

THE KURDS:
THEIR EFFECT ON THE ATTEMPT TO DEMOCRATIZE IRAQ
A STRATEGIC ESTIMATE

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fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE
Strategy

by

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ABSTRACT

THE KURDS: THEIR EFFECT ON THE ATTEMPT TO DEMOCRATIZE IRAQ, A STRATEGIC ESTIMATE, by Major Stephen Miller, USA, 75 pages.

Of all the ethnic groups in the Middle East, the Kurds can best determine the success or failure of the US attempt to establish a democracy in Iraq. Since 1991, the Kurds, unlike any other ethnic nation, have experienced the best-protected autonomous governance in the Middle East. During the interim years leading up to Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), the Kurds have established an independent economy, political structure, and resurgence in nationalism. They hold claim to regions that contain the richest natural resources in the Middle East, from oil, to agriculture, to water. It is left to the United States to determine if the Iraqi Kurds will be integrated into the new political system of Iraq or allowed to breakaway to establish their own independent state.

This thesis aims to examine the options available to the United States in the event the Iraqi Kurds attempt to realize a goal of independence.

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ACRONYMS

CGSOC	Command and General Staff Officers Course
COCOM	Combatant Commander
COIN	Counterinsurgency
DOS	United States Department of State
EU	European Union
GAP	South Anatolian Project
GWOT	Global War on Terrorism
ICDC	Iraqi Civil Defense Corps
ING	Iraqi National Guard
ISAF	International Assistance and Security Force
KADEK	Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NIA	New Iraqi Army
NSS	National Security Strategy
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
OIF	Operation Iraqi Freedom
PKK	Kurdistan Workers Party
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The Kurds are predominant in an ellipse of territory that overlaps not only with Turkey but also with Iraq, Iran, Syria, and the former Soviet Union. The Western-enforced Kurdish enclave in northern Iraq, a consequence of the 1991 Gulf War, has already exposed the fictitious nature of that supposed nation-state.

Because the Kurds overlap with nearly everybody in the Middle East, on account of their being cheated out of a state in the post-First World War peace treaties, they are emerging, in effect, as the natural selector-the ultimate reality check. They have destabilized Iraq and may continue to disrupt states that do not offer them adequate breathing space, while strengthening states that do.¹

Robert D. Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy"

With the failure of the international community to establish an independent Kurdish state following the end of World War I, the nation of Kurdish people is split among four independent states in an area of strategic significance. The Kurds occupy a mountainous region that control's the overland trade routes among Iraq, Iran, Turkey and northern Syria, the headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates in southern Turkey, and also claim historic right to the oil rich area of Kirkuk, Iraq. With the United States protecting the Kurds in northern Iraq since the end of the Gulf War in 1991, the Iraqi Kurds have become accustomed to a level of autonomy unheard of in their recent history. Following the success of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), and the ongoing efforts to establish a democratic government in Iraq, the Kurds are exercising their influence, determined to ensure they are not refused a place in the process and denied once again the chance of some semblance of self-determination.

Inside Iraq, the Kurds, despite a history of political and tribal fragmentation, are now united in their efforts to ensure their role in the democratic process. At this point in history, they are militarily stronger and more unified than Shia and Sunni groups in Iraq and, if the situation deteriorates into civil war, could easily reoccupy and control the historically claimed cities of Mosul and Kirkuk. The occupation of these two cities, specifically Kirkuk, would, in effect, place them in a position of strategic and economic importance in the region. The residual effects of the Iraqi Kurds achieving a greater position of strength inside Iraq, either through an increase in the autonomy they already possess or in successfully creating an independent state, will have a rippling effect across the region. It would give cause to Kurdish groups, especially those in Turkey, to continue fighting for their own self-determination, and perhaps to seek a unified state with their cousins in northern Iraq at a future time. Such an alliance between the Kurdish groups of Iraq and Turkey would undoubtedly lead to a military response by Turkey, which could then precipitate another regional war. At that point, the Kurdish minorities of Syria and Iran would also readily enter the fray in support of a common goal of Kurdish independence, which in turn would provide the Syrians, but more importantly the Iranians, cause to intervene in the defense of their own regional self interest.

Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the options facing the United States in regards to various forms of Kurdish autonomy. Internal and external effects of Kurdish independence in the region will also be analyzed.

Thesis Question

Should the United States support a Kurdish attempt to establish an independent Kurdish state? In order to answer that question, the determining factors that will influence the United States' decision to either support or not support the Kurds must be identified and analyzed. By utilizing the factors defined by Richard Haass that determine the rights of a state, including historical legitimacy, viability, and internal and regional stability, an appropriate course of action for the United States can be defined and justified. Additionally, this paper will explore the following subordinate questions to ensure the appropriate conclusions are drawn.

1. What, if any, are the regional and geo-political differences between the end of World War I and today in respect to the Kurds desire for self-determination?
2. What are the likely internal and regional effects of an independent Kurdish state within what are now the current borders of Iraq?
3. What are the US policy options if the Iraq Kurds attempt to establish an independent state inside what is now the internationally recognized border of Iraq?
4. What are the potential regional effects in response to an Iraqi Kurd attempt to expand their current autonomous region inside Iraq?

Assumptions

The following assumptions are made in order to focus the scope of the research:

1. The goal of the United States to establish a democratic Iraq will succeed.
2. Kurds outside of Iraq in Turkey, Syria and Iran will demand greater political influence and power within the borders of their own country.
3. Kurdish demands for an independent Kurdish state will increase over time.

Definition of Terms

Autonomy: Freedom to govern and administer oneself, recognized or granted to a territorial community which does not have sovereignty, and which is politically and legally linked to one or several states without being part of their territory or subject to their sovereignty.²

Confederacy: A group of states united for a common purpose that can act independently of the central government for their own self-interest.³

Democracy: A government exercised either directly by the people or through elected representatives, based on the principles of majority rule, social equality, and respect for the individual within a community.

Diplomatic Power: The art of international communications and relationships to garner US support of, or to persuade foreign entities to support actions in protection of US national interests.

Independent: Politically autonomous, self-governing, and free from influence, guidance or control of another.

Instruments of National Power: All the means available to a state for employment in the pursuit of national objectives (diplomatic, informational, military, economic).⁴

Kurd: A member of a pastoral and agricultural people who inhabit a plateau region in adjoining parts of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Armenia, and Azerbaijan.

Legitimacy: Acting in accordance with established or accepted patterns and standards; conformity to recognized principles or accepted rules and standards.⁵

Nation: A region or territory occupied by a people or tribe that share common ethnicity, customs, origins, history and often language.

Sovereignty: Total independence and self-government and the internationally recognized authorities of a governing entity within a defined territory.⁶

Strategic Estimate: The estimate of the broad strategic factors that influence the determination of missions, objectives, and courses of action.⁷

Limitations

The study will limit itself to only the Kurdish area within Iraq. The study will limit its scope of options to autonomy and independence within the boundaries of Iraq.

Delimitations

This study will not include any information from classified sources. The study addresses the impacts of an independent Kurdish area within the current border of Iraq and the resulting effects on Turkey, Iran and Syria. It does not address any impacts on the predominantly Kurdish areas in Armenia or Azerbaijan. The study will not address the differences or similarities of political ideologies of any of the major Kurdish political organizations in the region of study, or the political leadership. The study will focus on events starting at the end of World War I that affected the establishment of an autonomous Kurdish area within Iraq. It will not cover events prior to World War I other than to describe the general sequence of events leading up to the defeat of the Turks and the demise of the Ottoman Empire.

Significance of the Study

Strategic understanding by officers of all grades is becoming increasingly important in today's environment. Given the increasing influence the Kurds carry as the fourth largest ethnic group in the Middle East, and the strategic importance of the region

that the ethnic Kurdish nation occupies, the political future of the Kurds is an useful example to study for potential future conflicts.

