues that "throughout the crisis the US administration, while likening Saddam to the most evil of dictators and encouraging the population in his overthrow, had nevertheless refused contact with opposition groups on the grounds of 'non-interference' in

---

[26] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 56.

Iraq's internal affairs. Only on 28th March, as Saddam's forces cut swathe, through his opponents did the USA finally decide on dialogue with opposition leaders."[27]

It is believed that the UN Security Council resolution number 688 on 5 April 1991 was the first and the greatest single achievement for the Kurds, as far as United Nations resolutions and recommendations were concerned since the Sevres treaty. The resolution 'condemned the repression of the Iraqi civilian population in Kurdish populated areas, the consequences of which threaten international peace and security in the region' and demanded that Iraq immediately end this repression. It was the first time that the international community and through one of the highest organization stated that the Kurdish situation was so bad that it required an international recipient for the problem and put the international community in a position to meet its obligation. Gunter states that, "the United Nations Resolution number 688 on 5th April 1991 condemned the repression of the Iraqi civilian population in Kurdish populated areas, the consequences of which threatened international peace and security in the region and demanded that Iraq immediately end this repression. It was the first time in its forty-six-year history that the world body has so explicitly addressed the Kurdish question in Iraq."[28]

The US finally came to the rescue of the Kurds and announced that they would take some decisive action to protect the one million or so Kurdish refugees stuck in the snowy mountains on the border of Iraq and Turkey. President George Bush publicly announced that they could not wait to see what would happen to the fleeing Kurds. Gunter continues to argue that "although many observers might have had legalistic qualms, most still would have agreed that the egregious situation justified some such extra –ordinary action. U.S.A President, George Bush, said: We simply could not allow 500000 to a million people to die up in the mountains."[29]

Finally the Coalition forces decided to set up a safe haven where the Kurdish refugees who had fled to Turkey or were still waiting on the border to go back. They decided to protect the enclave from Iraqi attacks. The Coalition forces announced a no-fly zone above 36 parallel, by which Iraq's fixed wing planes could not fly in those areas. They also warned the Iraqi regime not to

---

[27] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 373.

[28] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 57.

[29] Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq*, 57.

risk attacking the Kurds in those areas. Soon after that decision, massive international aid and assistance began flowing into the area. A Coalition forces centre was also set up in the town of Zakho. A large number of NGOs began operating in the north of Iraq ever since. According to McDowall, "in mid-April the Coalition announced the establishment of a 'safe haven' inside Iraq, prohibiting Iraqi planes from flying north of the 36th parallel. On 18th April, it began moving the first Kurds into this haven from the border area under conditions close to coercion. This complemented the massive relief operation mounted by inter-governmental, governmental, and non-governmental agencies that had began, first unilaterally and then under the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreed between the United Nations and the Iraqi government on 18th April 1991."[30]

9.5   Another Failed Diplomatic Attempt – 1991 Negotiations

History had taught the Kurds a valuable lesson with regard to negotiations with the Iraqi government. They learned that any Iraqi government would ask the Kurds to begin negotiations to solve the Kurdish question peacefully only when they thought that taking such a step would save their skin during a crisis, or to strengthen their grip on power. This time was no different from the previous instances. Gunter states that "Saddam's objectives in starting the talks would seem to have been to neutralise the Kurdish resistance movement, play for time following his shattering defeat in the Gulf War, and divide the Iraqi opposition. To some extent, he initially accomplished all three of these goals."[31]

The Kurds, on the other hand, never rejected any offer from Iraq to resolve their problem peacefully and especially, when they felt that no one would protect them from the aggression of the Ba'th regime. The Kurds did not keep their intention secret following their failed uprising in March 1991. McDowall argues that "the absence of any Coalition to prevent the defeat of Kurdish forces and the mass flight of the civil population compelled the Front to negotiate with Saddam, as it had warned on 1st April. The previous week, as Iraqi forces retook Kirkuk, it had received a proposal from Saddam to settlement based on the principle of confederation. Both

---

[30] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 376.

[31] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 115

sides desperately sought respite from the dire strains in which they found themselves, the Kurds from their flight into sub-zero conditions in the mountains, Saddam from barely tolerable internal and external political and military pressure."[32]

The first attempt at a new round of negotiation was made by Saddam Hussein on 11 March 1991. By that date most of Iraqi Kurdistan had been liberated. By the time Saddam's letter reached the Kurdish leaders, only Kirkuk left to be liberated. Saddam asked the Kurdish leaders to start negotiations and he expressed his willingness to discuss all outstanding issues between the two sides. Talabani agreed to start the talks immediately. However, the KDP dragged their feet in response. According to Noshirwan Amin,

> "By the middle of the uprising in March 1991when most of the towns and cities of Iraqi Kurdistan had been liberated – except Kirkuk, and the army barracks and posts, Ba'th Party headquarters in those towns and cities had been destroyed and controlled by the Kurds, Saddam Hussein sent a joint letter to Talabani and Barzani to start negotiations. The letter, which was signed by his personal secretary and addressed to Talabani and Barzani separately, included a number of messages. He criticised the Kurds because the Kurdish uprising had been timed to occur alongside the Shiite one in the south. It contained a warning that he would re-capture the towns and cities in the same way he did in the south. It also contained a proposal for a dialogue and a new round of negotiations… Talabani's copy of the letter had been sent by his brother, Barzan from Geneva to Talabani, who was in Damascus. He replied immediately and agreed to start the talks. He instructed two politburo members, Dr. Fuad Ma'soum and Mohammed Tofiq Rahim, who were in London to travel and meet with Barzan Tekriti. He also asked Hushiar Zebari, personal representative of Masoud Barzani in London and Muhsin Dezayee to accompany Mr Ma'soum and Mr Rahim. They disagreed to go to Geneva. They preferred to carry on with their previously arranged visit to Saudi Arabia rather than going to Genève to meet Barzan Tikriti and start negotiations."[33]

Another failed attempt for negotiations was initiated by Saddam Hussein on 24 March 1991. Saddam sent Mukarram Talabani, a former Communist trusted by Saddam and a friend of Talabani and Barzani, to meet both Kurdish leaders, but he failed to see both of them before the ultimatum given to him by the Iraqi government expired. Amin continues describing the situation and states that

---

[32] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 376.

[33] Noshirwan Mustafa Amin, "Mufawazati Barai Kurdistani u Ba'th la 1991 (Kurdish), Negotiations of 1991 Between the Iraqi Kurdistan Front and the Ba'th Party", *Rozhnama,* February 3rd, 2008, 1st series.

According to Amin, "on 24th March, Iraq prepared a large force of the Republican Guards, and moved from Baghdad towards Kirkuk. Saddam sent Mukarram Talabani with that force to see Talabani and Barzani. He saw Barzani but insisted in seeing Talabani as well. But Talabani was on his way from Damascus and was in Zakho. Mukarram Talabani could not see Talabani before the four-day ultimatum expired. Therefore, this attempt was also buried."[34]

Despite all of the rounds of negotiations since the start of the Kurdish movement, the Kurds were, at times, rather naïve in dealing with situations, and handling crises, and there are many occasions when Kurdish leaders did not handle the situation properly. Mullah Mustafa Barzani made a mistake in 1963 when he negotiated the Aref government and accepted the deal without further reconsideration. Talabani, however, made another terrible mistake when he embraced and kissed Saddam Hussein in April 1991 during their brief meeting before holding a press conference saying that Saddam Hussein was a guarantor for the negotiation. According to McDowall,

> "Sceptical of adequacy or reliability of the 'safe haven' Front leaders, including Talabani arrived in Baghdad to discuss 'an Iraqi offer for expanded autonomy within the federated structure of Iraq promising democracy, pluralism, and constitutional rule in Baghdad'. Masud Barzani emphasized that the Front did not seek the resignation of Saddam Hussein or political independence, just democracy for Iraq and autonomy for the Kurds… Meanwhile Talabani shocked the world by publicly embracing Saddam who, he stated, had agreed to abolish Revolutionary Command Council and hold free multi-party elections within six months."[35]

The exodus of millions of people to the mountains on the borders of Iran and Turkey forced the Kurdish leadership to initiate negotiations with the Iraqi regime. On 5 April 1991, Talabani asked the Iraqi government to start negotiations and announced a ceasefire. What irony that the Kurdish leaders asked Saddam to start a dialogue on the same day that the United Nations Security Council issued resolution number 688. Was it a curse of nature, the naivety of Kurdish leaders, or their carelessness? Resolution 688 was one of the biggest achievements for the Kurdish people since Sevres treaty, but instead of capitalising on this great achievement, the Kurds approached Saddam Hussein to start negotiations. According to Noshirwan Amin, "on 5

---

[34] Amin, "Mufawazati Barai Kurdistani 1st series..

[35] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 376.

April, Talabani wrote a letter to Saddam Hussein reminding him about his letter of 11th March and that of his brother, Barzan, and expressed his willingness to announce a ceasefire and to send a delegate from the Iraqi Kurdistan Front to Baghdad and start negotiations. He gave the letter to a former military intelligence (Istikhbarat) officer, to deliver it to Saddam… When he handed the letter to Saddam and asked for a reply Saddam Hussein told him to inform Talabani that they were ready to discuss anything except separation from Iraq."[36]

The establishment of safe haven in Iraqi Kurdistan and the Security Council resolution number 688 on 5April 2008 placed enormous pressure on the Iraqi regime which resulted in the consideration of a deal with the Kurds through another round of negotiation. Gunter states that

> "During the height of the refugee crisis in mid-April, Saddam sent several envoys to Kurdish leaders calling for 'new chapter between Baghdad government and the Kurds.' Saddam probably took this step to at least seem to be trying to solve the Kurdish problem, which was preventing him from even beginning to normalise his rule over Iraq after his shattering defeat in the Gulf War… Iraqi Foreign Minister Ahmad Hussein Khudayir announced that the proposal from the regime calls for a settlement of the Kurdish problem based on the March 1970 accord concerning the granting of autonomy to the Kurds as well as the realization of pluralism and democracy."[37]

This round of negotiations was unique and different from many previous rounds, namely because it was the first time all the Kurdish parties within the IKF participated in the negotiations. This placed the Kurds in a much stronger position. On many other occasions, after the collapse of the Kurdish movement in 1975, each party negotiated with the Iraqi regime separately. The previous rounds of negotiations did not reach any satisfactory conclusion for obvious reasons. The Kurdistan Socialist Party entered negotiations with the Iraqi regime in 1979. There were many unconfirmed reports that the KDP started an un-announced and indirect negotiation in mid-1983. The PUK, however, announced a cease-fire with the Iraqi authority in December 1983. A leader of one of the major parties of IKF had to lead the Kurdish envoy every time they travelled to Baghdad for a series of rounds of negotiations. Gunter affirms that

---

[36] Noshirwan Mustafa Amin, "Mufawazati Barai Kurdistani u Ba'th la 1991 (Kurdish), Negotiations of 1991 Between the Iraqi Kurdistan Front and the Ba'th Party", *Rozhnama,* February 5th, 2008, 2nd series.

[37] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York, St Martin's Press, 1992), 59.

"The initial negotiations went through two rounds, Jalal Talabani was the principle Kurdish representative at the first (April 18-24) and Masoud Barzani at the second (May 6-18) each was absent from the talks the other attended. Only four of the then seven announced members of the Iraqi Kurdistan Front attended both rounds… On the Iraqi side, it was first reported that Foreign Minister Khudayir was representing his government but later it became clear that Izzat Ibrahim, the Vice Chairman of the RCC actually did so… Upon the successful completion of the first round of talks, Saddam received the leaders of the four –participating Kurdish parties and was seen on Baghdad television actually kissing Talabani."[38]

One can conclude that the main goal for the Iraqi regime's 1991 round of negotiations was to dilute and diminish the massive international support and sympathy that the Kurds began to enjoy for the first time since their exodus. The Kurds, on the other hand, wanted to save what they could and to bring back people to their homes and towns. The Kurdish leadership did not want to see their people humiliated and scattered in refugee camps in the neighbouring countries and therefore, become a nation without land. The Kurds were desperate for anything to save their fleeing population and the real winner in this game was Saddam Hussein. He managed to deprive the Kurds of the massive media coverage they enjoyed for many days following the counter-attack of the Iraqi army on the Kurdish towns and villages. This was another excellent opportunity that the Kurds did not utilize properly because the Kurdish leadership proved to be naive. Gunter affirms that 'Following the meeting, Talabani announced to the world the substance of the talks. He declared that effectively Saddam Hussein had agreed to the end of his dictatorship. There would be free election for all parties and multiparty life in Iraq. The RCC would be abolished and the Arabization of Iraqi Kurdistan ended. There also would be a general amnesty for all Iraqi prisoners in principle. The talks had dealt with four points: improving relations, democracy in Iraq, Kurdish national rights and the country's national unity.[39]

Soon differences regarding the negotiation process appeared between Talabani and Barzani. It became clear that one of the leaders was quite optimistic and placed a lot of weight behind the negotiation with Saddam, but the other started removing himself from the process and concentrated on rallying against the regime. Talabani made a dramatic about-face, as far as the outcome of the negotiation was concerned, and became deeply sceptical and pessimistic about

---

[38] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 60.