Similar to the breakup of the former Yugoslavia following the demise of the Soviet Union, stateless ethnic groups will increasingly demand recognition and rights of self-determination. Of the four neighbors, the United States is already directly involved in one, and has a strained political relationship with two others. The fourth, Turkey, is a US NATO ally. Turkey is a recognized regional power that does not readily acknowledge separate ethnic groups, has a checkered past in human rights, and already controls the most valued natural resource in the region, water, from an area of the country that is occupied predominantly by Kurds who continue to prosecute a protracted fight in an attempt to establish an autonomous enclave.

In short, it is probable that there will be an increase in the call for sovereignty by ethnic groups in the future, especially as the United States continues to promote its message of “liberty” and “freedom” for all those that desire it. As a result, ethnic groups that occupy territory and feel as though a historical basis for sovereignty exists could increase their demands of autonomy and independence. Military leaders, as the face of the United States and, more importantly, the representatives of US policy, should understand and study how the United States determines who should receive its support for independence and self-determination, and the strategic implications of the decision.

Presentation of the Problem

Occupying a plateau and mountainous area that includes portions of eastern Turkey, northeastern Iraq the northwestern region of Iran, far eastern Syria, as well as areas within Armenian and Azerbaijan borders, the Kurds are the largest minority

population (presently estimated at 20 million people) in the world without a country. Despite this, and a long tradition of political internal political divisiveness, the Kurds are increasingly playing a significant role in shaping both the political and economic climate of the Middle East. The Kurds are particularly influential in Iraq, Turkey, and Iran, where they make up 23 percent, 20 percent, and 10 percent of the population, respectively. The Kurds also maintain strong influence in Syria, although they account for less than 10 percent of that country's population (figure 1).

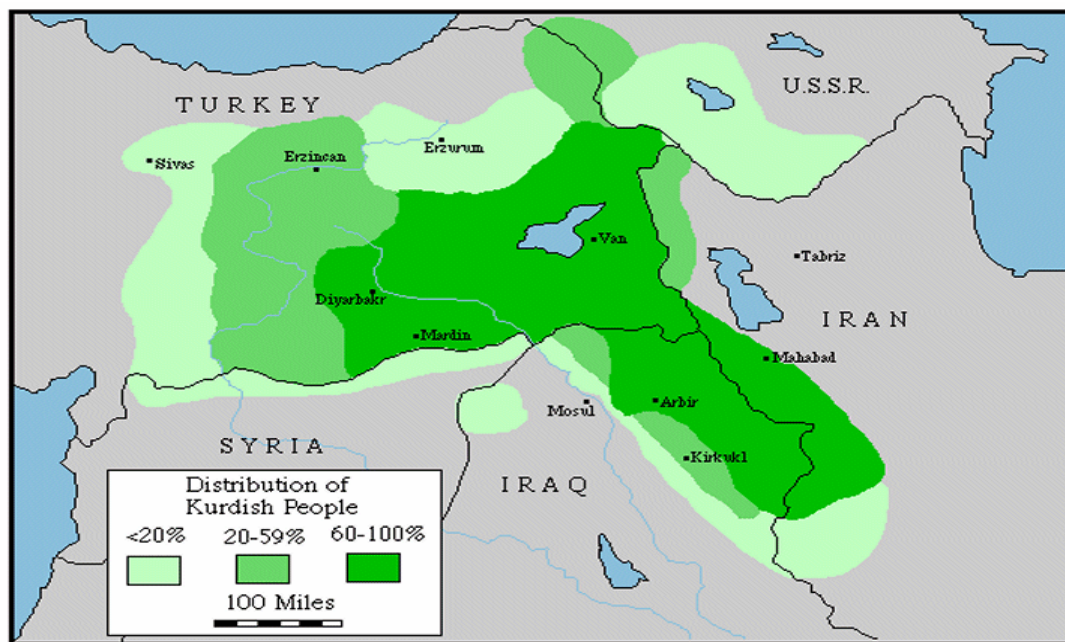


Figure 1. Distribution of Kurdish People

Source: GlobalSecurity.org

For centuries, the Kurds of the Mesopotamia area proved to be one of the strongest and most developed civilizations in the region, maintaining control of the overland trade routes from central Asia to Europe. However, this control was

relinquished to numerous outside forces at various points in history. Following the end of World War I, and before the establishment of the League of Nations, the British and French were posed with the question of how to reestablish the borders between states of the region.

At this point in recent history began the genesis of a pressing question now facing the United States can be seen: should the United States adopt a policy of support for Kurdish desires of an independent state, especially in light of the fact that it is promoting a model for Middle East democracy in Iraq?

To address this question, this study first provides a historical examination of the factors that facilitated the splintering of the Kurds as a nation and how the Kurds failed to achieve statehood following the end of World War I. Second, it will review and analyze the current situation in the region in relation to the Kurdish areas of Iraq, Turkey, Syria and Iran. Finally, this study will analyze options available to the United States in its attempt to stabilize the region and make recommendations for an appropriate course of action.

Background

To understand the issues facing the United States and, in effect, the international community in regard to the Kurds, it is critically important to understand the historical context in which the current situation developed. In addition to an overview of this history, a review of the contributing factors that led to the denial of Kurdish sovereignty and the subsequent actions taken by Kurdish groups in the separate countries in an attempt at self-determination will be conducted. Once reviewed, this information will provide the basis for answering the first subordinate question: What, if any, are the

regional and geopolitical differences between the end of World War I and today in respect to the Kurds' desire for self-determination?

Prior to 1918

Prior to the seventh century, the Kurds controlled most of the Middle Eastern land of present-day Iran, Iraq Turkey and parts of southeastern Europe. In occupying this land, the Kurds controlled much of the region's economy and the key trade routes. However, beginning in the seventh century, the Kurds were dominated by numerous world powers. The Arabs conquered most of the Kurdish areas in the seventh century, the Turks in the eleventh century, and the Mongols seized control of Kurdish territory from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries. Finally, the Ottomans ruled the Kurds from the sixteenth century until the end of World War I. Despite long periods of domination, the Kurds remained hopeful in regard to the establishment of an independent Kurdish state. This hope, however, was not pursued in a coordinated effort as a nation. The Kurds have historically based their individual allegiance to the tribe or clan; hence, their collective ability to maintain an overall nationalistic voice or approach to the international community was diminished. The Europeans, as well as other powerful regional states, consistently capitalized on this weakness.

1918 to Present

Despite having suffered severe defeat at the hands of the Turks between 1915 and 1918 while struggling to gain independence from Ottoman domination, the Kurds were optimistic in regard to attaining sovereignty. This optimism was fueled by the Turkish defeat during World War I and President Woodrow Wilson's resulting call for autonomy

for non-Turkish ethnic groups that had been previously ruled by the Ottoman Empire. His appeal for autonomy was stated as follows:

The Turkish portions of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but other nationalities, which are now under Turkish rule, should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development.⁸

In an effort to actualize this appeal, the Kurds brought their claims of independence to the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, a diplomatic conference held to draft a general treaty to end World War I and make territorial revisions to revise the prewar world map. The result of the conference was the Treaty of Versailles. However, a lack of unity and preparation on the part of the Kurds during this conference effectively derailed any hope of negotiating sovereign status in this treaty. However, the Treaty of Sevres, ratified by the Ottomans, England and France on 10 August 1921, which liquidated the Ottoman Empire, offered new hope to the Kurds because it explicitly provided for the possibility of establishing an autonomous Kurdish state (see figure 2).

The following articles, taken from this treaty, also provided protection for racial and religious minorities and specified a timeline for execution of treaty requirements:

Article 62

A Commission sitting at Constantinople and composed of three members appointed by the British, French, and Italian Governments respectively shall draft within six months from the coming into force of the present Treaty a scheme of local autonomy for the predominantly Kurdish areas lying east of the Euphrates, south of the southern boundary of Armenia as it may be hereafter determined, and north of the frontier of Turkey with Syria and Mesopotamia, as defined in Article 27, II (2) and (3). If unanimity cannot be secured on any question, it will be referred by the Commission to their respective Governments. The scheme shall contain full safeguards for the protection of the Assyro-Chaldeans and other racial or religious minorities within these areas, and with this object a Commission composed of British, French, Italian, Persian and Kurdish representatives shall visit the spot to examine and decide what rectifications, if any, should be made to

the Turkish frontier where, under the provisions of the present Treaty, that frontier coincides with that of Persia.