[39] Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq,* 60.

the potential outcome of the negotiations while Barzani remained optimistic. The PUK and KDP leaders expressed their opinions publicly. This was considered as a crack in the formal agreement between the IKF leaders, and many Kurds felt let down by the differences in their leaders' view about such an important issue as negotiating with Saddam Hussein at an extremely critical moment. According to Gunter, "Barzani continued negotiating with the regime in Baghdad until June 16. Then he returned to north, claiming that an agreement was in hand: We have achieved very good results, and I think the matter is finished… I will return to Baghdad in the next few days and the agreement will be signed… Despite Barzani's enthusiasm about the agreement, Talabani cautioned that the autonomy talks could still continue to months and that he and the Iraqi refugees do not trust the guarantees that the defeated tyrant would give if an agreement is reached."[40]

The main obstacle to signing any agreement between the Kurds and the Iraqi regime remained to be the boundaries of the Autonomous region and the chauvinist ideology of Ba'th Party. This round of negotiation was not any different from the previous ones. Furthermore, the view of the neighbouring countries on this issue made reaching an agreement on this point very difficult, if not impossible. According to Gunter, "Sami Abdurrahman, the leader of the KPDP emphasized important points which are still suspended, including the determination of the Autonomous Region… [And] the question of protecting security in the region – a task that we believe the Autonomy Authority should be in charge of… Saddam told the Turkish Prime Minister, Bulent Ecevit: The insistence on Kirkuk's inclusion in the Autonomous region is indicative of the wish of separation."[41]

The Ba'th Party implemented a foot-dragging style of negotiation. They also gave a positive impression to the Kurds at the onset of negotiations. The discussions about Kirkuk and the boundaries of the Autonomous region was a typical example. The Iraqi officials gave the impression that they were willing to discuss the future of Kirkuk and reach a deal with the Kurdish negotiating side, but a few weeks later they showed a completely different face. According to McDowall, "for two or three weeks the Front looked as if it might secure what it

[40] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 70.
[41] Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq,* 70.

wanted, including the designation of Kirkuk as the administration capital of the Autonomous Region. [Few weeks later] it was clear that Baghdad was no longer happy with ceding Kirkuk, Khanaqin or Mandale as the Front required."[42]

Saddam Hussein imposed a number of very tough conditions on the Kurds before any agreement could be decided. Saddam's first condition was that the Kurds needed to cut off all ties with the Americans and their allies. That condition could not be met, at least by one prominent leader of the IKF, Jalal Talabani. It should be said that there was not any concrete international guarantee either but instead a false hope that the Americans and the Allies would support the Kurds. Gunter argues that "the main problem that made an agreement elusive, however, was not the Draft Law on Autonomy but Saddam's demand that the Kurds give him something in return. This six-point requirement took the form of an appendix Baghdad added to the Draft Law entitled the Iraqi Kurdistan Front's Commitments towards the Homeland. The Kurdish Front found these demands unacceptable, since they would require the Kurds to sever their relations with outside world, lay down their arms, and depend on the Iraqi regime in the political, military and cultural fields"[43]

The Kurds' highest hope had risen to include Kirkukn their demand list as part of Iraqi Kurdistan despite the troublesome situation, but with every step the regime took to impose its chauvinist policy, the Kurds became more adamant and reacted by raising their demands.

Three weeks later, the IKF responded to Saddam's proposals by presenting a six-point counter-request and submitted to the government side. The Kurdish requests were, in response to every request Saddam had made. Gunter confirms that "on July 6th Kurdish Front presented a six-point counter-proposal to the Iraqi government. This reply concerned (1) the future status of Kirkuk, (2) democracy in Iraq, (3) security in Iraqi Kurdistan, (4) the surrender of Kurdish heavy weapons, (5) the silence of Kurdish radio stations, and (6) the termination of Kurdish contacts abroad."[44]

---

[42] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 376.

[43] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 70-71.

[44] Gunter, *The Kurds of*, 72.

At the end, Talabani and Barzani disagreed on how to handle the negotiations. Talabani changed his position towards the whole process, and claimed he had no faith in Saddam, and was reluctant to sign any deal with Iraq. He preferred to hang on to the negotiations and wanted to wait and see until Saddam's fate became clearer. Barzani, on the other hand, had no faith in the Americans and was tempted instead to take whatever was offered by Saddam to secure some sort of protection. Barzani believed that protection would result from Saddam's offer but not from the promises of the Allies. The rift that emerged between Talabani and Barzani was the greatest obstacle for those rounds of negotiations for the Kurds. Day after day, Talabani and Barzani drifted apart and the chasm between them was growing bigger and bigger.

On 13 August 1991 the Kurdish delegates returned to Kurdistan with the Ba'th proposal. The following day, the IKF held an important meeting to decide what to do. They had to make a final decision either to accept the deal or reject it. They decided not to aggravate Saddam by holding a general election and ask the elected Kurdistan parliament to make that decision. According to Noshirwan Amin, "the Kurdish delegate returned from Baghdad. The project/proposals had to be either accepted or rejected. The Iraqi Kurdistan Front held a series of meetings and at the end they refused the Iraqi proposals. Some members suggested holding a referendum to make such a decision. Finally they decided to rather hold a general election to elect a legislative body and let them make the decision on behalf of the people of Kurdistan. Therefore, a new situation had developed with the Iraqi government – no war no peace."[45]

9.6   End of Ba'th Rule

By the end of 1991, a new political situation had developed in Iraqi Kurdistan and probably one many Kurds never dreamed of. Saddam Hussein decided to withdraw his administration, police, security and military units from parts of Iraqi Kurdistan. A large part of Iraqi Kurdistan had been emptied of the Iraqi government's military, police and Ba'th Party officials and intelligence apparatus. The Peshmerga force was in full control over the cities, towns and all the regions of Erbil, Suleimanyeh, Duhok and part of Kirkuk governorate except the city of Kirkuk. This was

---

[45] Noshirwan Mustafa Amin, "Mufawazati Barai Kurdistani u Ba'th la 1991 (Kurdish), Negotiations of 1991 Between the Iraqi Kurdistan Front and the Ba'th Party", *Rozhnama,* February 25th, 2008, 10th series.

another excellent opportunity for Kurdish nationalism to flourish, for the nationalists to set up a good example of self-rule, and for the IKF to establish a de-facto state of law and order. However, that unique opportunity was not without problems, obstacles and unfortunate circumstances. Romano states that "in October of 1991, facing continual ambushes from Kurdish Peshmerga, and unable to use its air forces to assist in suppressing the guerrillas, Iraqi forces and government personnel withdrew from an area roughly the size of Switzerland, which became the de facto state of Iraqi Kurdistan. The oil producing areas of Kirkuk and Mosul, long claimed by the Kurds, remained in government hands, however."[46]

The Kurds faced two major problems following the withdrawal of the Iraqi administration from Iraqi Kurdistan in October 1991. First of all, Iraq withdrew all services from all towns and cities of Iraqi Kurdistan. This created a big vacuum in terms of public services such as hospitals, schools, municipal and public offices as well as bank and financial sector. Secondly, from October 23, 1991, Iraq imposed an economic embargo on the region. Romano states that "Saddam placed Kurdistan under siege in late October, withdrawing his troops behind a defensive line, cutting off all salaries to Kurdish employees and gradually imposing a blockade on the Kurdish region. Saddam did this not only to make life uncomfortable but to remind ordinary Kurds that, materially speaking, life would be much better without the IKF. He wished to enforce autonomy on his own terms. More fighting took around Erbil in early November and the number of newly displaced rose to 200000."[47]

Despite all of that, the Kurds resisted and the vast majority of the Kurdish population preferred to live under these difficult circumstances than be ruled by the Ba'th Party. This was an example of genuine national sentiment that had proven to be the driving force for all the coming years for Kurdish national struggle. These two very difficult situations that been imposed on the Kurds in Iraq strengthened their willingness to establish a de-facto government in Iraqi Kurdistan rather than weakening their determination to resist the harsh situation. This willingness of the Kurds to rule themselves and run their own affairs reflected the degree to which Kurdish nationalism had developed. Romano argues that "there was indeed a crisis. The Front recognized Saddam's

---

[46] David Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 208.

[47] Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist,* 378.

intention to force their submission to his terms, but it decided that the blockade was an opportunity for the Kurds unilaterally to choose their own future and they gave up further thought of a deal with Saddam. However, someone had to administer Kurdistan, but if the Front set up an independent administration because of government abdication, this would alarm Turkey, Iran, Syria and the West."[48]

The IKF decided to fill the vacuum left by the withdrawal of the Iraqi officials through the formation of an administrative entity. They agreed that such an entity must be built on a legitimate establishment that needed to be elected by the people of Kurdistan. The Kurdish leaders, namely Talabani and Barzani, had differing views on the formation of such an entity and its future. Talabani wanted to set up a semi-independent entity within a democratic Iraq, while Barzani was reluctant and was more concerned about their neighbours' reaction to such a development and decision. According to Gunter,

> "Although Barzani and Talabani denied that there were serious differences between them, it was clear that the elections could offer the Kurds different futures. Doubting the staying power of the West, Barzani favoured some type of autonomy, in agreement with Baghdad and also believed that anything more radical would not win the approval of Iraq's neighbours, whose fears of a nascent Kurdish state were perpetual. On the other hand, Talabani favoured self-determination within a democratic Iraq that would grant the Kurds more self-rule than the simple autonomy Barzani envisioned."[49]

The IKF had no option but to take serious action to fill the administrative vacuum, but the lack of a judiciary decision was the main obstacle in front of any decision or law to setup a new administration. In the meantime, the IKF made a temporary arrangement to run the affairs of the towns and cities under its control. The administrations of the cities were done through joint committees using the old governorate structure and members of the political parties. Gareth Stansfield confirms that "the initial governance of the region was exercised through the governorate structure and the Peshmerga of the political parties."[50]

---

[48] David Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 379

[49] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 89.

[50] Gareth Stansfield, *Iraqi Kurdistan – Political Development and Emergent Democracy* (London & New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 123.

9.7   The Best Solution - Election of Kurdistan Parliament

The new joint committees managed to run some of the daily affairs of people but the Kurds still needed to set up a legitimate authority and administration to help not only running the daily affairs of people, but to set up an entity on their land. This could be done through a general election to elect a parliament and a form of a legitimate administration. According to Stansfield, "the Iraqi Kurdistan Front needed to formulate some form of constitutional procedure before tackling the issue of self-governance. However, their political position was treacherous. The withdrawal of government of Iraq's administration from Iraqi Kurdistan was seen by many as a trap... The direction decided upon by the IKF was to legitimize its authority by forming an assembly with the aim of administering the region and establishing a legal authority by democratic election."[51]

The leaders of the IKF decided to hold a general election to establish a legitimate constitutional entity to run the affairs of that part of Iraqi Kurdistan. Barzani admitted by saying: Stansfield argues that

> "There is crisis within the Iraqi Kurdistan Front – a decision-making crisis… in order for there to be a decision-making centre and for this centre to enjoy legitimacy; we decided that election must be held… To determine which party or parties enjoy the masses confidence. Talabani hoped that the election will result in the establishment of a legitimate, constitutional, and legal entity embodied in a council that will represent the Kurdish people and will be the political decision-making body in Iraqi Kurdistan. The Kurdish Parliament will form the civil administration and will act as the Kurdish northern government."[52]

The Kurds were living in a difficult situation. On one hand, they realised that they must seize the opportunity to set up a local administration for the first time in their recent history to run the affairs of the region. On the other hand, though, they were concerned about the reaction of Iraq and their neighbours, Iran, Turkey and Syria. None of the neighbours was ready to accept a self-ruling Kurdish political entity in Iraqi Kurdistan. The Iraqi Arabs also did not want to see the Kurds set up a political entity on Iraqi soil that may gradually become a de-facto government and

---

[51] Gareth Stansfield, *Iraqi Kurdistan – Political Development and Emergent Democracy* (London & New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 124.
[52] Stansfield, *Iraqi Kurdistan – Political*, 89.

would jeopardise the unity of Iraq in the future. Not to mention the greatest threat came from Saddam Hussein, who did not hesitate in the past to attack Kurdistan. So, the Kurds had to keep a very critical balance and not take any risks. According to McDowall, "it was important to reassure all parties of Kurdish intentions to remain within the Iraqi state. In early January, KDP and PUK representatives joined other Iraqi opposition representatives in Damascus to lay the groundwork for an Iraqi government in exile."[53]

Despite the excitement of the forthcoming election-day, the people of Iraqi Kurdistan were understandably concerned about a number of issues. They feared reprisal from Saddam's regime after they were forced out of Iraqi Kurdistan; they were also worried about their neighbours – especially Turkey for not allowing the Kurds to peacefully achieve what they had been denied for so long. Another genuine fear was the reaction of the Kurdish parties to the result of the election. Gunter affirms that "on the eve of the elections, the leaders of the eight members of the Kurdish Front signed in Erbil a Sacred, Historic Kurdish Covenant that pledged that nothing would disturb or impeded them [the elections] or distort their soundness, honesty, and legitimacy. They also declared their respect for the outcome of the elections and full and unconditional commitment to whatever its results will be, [and] to the decisions of the Kurdistan National Council and the laws it will enact."[54]

The Kurds asked the Allies and the United Nations to help facilitate the election process. Soon the Kurds managed to draft a set of rules and regulations to be implemented during the general election. It was hoped that the election would produce a genuine leadership with clear vision to form a government based on the choice of people.

On 19th May 1992, a general election was held in Iraqi Kurdistan. Despite all of the shortcoming and claims of alleged fraud by some individuals and smaller parties who did not get the 7% requirement, the overall verdict of the observers was that the election was free and fair. Gunter confirms that "Michael Meadowcroft of the London-based Electoral Reform Society pronounced the results free and fair. He said that his group of forty-six observers had watched 141 of the 176

---

[53] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 379.

[54] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 91.

polling stations and had discovered no evidence of substantial fraud that would have significantly affected the results."[55]

The main competition was between the two main rivals, the PUK and KDP. The choice in the election was based on the slogans that the two parties adopted. It was reflected by the views of the two leaders, Talabani and Barzani. Talabani advocated a more semi-independent self-ruling entity, while Barzani favoured the KDP's old slogan, "Democracy for Iraq and autonomy for Kurdistan". However, many people believe that the electorate was divided between the loyalty to the leaders rather than the slogans and the ideology of the two parties. According to Gunter, "like many elections elsewhere, the campaign was essentially a personality contest. It was about loyalty to leaders rather than matters of ideology. Barzani, anxious not to alarm Iraq's neighbours, emphasized the need for reaching agreement with Baghdad, and adopted the slogan 'autonomy for Kurdistan and Democracy for Iraq'. Talabani proclaimed Kurdish self-determination within a federal Iraq, a slogan that clearly hinted at something closer to independence, despite assurances regarding Iraq's configuration."[56]

Election Day was the biggest occasion for the Kurds in their calendar of the recent history. This was because everyone managed to express his/her right and cast their vote to choose their first genuine representatives for the first Kurdish Parliament. This, indeed, was another clear expression of how much the Kurds loved freedom, self-rule, and their nation.

On election-day, 19 May 1992, the people of Iraqi Kurdistan elected their first ever parliament in their history. The total number of the legislature was 105 members: one for every 30000 people, which was decided after a long and thorough discussion. The IKF decided to adopt the proportional representation system. This system been adopted at the request of the smaller parties in the IKF. To win seats in that legislature, it would be necessary to win at least seven percent of vote. Gunter states that "at the same time as this legislature would be chosen, a supreme executive leader who had received at least 51% of the vote also would be picked… The electorate consisted of some 1.1 million men and women over the age of eighteen eligible to

---

[55] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 91.

[56] Gunter, *The Kurds of*, 91.

vote. The legislative candidates had to be citizens and residents of Kurdistan, at least thirty years old… Barzani and Talabani were the two leading candidates for the supreme leadership position, but two others also contended."[57]

All Kurdish parties, except those that were pro-PKK, entered the election based on proportional representation. Some of the smaller parties joined one of the two bigger parties, the PUK and KDP, in their list in return for the promise of seats in the parliament or in the cabinet. According to McDowall,

> "The election finally took place on 19th May, on the basis of proportional representation, with a threshold of 7 percent of the vote to qualify for seats. Smaller parties agreed to this, confident they could easily gain this minimum. The Front also agreed on the election of a leader. It was careful to ensure the electoral terms were consistent with the 1970 Autonomy Accord signed in Baghdad. Certain parties combined to improve their chance of seats, the Toilers Party joined the PUK list, in return for an assured three seats, and PASOK combined with the KSP. Various small Islamic groups combined under the title of the Islamic Movement. Others, notably the Society of Kurdish Tribes and the small, semi-clandestine pro-PKK, Partia Azadiya Kurdistan, chose not to participate."[58]

The election was by far, one of the greatest achievements for Kurdish nationalism to date. This process could be considered as a milestone that paved the way for more concrete measures to set up a Kurdish entity to run the affairs of people and establish a suitable education and administration system as opposed to the homogeneous state of Iraq with an Arab identity. This might have also created an environment for a democratic system that guarantees freedom of speech, pluralism and protection of human rights.

The Turkmen and Assyrians are two main ethnic minorities which have been living in Iraqi Kurdistan alongside the Kurds. Their participation in the election was vital in order to show that all ethnicities of Iraqi Kurdistan contributed to establishing the legislative institute that would harbour all of them. Both were represented by some political groups. The Assyrians chose to participate but the majority of Turkmen through the National Turkmen Party opted out of the

---

[57] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 90.

[58] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 380.

election. It would also demonstrate how the Kurdish political parties managed to embrace these minorities and made them feel that Kurdistan is theirs too. McDowall states that

> "The only [Turkmens'] political group, The National Turkmen Party was not a member of the Iraqi Kurdistan Front although its forces co-operated informally. It chose not to participate in the election because of the danger for the majority of Turkmens still under government control and to avoid offending Ankara, with which the party naturally had close relations… The Assyrians voted separately from the Kurds. Assyrians had worked within the Kurdish national movement since 1960s… The only Assyrian party of note was the Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM) [which was a member of the Iraqi Kurdistan Front – SR] founded in 1979. Its only challengers were small surrogate parties."[59]

9.8 Election Results - Catastrophe or Triumph

Regardless of a few shortcomings, the 19 May election was a historic day for Kurdish nationalism, and showed the people's willingness to do whatever was needed to establish a genuine, democratic and national institute to run their affairs. It also meant the rejection of the imposed Arab identity on them by the Ba'th party. The election, by many standards, was a triumph. McDowall argues that "the Kurdistan election was, for all the haste in its preparation and the occasional cases of fraud and malpractice, a historic moment. Externally, it demonstrated almost uniquely outside Israel and Turkey, the ability of a Middle Eastern electorate to conduct a peaceful, multi-party election. Its example was a symbolic threat not only to Saddam but to all un-elected regimes in the region."[60]

The outcome of the election was very close. There was a marginal difference between the votes in favour of the PUK and KDP. None of the smaller parties managed to gain the 7% threshold, however. As for the supreme executive post, none of the candidates gained the majority needed. However, after a thorough discussion and long negotiations and mediation by many Kurds both parties, the PUK and KDP, agreed to form a coalition government on a 50% - 50% basis. So, fifty seats of the Parliament went to the PUK and similar numbers to the KDP, in addition to five seats designated to the Christians. The Turkmen – and through the Iraqi National Turkmen Party (IMTP) decided not to participate in the elections. Nevertheless, all other parties of the IKF

---

[59] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 380-381.

[60] McDowall, *A Modern History of*, 380-381.

participated in the government alongside the Turkmen and the Christians (Assyrians). According to Gunter,

> "In the parliamentary voting, the KDP won 50.22 present and the PUK 49.78 percent of the vote. These figures apparently represented the distribution after the votes of those parties that had not received at least 7 percent of the vote were eliminated. Although they were nevertheless offered seats, the smaller parties turned the proposal down. After much negotiation, the Kurdish Front decided that the KDP and PUK would each be given fifty seats in the National Council. The remaining five would be given to the Christian minority with four of those going to the Assyrian Democratic Movement… As part of the agreement, it also was decided the chairman of the National Council would be from the KDP, while his deputy would be from the PUK. Conversely, the chairman of the Executive Council would be from the PUK and his deputy from the KDP."[61]

It has been said that despite some disagreements over percentage won and evidence of voter intimidation, the Kurdish elections of 1992 represented a landmark moment for Kurds everywhere.

The final agreement between the Kurdish parties regarding the election outcome, despite reservation and concerns raised by some parties, showed a great degree of responsibility by Kurdish leaders and the IKF. The Kurds exhibiting unity at that critical moment could be considered a shining example of Kurdish readiness to work towards achieving their national goals. According to Romano, "although there had been 'dissent and objections' during the elections, the result was one which all Kurdish parties accepted, albeit reluctantly, in order to safeguard the unity of Kurdish ranks and to portray the Kurds as civilized people before the world."[62]

The outcome of the leadership contest was not as clear as was expected. All three different candidates, Talabani, Barzani and Mahmud Osman were disappointed by the election result. Each of them expected much more votes in their favour. Gunter confirms that "the balloting for a supreme leader gave Barzani 466819 votes and Talabani 441057, with two other candidates receiving less than 40000… Since Barzani did not win a majority, a second round of voting was

---

[61] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 92.

[62] David Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 209.

necessary to choose the leader, but for practical reasons this would also not been possible in the near future... Nevertheless, once the compromise had been reached, Barzani and Talabani announced that the elections were a victory for everyone."[63]

Both leaders, Talabani and Barzani, agreed to abandon the idea of a contest for the position of executive leader. Instead they decided to jointly lead the IKF. According to McDowall, "in the leadership election, Barzani had gained 48 percent, Talabani 45 percent and Othman only 2 percent. It was decided to set the results aside and for Barzani and Talabani to lead the Front jointly."[64]

It was thought that the majority of former Jash supported the KDP and Barzani. McDowall states that "many Jash, who could sell their services, had shopped around. Some had been lured by money, for example into one of Islamic parties funded by Iran or Saudi Arabia or by a better deal in no their party. Other had been disenchanted."[65]

9.9 Dream Come True – First Iraqi Kurdistan's Parliament & Regional Government

The Kurdish Parliament held its first meeting on 4 June 1992, where all its members took oath in the presence of all Kurdish party leaders and many other Kurdish notables. They also appointed Jawher Namiq, a KDP Politburo member, the first speaker of the Kurdistan Parliament and Mohammed Tofiq, a PUK Politburo member, as his deputy. This was the first experience since the fall of the Republic of Mahabad in 1946 for the Kurds to rule themselves. According to Gunter, "in the presence of Barzani and Talabani the members had taken an oath regarding the 'safeguarding of the people and the land of Kurdistan.' Jawher Namiq Salim was elected as the council's speaker and Mohammed Tofiq Rahim, as his deputy."[66]

The next task for the Kurdistan Parliament and the Kurdish parties was to form a government. The structure of the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) was a reflection of the formation of

[63] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 92.

[64] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 381.

[65] McDowall, *A Modern History of*, 380.

[66] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 94.

the Parliament. The PUK and the KDP received almost all of the posts. It was agreed that the post of the Prime Minister would be given to the PUK. Dr Fuad Ma'soum, who was a member of the PUK's Politburo, was appointed as the Prime Minister and Dr. Rozh Noori Shawais, who was a member of the KDP's Politburo, was appointed as his deputy. Gunter describes the situation as follows: "on July 4th, the process of creating a government for the de facto Kurdish state was completed when Dr. Fuad Ma'soum, the Chairman of the council of Ministers, announced the names of the ministers and ministries… The government included members only from the KDP, PUK and one Christian. There was no one from the newly combined three parties (SPKI, KPDP, and PASOK, a group that began calling itself 'Unity Party of Kurdistan')."[67]

The newly established KRG faced massive administrative and financial difficulties. The Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan and the leaders of the IKF did not have any experience in managing large population of big towns and cities and the IKF leadership faced huge difficulty in running the newly established government. The problems ranged from very basic to large and complicated issues. According to Gunter, "Saddam Hussein's genocide attempts to reduce the Kurds in the 1970s and 1980s, had the opposite effect of fostering Kurdish nationalism. Iraq's defeat in the Gulf War of 1991 spawned a de facto Kurdish state in northern Iraq in which an increasingly strong sense of Iraqi Kurdish nationalism began to grow within a Kurdish ruled state."[68]

The PUK and KDP leaders, Talabani and Barzani, made a large mistake in choosing not to be part of the Kurdistan Parliament and KRG. They preferred to exercise their authority over the Parliament and the KRG through their parties outside of the two official institutes. They practically paralysed these two very important elements of the newly established Kurdish de-facto government. They argued that their positions outside the Parliament and KRG would not give Turkey, Iran, Syria and Iraq any justification to act against the two institutions. However, their intervention through their party members crippled the government and the parliament. McDowall states that

"With the KRG denied international recognition, Barzani and Talabani agreed to stand outside government in order to pursue their international diplomacy. This

[67] Michael Gunter, *The Kurds of Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 95.

[68] Gunter, *The Kurds of,* 49.

exacerbated the problem. Abroad as well as inside Kurdistan they tended to compete not co-operate, travelling separately to the world's capitals not jointly. Washington was finally compelled to insist they could only visit in tandem… But the greatest damage was done to KRG. Exercising power outside the electoral system hardly helped the development of democratic institutions. KRG was left executing the decision of leaders, with full responsibility but delegated authority. No one was in any doubt that regarding the exercise of coalition government, Kurdistan was now run by the two party headquarters."[69]

9.10   Bitter Experience - Internal Fighting

1992 - 1994 The Return of Tension: The election process and its results demonstrated deep internal differences in Kurdish society as much as it showed the eagerness and unity amongst them to achieve some national objectives. The people of Kurdistan showed how much Kurdish nationalism meant to them. However, party politics, power struggles and financial gains and, to some extent, ideological differences divided Kurdish society in Iraqi Kurdistan. According to McDowall,

> "Meanwhile inside liberated Kurdistan, the election of May 1992 and the formation of the KRG could not hide the fundamental longstanding or more recent divides that now existed. It was one thing to hold free elections but quite another to run a functional democracy, which demanded the creation of credible institution. The dead heat between the KDP and PUK merely underlined the manifold and overlapping antagonisms between the two parties, personal difference between the two leaders, geographical between Badinan and Soran, and ideological between 'traditionalist' and 'progressive' cultures. The geographical pattern had been confirmed in the vote, with the KDP's overwhelming sway in Duhok, and the PUK's supremacy in Suleimanyeh and Kirkuk provinces."[70]

If the Kurdish society was divided in the past between tribal and individual identity and status was measured by the degree of loyalty to a tribe's leader, it was now measured by loyalty to one party or a party leader. This new phenomena was reflected everywhere and in almost every activity in Iraqi Kurdistan. McDowall argues that

> "Following the demise of traditional tribalism as the prime form of socio-political organization during the 1970s, the 1990s saw the emergence of a new-tribalism as two major 'confederations' competed for hegemony in Iraqi Kurdistan. At the centre

[69] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 385.

[70] McDowall, *A Modern History of,* 385.

of each party, as with traditional confederations, lay a core of those loyal to the paramount. Beyond this core lay a widening group of people who supported one confederation or the other less directly. Thus the system of patronage and power still reached down to the street through intermediaries who themselves acquired followings through local patronage. These new 'Aghas' are the Peshmerga or Jash commanders who commanded their own following."[71]

In the absence of tolerance and acceptance of others who have different views, and the magnitude of the business involved, the PUK and KDP turned to their guns to settle their differences. According to McDowall, "in May 1994, the stress between the two confederations erupted in open fighting, sparked by a land dispute near Qaladeza between a KDP claimant and local non-tribal farmers supported by the PUK… Barzani and Talabani proved incapable of controlling their own forces and battles raged intermittently in Rawanduz, Shaqlawa, Qaladeza and elsewhere until the end of August… An uneasy stand-off ensued, with Kurdistan now politically and militarily partitioned."[72]

As the tension and fighting continued between the two main parties, the PUK and KDP, the other smaller parties took advantage of their engagement with each other. The smaller parties tried to cooperate with one side in order to gain ground with the other one. McDowall analyzes the situation and states that

> "The growth of the IMK around Mullah Osman's home town of Halabja had already led to fierce clashes with the PUK in December 1993, in part the result of animosity between 'obscurants' and 'atheists', as each side was wont to view the other but also the result of the IMK challenge to an area the PUK considered its own. On that occasion the PUK prevailed on the battlefield but accepted the arbitration of the KDP, with which the IMK enjoyed friendly relations. With fighting raging between the PUK and KDP in May 1994, IMK seized the towns of Halabja, Penjwin and Khurmal, fiercely attacking PUK positions… It was also clear that the KDP and IMK had been cooperating against the PUK and that the IMK was receiving strong support from Iran."[73]

As fighting continued, the Kurdish people's hopes for a prosperous and stable future at the hands of the PUK and KDP leadership faded away. With the internal fighting at its peak and the

---

[71] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 386.

[72] McDowall, *A Modern History of*,386.

[73] McDowall, *A Modern History of*, 387.

unemployment rate rocketing, a frightening wave of migration of young people to Europe began. Tens of thousands of young people between the ages of 15 – 30 made their way to European countries via a dangerous and unsafe route of Turkey, Greece and Italy. This resulted in draining Iraqi Kurdistan from a work force in every field. This wave of migration continued well until the fall of Saddam in 2003 and beyond.

1994-1999 The Contest for Iraqi Kurdistan: For most of this period the situation in Iraqi Kurdistan was hanging on a balance. There were many interacting factors, which made the situation volatile. The internal fighting between the PUK and KDP prevented the stability in that part of the Middle East. The harsh economic situation resulted from the United Nations' sanction against Iraq and the economic blockade imposed by Saddam Hussein on the already isolated Kurdish controlled area. The regional powers (Iran, Turkey, and Syria) continuously intervened in the affairs of the region. They wanted to influence the situation and to use the region for their own benefit. America on the other hand wanted to maintain the largest presence and influence to implement its dual containment policy (against Iran and Iraq). The US played a role, although not sufficient though, to end the fighting between the two fighting rivals. The Kurdish population paid the biggest price for this situation. According to McDowall, "these were unpromising circumstances in which internal Kurdish conflicts, essentially a struggle for ascendancy between the KDP and PUK, could be resolved. In December 1994, the KDP and PUK plunged again into open fighting... Anxious to re-establish sufficient stability for its twin strategic ambitions, and to deny a vacuum for its adversaries, Syria, Iraq or Iran, to exploit, the US brokered a fragile ceasefire in April 1995. However, this only held for three months."[74]

No peace agreement could last very long because the two main parties believed that they could weaken the other or force it to comply with its conditions on the battlefield. Therefore, they continued fighting whenever they found a simple opportunity to gain some ground or to defeat the other side. The hatred and lack of trust between Talabani and Barzani played a significant part in the conflict. One must not undermine the influence of many warlords from both sides that emerged during these circumstances. The undisciplined behavior of Peshmerga forces was another factor that made any peace agreement very fragile. This was particularly true with the

---

[74] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 387.

surrogate armed groups that had attached themselves to one party or another. Iran, however, was another regional force, that had a large influence on both sides and helped to broker a number of peace agreements that did not last either. McDowall affirms that "Iran held mediation talks in Tehran. Like Syria, it wished to rival the US and Turkey as a major factor in the area and it was in a strong position since it controlled the PUK's only egress to the outside world."[75]

The fighting parties examined every opportunity to strengthen themselves and defeat the other side in the battlefield. There were credible reports in 1994, that the KDP made contacts with Saddam's regime and sought help in defeating the PUK. Saddam generously supplied the KDP with arms and ammunition to alter the balance of force in favor of the KDP. This could have been the reason that the KDP refused to agree to another peace initiative by the US in Drogheda and Dublin in the autumn of 1995. According to McDowall, "meanwhile it became common knowledge that the KDP was negotiating with Baghdad. From 1994 and possibly earlier, Barzani had resumed secret contacts with Baghdad. Armor and artillery began to appear in the KDP arsenal, reportedly provided by Baghdad... In August and September the US secured a ceasefire at meeting in Drogheda and Dublin, but with no resolution to the fundamental disputes: the KDP's monopolization of revenues on the Turkish border and the PUK's seizure of Erbil."[76]

The two main parties, the PUK and KDP, could not find a way to establish a new relationship and bury decades of their differences, which had already cost the Kurds and Kurdish nationalism dearly. In 1994 fighting resumed once again between the Peshmerga forces. It lasted for a while and would result not only in the loss of tens of Peshmerga of the PUK and KDP but would widen the gap between the two sides for any possible reconciliation. According to Stansfield, "fighting between the KDP and PUK broke out in 1994 due to the intractable historical problems which colored the relationship of the two parties. Power sharing mechanisms within the Kurdish administration, the domination of decision making by the political bureaus of the KDP and PUK, all combined with the animosity caused by 25 years of fighting culminated in internecine Kurdish bloodletting on a ferocious state."[77]

---

[75] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 387.

[76] McDowall, *A Modern History of*, 388.

[77] Gareth Stansfield, *Iraq – People, History, Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 143.

In the summer of 1996, another round of fighting broke out again in the Choman – Rawanduz area, and soon escalated to Erbil area. Assisted by the Iranians, the PUK attacked KDP positions. The KDP started losing ground in the Erbil area and feared that the fighting would soon escalate towards the region of Badinan. Barzani failed in his attempts to urge the Americans to intervene and stop the PUK's advance. They had already lost the city of Erbil after the PUK captured all headquarters of the KDP inside the city of Erbil and the surrounding villages and complexes. Barzani turned to Saddam to cripple his arch enemy, the PUK. Stansfield confirms that "with Iranian support, the PUK attacked the strategic Haji Umran region in August 1996. The KDP was furious ad appealed to the US to end PUK-Iran offensives. Barzani was desperate and would seek whatever support was necessary to remove Talabani once and for all, appealing directly to Saddam for assistance to 'ease the foreign threat' posed by Iran."[78]

The fighting and the hostility took a dramatic turn when the KDP liaised with Baghdad to jointly attack Erbil and drive the PUK out of the area. This move cost the KDP great credibility amongst the population. In the early morning of 31August, the people of Erbil woke to the thundering sound of artillery bombardment and Iraqi Tank shelling from the south, east and west of Erbil. These attacks were in parallel with another attack from the KDP from the north. By doing this, the KDP had exceeded every limit in the history of the Kurdish internal fighting history for quite a long time. This move created such a big wound that it would take a long time to be heal. Kurdish nationalism has no meaning when one party takes such measure to overcome a rival Kurdish party! According to McDowall, "at the end of August the KDP moved rapidly, strongly supported by Iraqi armor and artillery, to capture Erbil, the Degala heights east of Erbil, and also Koysinjaq. A week later, KDP forces entered Suleimanyeh uncontested, and the defeat of the PUK seemed complete. In and around Erbil, Iraqi forces rounded up and executed dozens of opponents of the regime. Others died resisting the capture. Another 1500 Arab and Kurdish opponents of the regime were taken away in captivity."[79]

Saddam played a clever game by lifting the economic blockade he had imposed on Iraqi Kurdistan since 1991. He did so to show the Kurds how much better off they would be if they

---

[78] Gareth Stansfield, *Iraq – People, History, Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 147.

[79] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 388.

cooperated with the regime rather than the Americans. The honeymoon period between Saddam and the KDP did not last long, however. PUK forces reorganized themselves and launched a counter-attack. They were assisted by the Iranians and recaptured Suleimanyeh, Koysinjaq and many other places in the governorate of Suleimanyeh, Kirkuk and Erbil, but they failed to take Erbil. McDowall states that "in the immediate aftermath, Saddam removed the blockade imposed since 1991. It appeared to be a reward to Barzani, now apparently supreme. However, contrary to expectations, the PUK made a dramatic recovery in mid October when it recovered most Sorani-speaking territory, including Suleimanyeh. However, it failed to recapture Erbil."[80]

The support that the PUK received from Iran to recapture most of the territory it lost to the KDP, which had been assisted by Baghdad, came with a price. Iran demanded that the PUK assist its forces in attacking the headquarters of the KDP of Iran (KDPI) in Koysinjaq. Ironically, the PUK complied with the Iranian's request. The PUK had very good relations with the KDPI prior to this. For example, in November and December 1982, the PUK had sent thousands of its Peshmerga to help the KDPI defend their headquarters and the region against Iranian forces in the Piranshahr and Sardasht region in Iran. By doing so, Iraq and Iran wanted to show the Americans that they could entice the Kurdish parties whenever they wanted and that they were the key players in the region. According to McDowall, "Baghdad was obviously wished to reassert its influence... Tehran likewise wanted an end to US influence in the area but it also wanted an end to the KDPI's use of Iraq. So, it required the PUK assistance against the KDPI as the price for its facilities and support against the KDP. Thus, increasingly, KDP/PUK rivalry drove each party into greater dependency on, and co-operation with the aims of, their respective external rival sponsors."[81]

This dirty game by Iran and Iraq, whose main players were the KDP and the PUK, cost the Kurds and its cause significantly. These events made the Americans rethink their presence in the region and their close tie with the Kurdish parties. Therefore, they withdrew their centre in Zakho along with thousands of their Kurdish employees who were amongst the educated and elite of society. The presence of these professional technocrats was vital and their service and

---

[80] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 388.

[81] McDowall, *A Modern History,* 389.

281

skills in Iraqi Kurdistan were desperately needed. This created yet another problem for Iraqi Kurdistan, which was the target for frequent incursion of Turkish forces into Iraqi Kurdistan in pursues of the PKK fighters. McDowall concludes that "for US the events of autumn 1996 had been a chastening lesson in the limitations of its influence and the flimsy nature of the opposition coalition it had nurtured. It duly withdrew its military mission in Zakho, and evacuated 7000 locally-employed personnel at risk from Iraqi reprisals. These evacuees represented some of the best educated people of the region… The US withdrawal from Zakho gave Turkey much freer hand to intervene against the PKK, and to co-opt the KDP in this process."[82]

The US brokered a number of ceasefires between the PUK and KDP but none lasted for a long period. For the KDP, the situation was good because they managed to collect enormous revenues from customs at the crossing border of Khapour and spent very little on the areas under their control. The PUK was in a terrible situation financially and they could not continue in their situation. For them, money and finance were necessary for life and power, which they were deprived from. Naturally the KDP wanted to prolong that situation and tried to avoid any serious ceasefire. The PUK was so desperate that they wanted to push for reaching a truce. According to McDowall,

> "In late October 1996, US persuaded both parties to agree a permanent ceasefire, with regular co-ordination meeting in Ankara. Many basic sticking points remained however, most notably the equitable distribution of customs revenues for the whole region. At the time the KDP was accused of bogging an estimated $250000 in daily revenues at the Khapour crossing from Turkey. In fact its income was much more… Barzani now sought to outmaneuver Talabani politically. He received Ali Hassan al-Majid, architect and perpetrator of Anfal, in his headquarters in Salah al-Din; he also reached an agreement with Iran to open Hajj Umran border, worth $100000 in daily revenue to the KDP. In March 1997, Barzani temporarily withdrew from the Ankara process accusing the PUK of assassinating three of his officials."[83]

The internal fighting between the PUK and KDP devastated most of the Kurds. The PUK and KDP tried very hard through their mighty media machine to justify their fighting and prove to the Kurds that the other side was to be blamed but the majority of people opposed the internal fighting under any name or title. The few independent media outlets that existed at the time,

---

[82] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 389.

[83] McDowall, *A Modern History of*, 389.

writers, poets, and intellectuals all condemned the fighting and they played significant role in rallying people behind a call to end the internal strife immediately. A number of pressure groups were formed inside Kurdistan and abroad to force the two fighting sides to end their hostilities. People realized that despite the propaganda of the two parties, the fighting did not benefit the Kurdish cause in any form or shape. It was the people of Kurdistan and the elite intellectuals who raised the flag of Kurdish nationalism high this time, not the two major parties who claimed to be the true defenders of Kurdish nationalism for so long.

A resumption of fighting and the breaking of ceasefire agreements were repeated for most of 1996, 1997 and 1998. Both sides relied on foreign support from Iran, Turkey and Iraq to defeat the other. The most dangerous development in the fighting between the PUK and KDP occurred in August 1996. According to Stansfield, "by 2 am GMT on 31 August (5 am in Kurdistan) the invasion of Erbil by the combined forces of the government of Iraq and the KDP had commenced."[84]

The USA's credibility was hanging in balance, and therefore, they needed to broker a deal with the KDP and PUK for a lasting ceasefire. A policy of carrot and sticks was an obvious route for the Americans to pursue. On the one hand, they needed to promise the fighting parties financial support to improve the crippling economic situation. On the other hand, they needed to remind the Kurds that they would be left to face their destiny by themselves if they did not abide by the Americans' demands. In September 1998, the American Secretary of State, Madeline Albright, sponsored a ceasefire signed by Talabani and Barzani in Washington D.C. that ended the fighting. Stansfield states that "following the renewal of US political initiative in Iraqi Kurdistan, David Welsh, the Principle Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, visited Iraqi Kurdistan on 17 July 1998 and met with both Barzani and Talabani, inviting them to Washington DC for talks. The visit to Washington culminated with the Washington Agreement of 17 September 1998"[85].

---

[84] Gareth Stansfield, *Iraqi Kurdistan – Political Development and Emergent Democracy* (London & New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 98.
[85] Stansfield, *Iraqi Kurdiststan,* 100.

The USA started a new policy in the region. It decided to support the economy and help develop the Kurdish region. It also started to make the north and south no-fly zones as no-armor zones to prevent Baghdad from attacking the area. It designated a large sum of money, $97 million, to overthrow Saddam Hussein. For that purpose, it included a number of Iraqi groups including the PUK and KDP to receive a portion of that fund. According to Stansfield, "at the beginning of 1999 it [USA – SR] named seven Iraqi opposition groups eligible for US $97 million earmarked for the overthrow of Saddam. Of the Kurdish groups named, the KDP rejected any involvement, while the PUK equivocated. Both were very frightened of Baghdad's retribution. But they had little option but to host other opposition groups. Wanting continued protection they found themselves hostage to US policy to overthrow Saddam."[86]

The continued confrontation between the PUK and KDP resulted in a new situation. First, Iraqi Kurdistan was divided into three regions. The first part was under Saddam's control including the city of Kirkuk. Another part was a PUK administration with Suleimanyeh as its capital. The third part was a KDP administration, with Erbil as its capital. Second of all, the black market flourished and the traders of this business started to act as a lobby, influencing political decisions. The UN's food-for-oil program made the situation worse in terms of the black market.

Gradually, it became obvious that the Washington peace agreement brought an end to a round of Kurdish internal fighting but it made the division of that part of Iraqi Kurdistan into two distinct parts a reality. The PUK and KDP set up their own administration. In other words the Kurdish Regional Government became two governments. Hence, although the actual fighting was over, its devastating effects remained to damage the Kurdish nationalist movement. According to Liam Anderson,

> "When the dust settled following the signing of the Washington Accord in 1998, the Kurdish region was divided into two states, one centered in Erbil and governed by the KDP, the other located in Suleimanyeh under the control of the PUK… However, the events of the 1990s inflicted seemingly irreparable damage on the broader Kurdish cause. Given the opportunity (albeit under extremely trying economic and political circumstances) to govern themselves for virtually the first time in history,

---

[86] Gareth Stansfield, *Iraqi Kurdistan – Political Development and Emergent Democracy* (London & New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 391.

the Kurds had succeeded only in demonstrating their incapacity to do so. As one American observer concluded in 1995, if I didn't understand beforehand why the Kurds never had a state of their own, now I can see why."[87]

9.11   Fall of the Tyrant – 9th April 2003

The Ba'th Party ruled Iraq for thirty five years during which it used all sorts of cruelty and oppression. Hundreds of thousands of Kurds were killed by the Ba'th regime and thousands of villages were destroyed. It used mass killings, wide employment of chemical weapons, continuous practice of torture, arbitrary imprisonment and threat and intimidation against its citizens. Despite all of that and absence of freedom of speech in Iraq during those decades, Western governments had stayed silent. The brutality of the Iraqi regime was known to almost everyone. Nevertheless, the rule of terror continued and the USA and most of the European countries turned a blind eye to the vicious practice of the B'ath Party in Iraq. In 2003, the USA and some European countries recognized the danger that Saddam posed not only to the Kurds and the Iraqi people but also to international peace. Subsequently they took decisive action and ended the reign of that tyrant. On 9 April 2003, Iraq witnessed the end to a chapter full of tragedies, events, surprises and controversies. The fall of Saddam Hussein's statue in the Firdaws Square in Baghdad ended one of the most malicious regimes in recent history and opened a new era for the Iraqi people and, perhaps, for the region.

The Kurds seized this opportunity well. They had a fairly organized force, Peshmerga, and did not hesitate to send them to Baghdad at the request of their Shiite allies and the American forces to protect the newly established offices and to help the new administration to run Baghdad. Most of the Kurdish leaders travelled to and settled in Baghdad close to Paul Bremer, the American administrator in Iraq. They also participated in drafting the constitution to guarantee recognition of their national rights within a federal state of Iraq. Anthony Smith argues that "ideology of nationalism focuses the nation rather than a state, so in practice we find cases where maximum

---

[87] Liam Anderson, "The Role of Political Parties in Developing Kurdish Nationalism", in *The Evolution of Kurdish Nationalism*, ed. by Mohammed Ahmad & Michael Gunter (California: Mazda Publishers, 2007), 130.

autonomy falls well short of statehood, and where the national community seems content with a special or a federal political status."[88]

The Kurds managed to rally enough support amongst the Arabs and Americans to adopt federalism as a political system in Iraq with Kurdistan as a semi-independent federal entity. The federal system was interpreted in the constitution to guarantee the Kurds' right to be an equal partner with the Arabs in Iraq. They also realized their right to a share of the Iraqi revenue as well as to having their own regional police and security force. The constitution also confirms the rights of the Kurds to have their own legislative institution with the ability of issuing any law they see as appropriate to preserve their rights and to run their own affairs in the region.

---

[88] Anthony Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 112.

10.   Conclusion

The Kurds are one of the largest ethnic groups in the world without a state of their own. They have all the characteristics of a nation: a distinctive language and culture, a common history and a geographically designated land that they have been living on for thousands of years. Most scholars agree that the Kurds are the descendents of the Medes, an ancient civilization who had an empire that spanned most of what are now Iraq, Turkey and Iran. In the eighteenth and nineteenth century, there existed several semi-autonomous Kurdish emirates which controlled the majority of the geographic Kurdish region, running the affairs of their people. Contemporary Kurdish history is full of revolts, uprisings and triumphs against their oppressors as well as many catastrophes, tragedies, and massacres in the struggle for the recognition of their national rights.

It is argued that the origin of Kurdish nationalism can be traced back to 1597, the year the Sharafnama was published, in which Sharafadin Betlisi chronicled the history of the Kurdish people. He wrote about the history of the Kurds and the Kurdish emirates that were run by Kurdish princes, along with the concept of Kurdish national awareness to run their own affairs. He also elaborated on the details about running the affairs of the emirates. The legendary poet, Ahmadi Khani (1650-1707), is considered to be the first intellectual Kurdish nationalist who called for an independent state for the Kurds in his introduction to his famous love story, Memu Zin. A strong modern Kurdish nationalism, which can be defined as the feeling of belonging to the Kurds and willingness to participate in the struggle of the Kurdish nation to achieve its national rights, emerged following the emergence of Turkish and Arab nationalism in the region.

A number of Kurdish national political parties and groups were established in Turkey after the Young Turks tried to control the Ottoman Empire in 1908, giving it a narrowly-defined Turkish identity. A similar strategy can be found following the foundation of the modern state, of Iraq, when Sunni Arabs tried to impose on it an Arab identity.

Iraq was founded by the victorious allies after World War I, against the will of its people. The forceful amalgamation of different ethnic and religious groups into modern Iraq

made the newly created state a mosaic of ethnic and religious groups. The Sunni Arabs were given the responsibility of running Iraq's affairs, and continued to do so until the fall of the Ba'th Party in 2003. The dominant Sunni-Arab group tried to homogenize Iraq and give it an Arabic identity through a centralized administrative and education system. Throughout, the Kurds of Iraq repeatedly rejected attempts at homogenization and demanded their national rights to be recognized.

The dominant Sunni-Arabs excluded all other subordinate groups that rejected such an identity, especially the Kurds. The founders of Iraq and their successors in the 1930s and 1940s, and then the Ba'th Party from 1963 until their fall, controlled all affairs of the state, monopolizing senior posts in the government, military and security apparatus as well as the state's revenue, excluding the Kurds from participating in running the affairs of Iraq.

The Arab nationalists, in Iraq, labeled the Kurds treasonous and disloyal to the state because they rejected attempts to homogenize it with an ill-fitting Arab identity. This, they felt, legitimized the use of brute force and violence against them, including massacres, mass deportation and genocide. Kurdish nationalism emerged as a reaction to this attempt. With the implementation of every vicious policy of the Ba'th regime, Kurdish nationalism grew ever more entrenched in Kurdish society, and the Kurds' determination for their national rights strengthened. The brutal and chauvinistic policies of the Ba'th Party ended up having the opposite of its intended effect on Kurdish nationalism, creating a fertile environment for it to blossom.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there was a strong sense of national identity among the Kurds, despite the absence of a strong nationalist movement. It is clear that almost all Kurdish political parties/groups and cultural organizations founded at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth were established to promote Kurdish nationalism. It was the first time that such a widespread sentiment among large number of Kurds had lined up with their national aspirations and was more or less organized within a set of goals that has become a road-map to realizing long-held dreams of statehood. The leaders of those groups/organizations analyzed the situation, identifying

the Kurds' friends and enemies in their manifesto. Though it is impossible to measure their exact contribution to defining and promoting Kurdish nationalism, it is clear that the aspiration of all of them was to safeguard their Kurdish identity and, ultimately, to establish an independent Kurdish state.

The Kurds established a number of national political parties and groups in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s. The Association for the Restoration of the Kurds (JK), the Hiwa Party, Rezgari Party and the KDP were among the largest and most influential parties, all with clear nationalist goals.

After the fall of the monarchy, Qasem's recognition of Kurdish rights in the Iraqi constitution of 1959 was a turning point for Kurdish nationalism. However, after one year, Qasem backed down from his initial promise to the Kurds and, like his predecessors, began working towards creating a homogeneous Arab state. The Kurds rejected this policy and the KDP began leading a Kurdish armed movement in September 1961 against the Iraqi regime that was to last fourteen years.

The central government attacked the Kurdish movement and engaged in fierce fighting with the Kurds of Iraq. The Ba'th Party took advantage of the fact that Iraqi forces were engaged in Iraqi Kurdistan and plotting a coup against Qasem, making the case that the Kurds actually helped to bring the Ba'th Party to power. On 8 February 1963 Qasem was toppled and a new era of Iraq's history began. It became clear early on that the Ba'th Party, loudly proclaiming its triple slogan of "Unity, Freedom and Socialism", was one of the most extreme nationalist Arab parties in the region. From the onset of their rule in 1963 until they ouster on 9 April 2003, the Ba'th Party's extreme anti-Kurdish policies had a direct impact on the shaping of Kurdish nationalism in Iraq, and it can be said, in retrospect, that this effect was greater than the Ba'th Party's effect on Arab nationalism.

The Ba'th Party came to power in Iraq with the aim of establishing an Arab state and attempting to homogenize the Kurds and other subordinate groups to it, an aim the Kurds continually struggled against. Like its predecessors, the party used various methods in its attempt to achieve this objective, among them establishing a centralized educational and

administrative system. The rule of the Ba'th Party has become chiefly associated by many with its Arabization process, implemented in large part by the deportation of the Kurds from their native villages and towns and, in their place, settling Arabs from central and south Iraq.

As previously stated, the Iraqi army's military engagement with the Kurds was a factor in the events that lead to the Ba'th Party being ousted less than a year after they seized power in 1963. As others took the mantle, they too entered into the first round of their own negotiations with the Kurds, and found de-centralized autonomy to be the primary Kurdish demand. Despite these and multiple subsequent attempts, negotiations eventually broke down with no agreement ever being reached.

The KDP faced a serious internal conflict between Mustafa Barzani and most of its Politburo members. They had conflicting views on a number of sensitive issues related to Kurdish demands, as basic as what the key aims and objectives of the Kurdish nationalism movement should be. They also argued about the proposed mechanism of leading the movement and what the definition and composition of its armed forces should be. This led to a split within the KDP in 1964, significantly altering the Kurdish nationalism movement for the following two decades.

By the late 1960s, the Iraqi government found itself crippled by a number of serious political and economic issues. The continued domestic armed struggle with the Kurds was a liability, as it had been to Qassem, plus foreign issues such as the Israeli defeat of Arab forces in June 1967 and the general regional and worldwide balance of power only added to the factors which culminated in the demise of the regime.

On July 1968 the Ba'th Party again seized power and began implementing the very same anti-Kurdish policies it had before, though with some tactical changes. Past experience from 1963 in carrying out such programs seemed to have caused advances in planning and execution, and so the return of the Ba'th Party's dominance in Iraq ushered in a new dark and infamous era for the Kurds, with ramifications that were to be felt for years throughout the region and the world.

The Party's actions against the Kurds were merciless and the tragedies which followed decimated the Kurds of Iraq, but in doing so, solidified their resolve, and so served to build the momentum of Kurdish nationalism and maintain its development over the following years.

Since Iraq's inception following World War I, and until the fall of the Ba'th regime in 2003, Kurds suffered dramatically at the hands of every successive Iraqi regime. The most brutal was the Ba'th Party, spanning the period from 1968 to the day they were ousted by the US-led coalition on 9 April, 2003. During this period, the Kurds were subjected to all manner of oppression by the Ba'thists, including but not limited to Arabization, deportation, destruction of villages and killing were all perpetrated on a massive scale. Despite this, the Kurds showed fierce resistance throughout. Ferhad Shakely states that "successive regimes during this period applied the same oppressive policy and methods against the Kurds and their culture. However, at the same time the Kurdish liberation movement and Kurdish nationalism went from strength to strength. After several years of struggle it had become a force which could no longer be ignored by Iraqi or international politics. In the end, the government was forced to sign an agreement with the liberation movement on the 11th of March, 1970."[1]

The Ba'th leadership, having learned from their previous experience, tried to concentrate on strengthening their grip on power, controlling Iraq through the monopolisation of senior posts in the government, educational system, army and entire security apparatus. They felt they needed a period of peace to accomplish their plan and started another round of negotiations with the Kurds who were at the time represented by the KDP. This dialogue led to signing of the March1970 agreement, in which the Ba'th Party had actually agreed to some considerable Kurdish national demands. The golden years of 1970-1974 marked a period of relative stability for the Kurds, allowing a steady increase in Kurdish aspirations and nationalism flourished, as did several vital aspects in the lives

---

[1] Ferhad Shakely, *Hasti Kurdayati la Mam u Zinda (Kurdish) - Kurdish nationalism in Mem u Zin* (Brussels: Kurdish Institute, 1992).

of Kurds. Among these accomplishments included the growth of Kurdistan's economy, the introduction of a Kurdish-language educational system into local schools, the publication of a large number of Kurdish books, newspapers and magazines, the attainment of university degrees by a number of Kurds while many others excelled in police and military academies, and a renaissance in Kurdish art and music.

The Ba'th regime nationalised foreign oil companies, persuaded the ICP to join the 'National Front' and took control of the army. It then retreated from what they had agreed to in the March agreement with the KDP and announced a new agreement which no longer honoured the Kurdish demands.

The Kurds rejected the new agreement and the KDP mobilised hundreds of thousands to join the Kurdish nationalism movement, and organized Peshmerga forces to the point where the number of fighters exceeded 100000. Another fierce round of fighting began between Kurdish forces and the Iraqi army, casting Barzani once again as the symbol of Kurdish resistance in the eyes of his supporters. Iraq used nearly every resource at its disposal in an attempt to eradicate the Kurds. Tens of thousands of families were forced to flee to Iran and stay in makeshift camps, set up by the Iranians. Mustafa Barzani managed to secure some aid and assistance from foreign powers in his struggle against the Ba'th regime. Iran and the USA supported the Kurdish movement, both financially and logistically, and Iran also provided arms and ammunition to help resist the Iraqi army's advances.

The support by Iran and the USA was crucial to Barzani's resistance to the Iraqi regime as a tactical move and he accepted it as a necessity, knowing both countries were attempting, in doing so, to indirectly affect their wars against Iraq and the Soviet Union for their own strategic interests. The Kurds, on the other hand, did their best to capitalize on the tensions between Iraq and Iran. This game proved to be much bigger than the Kurdish leadership could handle.

The Kurdish movement maintained its demands - throughout their struggle against the subsequent Iraqi governments and until 1975 – for democracy in Iraq and autonomy for

the Kurds. However, the Ba'th Party portrayed the Kurdish demands for their national rights as a plan to partition Iraq at the request of foreign powers.

One year of fierce fighting between the two sides resulted in thousands of deaths, tens of thousands of injured and swallowed up a large portion of the Iraqi budget. Saddam Hussein realised that he could not win a ground war against the Kurds outright, and became concerned that a protracted war might threaten his grip on power in Baghdad. Therefore, he decided to end the war with a new strategy. He signed an agreement with Iran to end their land and border dispute in favour of Iran under the condition that Iran would cease its support of the Iraqi Kurdish movement. According to McDowall, "on 6 March 1975, at the OPEC conference in Algiers, Saddam Hussein and the Shah agreed a formal settlement of outstanding border differences. Iraq ceded the Thalweg (deepest point) demarcation of the Shatt al- Arab, and both parties agreed to abide by the 1913 Constantinople Protocol, and the frontier demarcation Commission of 1914. Furthermore both agreed to maintain strict border security and prevent subversive infiltration from either side."[2]

On the 11 March 1975, the Shah of Iran informed Barzani about the agreement and his decision to end support of the Kurdish movement. Barzani announced the end of active Kurdish resistance movement and urged Peshmerga forces to either surrender to the Iraqis or to go to Iran and live in refugee camps. He and his sons fled to the USA and stayed there until 1979, when he succumbed to lung cancer.

The collapse of the Kurdish resistance movement was a huge disappointment for the Kurds, and though it had a profound demoralizing effect. Nevertheless, the Kurdish nationalism movement continued. The Iraqi regime tried to capitalize on its victory by imposing Iraq's Arabic identity on the Kurds with the implementation of a serious of new Anti-Kurdish measures, such as: forcing Kurds to join the Ba'th Party, embarking on a new large-scale Arabization campaign, destroying 1242 villages on the border with Iran and Turkey, and displacing thousands of Kurds from the city of Kirkuk to the south of

---

[2] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 338.

Iraq and replacing them with large numbers of Arabs. Despite all of this, Kurdish nationalists did not give up and reacted by reorganizing themselves anew, into a new form of their continued nationalist movement.

Soon after the collapse of the Kurdish armed movement in 1975, the formation of the PUK was announced. Some former KDP leaders and former Peshmerga commanders continued their struggle under a new name, the KDP-Provisional Leadership. It was followed by a re-emergence of Peshmerga forces in Iraqi Kurdistan. This was a reaction to the stringent Ba'thist policies being perpetrated throughout Kurdistan. The PUK implemented a new style of collective leadership and created a new structure for the organization of Kurdish fighters. Other new parties such as Pasok, the Socialist Party, and those of the Islamists emerged and joined the Kurdish forces in Iraqi Kurdistan. The speed and strength with which the Kurdish nationalism movement re-emerged was evidence of the Kurdish peoples' alarming dismay of the harsh Ba'thist policies of that period, and their steadfast refusal to be deterred by the failure of the preceding national movement led by Mustafa Barzani. The emergence of several new Kurdish parties and armed groups came at a price known to many such movements throughout history: division and internal fighting.

The internal fighting between the Kurdish parties had a harmful and demoralizing effect on the Kurdish nationalism movement and left lasting negative marks on the development of Kurdish nationalism. It also gave both regimes, Iraq and Iran, an opportunity to intervene in the internal affairs of the Kurdish movement, not to mention the thousands of Peshmerga who were killed and wounded in the fighting.

The Iran-Iraq war of 1980 provided another opportunity for Kurdish nationalism to flourish. The Kurdish political parties managed to mobilize a large number of Kurds, army deserters and draft dodgers at a crucial time, when its resources were limited. At the beginning of the war, the Kurds tried to stay neutral between the two fighting sides, hoping to see the end of both of them. Most of the Kurdish parties managed to do so at the beginning, but failed to sustain their neutral positions. The KDP sided with the Iranian regime, while the PUK supported the Iranian Kurds in their struggle against the

Islamic Republic. The Ba'th regime used the Kurds' collaboration with Iran as an additional excuse to implement their policy of elimination against them.

In March of 1982 the Kurds displayed their anger at the Ba'th Party's policies against them in a new way by organizing large anti-regime demonstration in almost every city, town and complex of Iraqi Kurdistan. They demanded an end to the regime's policy against them and a formal recognition of their national rights. As a result of these events, in December 1983, the Ba'th regime started another round of negotiations with one of the main Kurdish parties, the PUK. After nearly two years of dialogue and negotiation between the two sides they yet again reached a stalemate, and on 15 February 1985 the PUK terminated negotiations. Vicious fighting resumed between the two sides, and Iraq began another scorched earth campaign in Iraqi Kurdistan which resulted in the destruction of hundreds of villages and the killing of thousands of men, women and children. Iraq then used chemical weapons against the Kurds for the first time, which had devastating consequences. Nevertheless, the Kurds did not give in to the Ba'th desire to end the Kurdish national struggle, instead exploring any and all available means at their disposal to continue their fight for their national rights.

The period of 1985-1991 was another eventful period in the recent history of the Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan. It witnessed the end of another round of negotiations between the Kurds and the Ba'th regime the foundation of the Iraqi Kurdistan Front (IKF) on 3 July 1987, which embraced all Kurdish parties; the infamous Anfal campaign that aimed to eliminate the rural Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan; the use of chemical weapons against civilian Kurds; the end of the Iran-Iraq war; Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and its defeat in the war against the US; culminating in the March 1991 uprising that ended the reign of the Ba'th Party in part of Iraqi Kurdistan.

The formation of the IKF played a significant role in boosting morale of the people in Kurdistan. It came as a response to the desperate need for unity amongst the Kurds. With every measure enacted by the Ba'th Party to end the long-held aspirations of the Kurds and impose an Arab identity on them, Kurdish nationalism was taking another step forward, and the awareness for the need for unity and continued struggle became

inevitable. The Kurdish leaders started consulting each other on national issues and began a new level of cooperation, instead of compromising with their enemies against each other. This was accompanied by the efforts of many in the Kurdish Diaspora as they too started campaigning together for the Kurdish national rights. The new relationship between the Kurdish parties and their new approach of working together, both domestically and internationally, boosted Kurdish nationalism and gave the Kurds a new hope for the future.

The Kurds actively refused the homogenization of Iraq, which favored Sunni Arabs, and for this, the Ba'th Party decided to eliminate them. They began with the rural Kurds. In March 1987, Ba'th Party leadership dispatched Ali Hassan al-Majid to Kurdistan to become the General Secretary of the Northern Bureau of the Ba'th Party (NB) in Kirkuk. In the decree of his appointment by Saddam Hussein, it was made clear that his mission was to eradicate the rural Kurds. According to the same decree - no. 160 of RCC - he was given the authority of Saddam Hussein over the Iraqi military and administration to accomplish his task. The use of chemical weapons, a fierce campaign of village destruction and Arabization and exclusion of rural Kurds from Iraq's general census were characteristic elements of the period when Ali Hassan al-Majid acted as the general secretary of NB.

On the 23 February 1988, Iraq put into motion the Anfal campaign to eradicate rural Kurds after stripping them of their Iraqi citizenship by excluding them from the general census of October, 1987, all the while, labeling Kurds, or any other subordinate group, who refused homogenization of Iraq and its Arabic identity as traitors.

The scope of the Anfal campaign spanned the entire geographical area of Iraqi Kurdistan and was accomplished in eight stages, ending on the 6 September 1988. The result was the death of more than 100,000 men, women and children, the destruction of 2,200 villages and the use of chemical weapons that resulted in the killing of more than 6,000 people, and the maiming of thousands more. By the end of the Anfal campaign, all the Kurdish parties' Peshmerga forces were driven out of Iraqi Kurdistan to the borders with

Iran and Turkey. It was on the 8 August 1988, during the Anfal campaign, the Iran agreed to a ceasefire with Iraq, ending the Iran-Iraq war.

The Ba'th Party continued its efforts to exclude and persecute the Kurds, and they reacted by reorganizing themselves and mobilizing their people within the Kurdish nationalism movement. Along with the IKF, the movement focused on mobilizing people in the towns and cities of Kurdistan, setting up armed sleeper cells, and liaising with the Peshmerga units in destroyed villages and the organizations inside the cities and towns of Iraqi Kurdistan. The IKF approached Kurds who had collaborated with the Iraqi regime, now ready to switch sides and support the Kurdish nationalism movement. They also planned to work in the diplomatic arena with international human rights organizations and other NGOs worldwide. They made direct contact with the Americans and with European countries, mainly Britain and France.

The 1990 invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein was considered to be the red line by the USA, and it established a coalition between NATO members and some Arab and Muslim countries to liberate Kuwait. In March 1990, the American-led coalition defeated Saddam's army, liberated Kuwait and imposed international sanctions on Iraq.

The Kurds, keen to exploit any chance to achieve their national goals, saw Iraq's defeat in Kuwait as a golden opportunity. The IKF prepared its Peshmerga forces and mobilized Kurdish populations, managing to lead a massive popular uprising against the regime. The spark of the uprising started on 5 March 1991 from the town of Rania and soon spread to every town and city in Iraqi Kurdistan including Kirkuk. By 19 March almost all regions of Iraqi Kurdistan were controlled by Peshmerga forces and the people.

This outcome of the uprising was a successful recovery from the defeat that was inflicted upon the Kurds in 1988 during the Anfal campaign, but they then suffered another catastrophe when Saddam was allowed to crush their uprising in full view of the international press. Media footage of the exodus of more than two million Kurds to the mountains created pressure on the Allies to set up a safe haven for the Kurds and to establish a no-fly zone above the 36th parallel. The withdrawal of the Iraqi administration

from most of Iraqi Kurdistan put the organization of the IKF to the test, as it now had to administer the region, while attempting to seize any other opportunities which might present themselves.

The Kurdish nationalism movement was reinvigorated by the mixing of Peshmerga and the population of Kurdistan living in the towns and cities. Furthermore, the inclusion of populations within Kurdish society that had been under the direct rule of the Ba'th Party for an extremely long was a daunting task. According to Andreas Wimmer, "the process of gradual inclusion of large sections of the population into the nationalist cultural compromise was reinforced after 1991."[3]

The establishment of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the election of the Kurdistan Parliament on 19 May 1992 was the endorsement of Kurdish nationalism at its peak level. This was the beginning of the emergence of a true and officially recognized entity called the KRG and also the Kurdistan Parliament. The formation of the KRG provided a deep sense of pride for Iraqi Kurds, one they would prove to be willing to defend with their lives. For many months, tens of thousands of teachers, civil servants, doctors and other officials volunteered to work in harsh circumstances without pay. Tens of thousands of Kurds who lived abroad contributed to the weak economy of Iraqi Kurdistan by sending money on a regular basis, in an effort to ease the hardship of living under such difficult circumstances. It became apparent that almost all Kurds preferred to live in such challenging circumstances than to being governed by the Ba'th Party and the Iraqi government again. This is considered one of the shining examples of true nationalism by ordinary Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan. Despite this golden opportunity, internal divisions continued to plague the major Kurdish political parties. Internal fighting between the various Kurdish parties not only ended the lives of thousands of people but for many also crushed an important dream of setting up a model of self-rule by the Kurds on part of their land.

---

[3] Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict - Shadows of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 193.

Internal divisions continued to be the Kurds Achilles' heel, and by 1994, almost all Kurdish political parties were engaged in some form of dispute or conflict. The most heated of them was between the PUK and KDP, with smaller parties divided in their loyalty between the two big players. Iraq and Iran played a significant role in widening the gap between the two parties. It became clear that the KDP was inclined to normalize its relations with Saddam's regime, while the PUK relied on the American stance against Saddam Hussein. The fighting between the two fighting sides paralyzed to a large degree the newly established KRG administration. G Stansfield states that "the tension which existed between the KDP and PUK in 1994 meant that the Presidential Council collapsed and political control remained with the Political Bureaus."[4] The fighting continued between the two main parties and this cost the Kurds enormously. The two sides sought Iraqi, Iranian and Turkish support for defeating their rival. In May 1996, the PUK forces drove the KDP fighters from the city of Erbil and declared full control over the capital of the region. In August 1996, KDP started a combined attack with the Iraqi army on the city of Erbil and drove PUK forces out of the city.

Despite many desperate efforts by multiple mediators, including the USA and Turkey, the tensions continued to soar. The fighting finally ended when the USA sponsored a peace agreement on 17 September 1998 between the two sides in Washington DC. Finally, with help from the USA, a lasting peace emerged.

Although in the period directly after the establishment of the 1991 safe-haven, Iraqi Kurdistan was left with no form of government. In the decade that followed, the Kurds were able to build a functioning central administration, autonomous of the Iraqi state. During those few years, the local economy improved, and the education system and universities made substantial progress. The Kurds of Iraq, learning from each mistake, gained more and more experience in running their own affairs.

Many historians would have readers believe that a prerequisite to nationalism is the nation state, but with the turn of the millennium and the fall of the Ba'thist regime, the

---

[4] Gareth Stansfield, *Iraqi Kurdistan – Political Development and Emergent Democracy* (London & New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 97.

Kurdish national identity proved strong enough to unite the Kurdish people at a time when they were stateless and divided. Though still plagued by internal divisions, the Kurds were, for the first time in their history, able to unite and represent themselves as a single Kurdish entity in the Iraqi interim government. This entity not only helped ensure that Kurdish rights were recognized by the Iraqi constitution, but also played a pivotal role in the reconstruction of the state as a whole, an institution that had previously denied them these very same rights. All of this was made possible by the Kurds' continual struggle, and, in the end, a unity driven by the strong sense of Kurdish national identity.

Bibliography

English books

- al-Jaza'iri, Zuhair. "Ba'thist Ideology and Practice." in *Iraq since the Gulf War*, edited by Fran Hezelton. London: Zed Books, 1998.

- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. London & New York: Verso, 2006.

- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London & New York: Verso, 1991.

- Anderson, Liam. "The Role of Political Parties in Developing Kurdish Nationalism," in *The Evolution of Kurdish Nationalism*, edited by Mohammed Ahmed & Michael Gunter. California: MAZDA Publishers, 2007.

- Breuilly, John Breuilly. *Nationalism and the State*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985.

- Gellner, Ernest. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983.

- Gellner, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011.

- Gerard, Chaliand & McDowall, David, *A People without A Country*. London: Zed books, 1993.

- Gunter, Michael. *The Modern Origins of Kurdish Nationalism, - The Evolution of Kurdish Nationalism*. California: MAZDA Publishers, 2007.

- Handler, Richard. "Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec." in *New Directions in Anthropological Writing: History, Poetics, and Cultural Criticism,* edited by. George E, Clifford Marcus James. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988.

- Hannum, Hurst. *Autonomy, Sovereignty and Self-Determination*. Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992.

- Hassanpour, Amir. *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan.* San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992.

- Hetcher, Michael. *Hetcher, 2000, Containing Nationalism*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

- Hiltermann, Joost. *A poisonous Affair – America, Iraq, and the Gassing of Halabja*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

- Hroch, Miroslav. "From National Movement to the Fully-formed Nation: The Nation-building Process in Europe." in *Mapping the Nation*, edited by Gopal Balakrishnan. New York and London: Verso, 1996.

- Human Rights Watch/Middle East, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide –The Anfal Campaign against the Kurds.* New Haven and London: 1995, Yale University Press, 1995.

- Jawad, Sa'ad. *Iraq & the Kurdish Question 1958-1970*. London: Ithaca Press, 1981.

- John. *Nationalism and the State*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985.

- Kaufmann, Eric P. *Rethinking Ethnicity*. London & New York: Routledge, 2004.

- Koohi-Kamali, Farideh, 2007, "The Kurdish Republic in Mahabad." in *The Evolution of Kurdish Nationalism*. California: MAZDA Publishers, 2007.

- Libaridian, Gerald J. "The Ideology of the Young Turk Movement." in *A Crime of Silence: The Armenian Genocide*. London: Zed Books, 1985.

- McDowall, David. *A Modern History of the Kurds*, London: I.B.Tauris, 2004.

- Rae, Heather. *State Identities and the Homogenization of Peoples*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

- Randal, Jonathan. *Kurdistan after Such Knowledge, What Forgiveness?* London: Bloomsbury, 1998.

- Renan, Ernest. "What is a Nation?" in *Becoming Nationally*, edited by Geoff and Suny, Ronald Grigor. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. http://tamilnation.co/selfdetermination/nation/renan.htm; http://ig.cs.tu-berlin.de/oldstatic/w2001/eu1/dokumente/Basistexte/Renan1882EN-Nation.pdf

- Romano, David. *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

- Smith, Anthony. *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era.* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007.

- Stansfield, Gareth. Stansfield, *Iraq – People, History, Politics, Polity Press*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

- Stansfield, Gareth. *Iraqi Kurdistan – Political Development and Emergent Democracy*. London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003.

- Tripp, Charles. *A History of Iraq*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 2007.

- Van Bruinessen, Martin. *Agha, Shaikh and State*. London: Zed Books, 1992.

- Wimmer, Andreas. *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict - Shadows of Modernity.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002

Arabic Books

- Edmonds, C J. *Kurd wa Turk wa Arab (Kurds, Turks and Arabs).* Baghdad: Maktabat al-Sharq al-Jadid, 1971.

- Ahmed, Dr. Kamal Mazhar. *Kirkuk We Nawahiha, Hukm al-Ta'rikh Wal Dhamir (Kirkuk and its Districts – Judgment of History and Conscious).* Suleimaniyeh: Renwen, 2002.

- Al-Aisami, Shibli. *Limatha al-Wahda al-Arabiyeh wa Kaif? (Why the Arab Unity and How?).* Baghdad: Dar al_Shuon al-Thaqafiyeh al-Aama, 1993.

- Aref, Fuad. *Muthakarat Fuad Aref (Fuad Aref's Memoirs).* Duhok: Khabat, 1999.

- Barzani, Ayoub. *Almqawama al-Kurdiyeh lilae'htilal 1914-1958 (The Kurdish Resistance to Occupation 1914-1958).* Paris: Haqaeq al-Mashriq, 2002.

- Barzani, Masoud. *Barzani, al-Barzani Walharake al-Taharuryeh al-Kurdia 1961-1975 (Barzani and The Kurdish Liberation Movement – 1961-1975).* Erbil: Khabat, 2002.

- Elewi, Hadi Hasan. *Al-Taqrir al-Siyasi lilmua'tamar alqutri althamen lehizb al-Ba'th (The Political Report of the 8th Regional Conference of Ba'th PartyBa'th Party.* Baghdad: Dar al-Huriyeh, 1976.

- Elewi, Hadi Hasan. *Dawr Hizb al-Ba'th al-Arabi al-Eshtiraki Fi al-Iraq (Role of Ba'th PartyBa'th Party in Iraq).* Baghdad: Maktabat al-Sharq al-Jadid, 1976.

- Hussein, Saddam. *Ahadeeth fi al-Qadhaya al-Rahina (Talks about Current Affairs).* Beirut: Dar al-Taleea', 1974.

- Karim, Habib Mohammed. *Ta'reekh Alhezb Aldemoqratti Alkurdistani Al'raq (The History of the Kurdistan Democratic PartyKDP).* Duhok: Khabat, 1998.

- Khasbak, Dr. Shaker. *Al-kurd Walmasa'la Alkurdyiah (The Kurds and the Kurdish Problem).* Baghdad: al-Thaqafa al-Jadida, 1959.

- Mosalli, Munzier. *Alhayat al-Syasia Walhizbiya Fi Kurdistan (The Political Life in Kurdistan - An Arab View of the Kurdish Problem).* London: Riad El-Rayyes Books. 1991.

- Nabaz, Jamal. *Hawla al-Masa'la al-Kurdyeh (The Kurdish Question).* Berlin: Yakiati Qutabiani Kurdistan la Awropa, 1969.

- Said Abdulla, Dr. Ali Karim. *Iraq 8 Shubat 1963 Min Hiwar Almafaheem Ila Hiwar Aldam – Muraja'at Fi Thakirat Talib Shabib (Iraq of 8th February 1963 From the Dialogue of Conceptions to the Dialogue of Blood – Reviews in Talib Ashibib's Memory).* London: Dar al-Hikma, 1999.

- Sharif, Dr. Abdulstar Taher. *Aljam'iat Walmunazamat Walahzab Alkurdyeh Fi Nesf Qarn (Kurdish OrganisOrganizations, Associations and Political Parties in Half a Century 1908 – 1958).* Baghdad: Al-ma'rif Publishers, 1989.

- Talabani, Jalal. *Kurdistan Walharaka Alqawmyiah Alkurdyiah (Kurdistan and The Kurdish National Movement).* Baghdad: Manshurat al-Nur, 1971.

- The Editor of Ba'th Ideology Series. *Nedhal al-Ba'th (Ba'th Struggle)*, 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Series. Beirut: Dar al-Taleea', 1976.

- Zeki, Mohammad Amin. Zeki, *Khulasat Ta'reekh al-Kurd Wa Kurdistan (Summary of the History of Kurds and Kurdistan).* Cairo: Matbaat al-Saada.1939.

Kurdish Books

- Abubaker, Ali. *Prsi Binakrdnaway Nasionalizm u Natawa (The Issue of Rebuilding Nationalism and Nation in Kurdistan).* Hawler: Rozh-halat, 2009.

- Ahmed, Pshtiwan. *Ahmad, Maday 140 u Keshay Kirkuk (Kurdish), 2011, Article 140 and Kirkuk Crises)*, Slemani: KhXezan Publications, 2011.

- Ali, Abubaker. *Ali, Nasionalizm u Nasionalizmi Kurdi (Nationalism and Kurdish Nationalism).* Hawler: Rozh-halat Publications. 2009.

- Amin, Nawshirwan. *Ba Dam Regawa Gul Chnin (Along the Way Picking Flowers).* Beirut: Arab Scientific Publishers, 2012.

- Amin, Noshirwan M. Emin, 1997, *La Kanari Danoubawa bo KhXri Nawzang (From the Danaube Shore to the Nawzang Valley).* Berlin: Postfach, 1997.

- Amin, Noshirwan. *Hukumati Kurdistan -– Kurd Lagamai Sovieteeda (The Government of Kurdistan – 22 Jan -17 Dec 1946- The Kurds in the Soviet Game).* Hawler: Wazarati Roshnbiri, 1993.

- Amin, Salih MohammedNoshirwan. *Amin, 1992, Kurdu Ajam- Mejooi Syiasi Kurdakani Iran (The Kurds & Ajem-The Political History of Iranian Kurds).* Slemani: Santari Lekolinaway Stratizhi Kurdistan, 2005.

- Haji, Shorsh. *Haji (2004), Ta'reebi Kirkuk – Syasati Ta'reeb la duoo Twei Hashta Balganamada (ArabisationArabization of Kirkuk – Evidence of ArabisationArabization Policy in Eighty80 Documents).* London: Dar al-Hikma, 2004.

- Kerimi, Ali *Kerimi, 2008, Nishtiman – Blawkerawai Biri Komalai J.K, (Nishtiman-The Advocator of the Ideology of Association of J.K).* Slemani: Benkai Jzin, 2008.

- Meheddin, Dr. Wahid Omer. *Meheddin, Danustanakani Bzutnawai Rezgarixwazi Natawayee Kurd u Hukumatakani Iraq (, (The Rounds of Negotiations Between The Kurdish National Movement and the Iraqi Governments 1921-1968).* Suleimani: Santari Lekolinaway Stratizhi Kurdistan, 2006.

- Mineh, Amin. *Sekuchkai Ba'sian – -Tarheel u Ta'reeb u Tab'ees (Ba'th Party's Trin: Deportation, Arabization and Ba'thification - Iraq's Strategic Security – Ba'th Party's Trine).* Slemani: Wazarati Roshnbiri, 1999.

- Nabaz, Jamal. *Nasnama u Kkeshai Nasionali Kurd (The Kurdish Identity and the National Question of Kurdistan).* London: Seminar, 2002.

- Qani', Mariwan W. *Nasionalizm u Safer (Nationalism and Migration – The Kurds in Diaspora).* Slemani: Rehend Centre, 2002.

- Resool, Shorsh Haji. *Anfal – Kurdu Dawlati Iraq, (Anfal – The Kurds and the Iraqi State).* London: Dar al-Hikma, 2003.

- Shakely, Ferhad. *Hasti Kurdayati la Mam u Zinda (- Kurdish Kurdish Nnationalism in Mem u Zin).* Brussels: Kurdish Institute, 1992.

- Shamzini, Dr. Aziz. *Joolanawai Rezgari Nishtmani Kurdistan (- (The National Liberation Movement of Kurdistan).* Suleimani: Santary Lekolinaway Stratizhi Kurdistan, 2006.

Kurdish Articles

- Ali, Baxtiar. "Arastokrati Kurdi- Naman u Sarhadanaway (Kurdish Aristocrats – Dissolution and Re-emergence)." *Hawlati*, April 4, 2007.

- Amin, Nohirwan. "Arab la Kurdistanda Matrsi Drustdakan yan la Awadankrdnewada Bashdaridakan? (Are the Arabs Dangerous to Kurdistan or Do they ParticipateParticipate in Re-building of Kurdistan?)." *Rozhnama* newspaper, October 2010.

- Amin, Nohirwan. "Keh Barprsa la Jebajenakrdni maday 140? America? Arab yan Kurd? (Kurdish), Who is Responsible for not Implementing Article 140? The Americans? The Arabs or the Kurds?)." *Rozhnama* newspaper, 2010.

- Amin, Nohirwan. "Keshay Nawt: la Newan Hkumati Nawandi u Hkumati Haremda (Kurdish), Problem of Oil: Between Central Government and Kurdistan Regional Government)." *Rozhnama,* 2011.

- Amin, Noshirwan. "Mufawazati Baray Kurdistani-Ba'th in 1991(Negotiation between Kurdistan Front-Ba'th PartyBa'th Party in 1991." *Rozhnama* newspaper (10 series), 2008.

- Amin, Noshirwan Mustafa. "Mufawazati Barai Kurdistani & Ba'th 1991 (1991's Negotiations between IKF and the Ba'th Party)." *Rozhnama* 1st , 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th , 8th, 9th and 10th series (2008).

- Fatah, Aras. Fatah, "Dawlatek Badway Natawayakda Dagaret (Kurdish), AA State Looking for a Nation)." *Awene* newspaper, (201127/12/2011.

- Qani', Mariwan Wria. "Ema u Arab (We and the Arabs)." *Awene* (2011).

Documents

I screened and studied hundreds of Iraqi official documents which highlight the policy and ideology of Ba'th Party while ruling Iraq during the years of 1963 - 2003. They also illustrate Kurdish reactions as a result of Ba'th Party policy. They include the RCC decree, the minutes of Ba'th Party Regional Leadership minutes and instructions, and directives by the Northern Bureau of Ba'th Party in Kirkuk. The following documents in particular are related to my topic. These documents were captured by the Kurds during their uprising in March 1991 before being transferred to the USA to be studied by Human Rights Watch (HRW). The original copies of these documents are stored in the University of Colorado and a copy of it can be found at the American National Archives in Maryland and the American Library of Congress.

- Proposal number 15334 from the secretary of Regional Command of Ba'th Party, Fawzi Khalaf, on 29/5/1988 to the Army chief command headquarter.
- Research study by the directorate of Security police in Suleimanyeh included in letter number 8196 on 16/5/1985.
- Telegraph from Major General Ayad Khalil Zeki, the commander of Second Corps of the Iraqi army.
- Al-Thawra newspaper, the official paper of Ba'th Party in Iraq, on 20th March 1988.
- Analysis number 2422 from the commander of Fifth Corps to the office of Army Chief Command on 25/12/1988.
- Complete speech of Ali Hasan al-Majid on audio tape while meeting with all senior Ba'th Party officials, governors of Erbil, Suleimanyeh, Kirkuk, Musol and Duhok, army commanders of First and Fifth Corps and Security Police directors.
- Decision number 2805 of governor of the city of Suleimanyeh, Ja'afar Abdul-Karim Barzinji, on 1st June 1986.
- Decree number 160 of the "Iraqi Revolutionary Command Council" signed by Saddam Hussein on 29/3/1987.
- Decree number 199 from "Revolutionary Command Council" (RCC) signed by Saddam Hussein on 6th September 2001.

- Decree number 272 from the Revolutionary Command Council signed by Saddam Hussein on 23/4/1989.

- Decree number 529 of the "Iraqi Revolutionary Command Council" signed by Saddam Hussein on 24/8/1989.

- Decree number 677 of the "Iraqi Revolutionary Command Council" signed by Saddam Hussein on 26/8/1987.

- Directive number 1961 of the Interior Ministry on 6/4/1986.

- Directive number 3115 from the general director of Security Police to all branches on 25/9/1990.

- Directive number 3650 of the general secretary of Northern Bureau of Ba'th Party, Ali Hassan al-Majid, on 3/6/1987 to all departments, branches, sections and directorates of Ba'th Party, Security Police and army commanders.

- Directive number 3848 from the general secretary of Northern Bureau of Ba'th Party (NB), Sa'di Mahdi Saleh, on 27th May 1985

- Directive number 4008 of the general secretary of Northern Bureau of Ba'th Party, Ali Hassan al-Majid, on 20/6/1987 to all Commanders of 1st, 2nd and Fifth Army Corps.

- Directive number 4350 of the general secretary of Northern Bureau of Ba'th Party, Ali Hassan al-Majid, on 7/9/1987 to all Security committees in northern governorates.

- Directive number 44/5726 of the general secretary of Northern Bureau of Ba'th Party, Mohammed Hamza al-Zubeidi, on 4 August 1985.

- Directive number 4684 from the Northern Bureau of Ba'th Party on 29/6/1985.

- General amnesty from Saddam Hussein on 6/9/1988 and a subsequent one on 8/9/1988.

- Information letter number 6138 from the director of Security Police of Erbil on 29/4/1988 to all their branches.

- Instruction from the general director of Security Police on 18/10/1990.

- Instruction number 589 of the governor of Kirkuk on 16/8/1997.

- Instructions included in letter number 27500 of the office of the Regional Command of Ba'th Party on 27/7/1985.
- Instructions of the deputy chairman of the "Iraqi Revolutionary Command Council", Izzat al-Duri, which is included in letter number 468 of the Census Bureau in Kirkuk on 24/3/2001.
- Iraq's "Revolutionary Command Council" decree number 850 signed by Saddam Hussein on 27th November 1988.
- Iraqi Presidential Council's Directive number 2213 on 6th June 1986.
- Letter from the general director of Iraqi Security Police to Saddam Hussein on 23/6/1982.
- Letter number 110/1/1718 from Iraq's "Revolutionary Command Council" on 14/3/1981.
- Letter number 13 of Duhok office of Ba'th Party on 1/7/1990 to the Secretary of National Security Council.
- Letter number 1427 of the 1st Corps' Command on 8/2/1989.
- Letter number 14314 of the director of Security Police of Erbil referring to a directive from the Minister of Interior regarding blanket punishment of the Kurds.
- Letter number 16302 from Iraq's "Revolutionary Command Council - Northern Affairs' Committee" on 25/12/1983.
- Letter number 21308 of the Security Police of Suleimanyeh on 16/9/1989.
- Letter number 24866 from the general director of Security Police to all branches, Revolutionary Court and office of General Prosecutor on 1/12/1988.
- Letter number 28242 from the Presidential office on 10/8/1988.
- Letter number 289 from the commander of oil fields forces, Brigadier Bareq Abdulla al-Haj Hintta, to Ba'th Party headquarter in Kirkuk on 11/4/1988.
- Letter number 422 of the director of Eastern Sector of Army Intelligence on 18/3/1988 to Security Police directorates.
- Letter number 47/3472 of the general secretary of Ba'th Party in the city of Suleimanyeh on 11th September 1989.

- Letter number 5628 from Iraq's "Revolutionary Command Council - Northern Affairs' Committee" on 15/8/1989.

- Letter number 993 of Iraq's National Security Council on 4 November 1990 to the Interior minister.

- Minutes of meeting of the Ba'th Party office in Salahadin on 12/9/1987 signed by the secretary of the branch.

- Minutes of meeting of the Security Committee in Erbil that included secretary of Ba'th Party in the governorate on 5/4/1987.

- Order 2526 of the secretary of Northern Affairs Committee, Walid Mahmud, on 6th September 1981.

- Order from the Secretary of Northern Affairs' Committee, Taher Tofiq, on 13/2/1988.

- Order number 14257 of the general directorate of Education of Ninewa on 13/1/2001.

- Order number 1506 on 26th September 2000 from the general secretary of the Northern Affairs Committee.

- Order number 6437 of the Interior Minister, Izzat al-Duri, (who later became the deputy chairman of the Iraqi Revolutionary Command Council- Shorsh Resool) on 29/5/1976.

- Order number 81 of the Governor of Ninewa governorate, Abdul-wahed al-Rebatti, on 17/11/1994.

- Order number 889 of the governor of Kirkuk, Major General Abdulrazaq Mohammed Jawad.

- Presidential decree number 434 11/9/1989.

- Presidential decree number 62 on 15/2/1976.

- Presidential decrees number 136 and 137 on 28/2/1970.

- Reply number 136 from the director of Northern Sector of Iraqi Military Intelligence to the Fourth Section on 12/5/1988.

- Speech of Mohammed Hamza al-Zubeidi, general secretary of Northern Bureau of Ba'th Party, on 12/8//1985 to all senior Iraqi officials in Duhok governorate.

- Statement number 11/1/1718 of the Iraq's "Revolutionary Command Council" on 14 March 1981.
- Statement number 605 on 22nd February 1976 of the chairman of the Liaison Committee in the governorate of Ninewa.
- Statement of gratitude from the director of Suleimanyeh Security Police on 1/12/1988.
- Telegraph number 13069 from director of Security Police in Erbil to all branches on 31/8/1988.
- Telegraph number 1723 on 30th June 1963 from the governor of Suleimanyeh to the Appeal Court in Kirkuk.
- Telegraph number 1807 from the commander of First Corps of Iraqi army on 7/5/1988 to all divisions and army units.
- Telegraph number 18640 on 22nd June 2001 from the Interior ministry to the governorate of Kirkuk.
- Telegraph number 29722 of the director of Suleimanyeh Security Police on 7/7/1980.
- Telegraph number 360 of the Autonomous Region's General Directorate of Security Police on 1/2/1982.
- Telegraph number 361 of the Eastern Sector of Iraqi Military Intelligence on 5/6/1988.
- Telegraph number 38074 on 24 August 1981 from General Security Directorate of Suleimanyeh.
- Telegraph number 4168 of the First Corps on 15/9/1987 to all units and headquarters regarding their activities in the area.
- Telegraph number 4561 of the Ba'th Party's office in Kirkuk on 12/6/1999.
- Telegraph number 5162 of the ministry of Interior on 11/4/1977.

Interviews

Throughout my research I interviewed large number of people from different backgrounds including everyone from top politicians and Party officials to those involved

in grassroots movement and to them I am extremely grateful. Some of the Kurdish leaders whom I interviewed played a significant role in the Kurdish national struggle for decades. Therefore, I found it necessary to listen to their views regarding Kurdish nationalism and their version of some of the events surrounding the Ba'th Party rule in Iraq. I quoted some of their answers where I found necessary. I also benefitted from the ideas and views of many others who advised and directed my conduct of research. The following is a list of some of them:

- Interview with the Kurdish poet Sherko Bekas, 18/8/2006, Suleimanyeh, Iraq.

- Interview with Jalal Talabani, the President of Iraq and the general secretary of the PUK, on 28th March 2005, 10:00 – 12:00 am in Qalachwalan – Suleimanyeh, Iraq. (Audio record of the interview is available)

- Interview with Noshirwan Mustafa Amin, the Deputy General Secretary of the PUK, on 29th March 2005, 14:00-16:00 – Suleimanyeh, Iraq.

- Interview with Falakadeen Kakayee, Minister of Culture and Media, Kurdish Regional Government, on 21/8/2006 – 12:00, Erbil, Iraq.

- Interview with Amin Mineh, Academic, London, 3/10/2008.

- Interview with Homer Sheikhmus – Lecturer at the University of Stockholm and Former Director of Voice of America - The Kurdish Division, London 31/8/2008.

- Interview with Rebeen Hardi, Kurdish writer, 3/8/2009, Suleimanyeh – Iraq.

- Interview with Kakamam Botani, Kurdish Novelist, 6/4/2011, Erbil – Iraq.

Research and dissertations:

1. Wadie Jwaideh (1960) – History of the nationalist movement.
2. Kutschera (1979) – Twent'th Century
3. Chaliand (1980)
4. Lazarev (1972, 1989) – study of Kurdish problem (1891-1923)
5. Celil (1985) – cultural and political life in Kurdistan – 19th – early 20th century
6. Vanly (traditional nationalist view
7. Mgoy, soviet Kurdish author (1977 , 1991)
8. Ghareeb (1981) – pro Ba'th prospective.

ProQuest Number: 30398181

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS
The quality and completeness of this reproduction is dependent on the quality
and completeness of the copy made available to ProQuest.