Article 63

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



Figure 2. Provisions of the Treaty of Sevres, 1921
Source: Izady, *The Kurds a Concise Handbook*, 58.

Article 64

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

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

If and When such renunciation takes place, no objection will be raised by the Principal Allied Powers to the voluntary adhesion to such an independent Kurdistan State of the Kurds inhabiting that part of Kurdistan, which has been hitherto included in the Mosul Vilayet.⁹

Following the adoption of the Sevres Treaty, which was developed largely by various European powers, the Turks sought to minimize territorial losses and, as such, they were forced to weigh the options of lands lost to the Armenians as compared to those lost to the Kurds. They chose to give up territory to the Armenians rather than relinquishing the resource rich region inhabited by the Kurds. Figure 3 details the territorial losses of the Ottoman Empire.

For Britain, the Kurdish question remained secondary to a political settlement for their main territories of interest, Syria and Mesopotamia, and, more specifically, the control of the geo-strategic area around Mosul and the foothills in the north and northeast areas of present-day Iraq. Here were the beginnings of the geographical fractioning of the Kurds because the borders were being drawn based on economic interests without regard to “ethnic borders.” With the British occupying much of the former Ottoman Empire, especially Mesopotamia, they (and the French) were better positioned to affect the redrawing of the map, which was done with an eye toward the control of the economic trade routes, oil reserves and agricultural areas.



Figure 3. Ottoman Empire Losses through 1924

Source: GlobalSecurity.org

Unfortunately for those advocating for a sovereign Kurdish nation, a change in the Turkish regime led to the demise of the Sevres Treaty. The new leader of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Pasha (later known as Ataturk), did not consider the agreement to be in the best interests of the Turks and, as a result, refused to adhere to the terms as defined. Additionally, the Turks seized the opportunity to reignite old hatreds between the Kurds and Armenians and to promote fear in the Christian settlements within the Kurdish region. By doing so, the Turks created the impression that the British desired the disestablishment of the Kurdish areas in the northern controlled areas. With the gradually increasing power and influence of Ataturk, the Turkish leadership found itself in a

position to request a new treaty that would, in effect, allow Turkey to be recognized as an independent state (after being previously dissolved under the terms of the Sevres Treaty) and to regain significant territory. During treaty negotiations in Lausanne, Switzerland, it became clear, based on Turkey's influence, that the potential for a Kurdish state was all but lost. The final Treaty of Lausanne provided no mention of Kurdish independence or autonomy, but instead, officially divided the Kurdish region among Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and Iran.

Despite the provisions contained in the Treaty of Lausanne, references to an independent Kurdish state persisted. Action taken by the League of Nations illustrates this point. As a longstanding border dispute between Turkey and the newly established Iraq continued into the 1930s, the League of Nations appointed a commission to address the issue. The Commission noted, "[I]f one was to base oneself on the ethnic arguments, one would have to conclude that the best solution would be to set up an independent Kurdish State, seeing as the Kurds account for five-eighths of the population."¹⁰ However, the final determination was to attach the area to Iraq, again based on political and economic rather than ethnic justification.

Iraq

Since the 1930s, the Kurds in Iraq maintained a sporadic peace with the Iraqi government. Numerous conflicts were fought into the 1970s over the autonomous rights of the Kurds. From these conflicts, Kurdish leaders emerged and assumed the face of the Kurd nation. Mahmud Barzinji led uprisings against the British in the 1930's. Following Barzinji was Mulla Mustafa Barzani in the 1950's and '60's. Barzani established the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) as a political party with its own internal militia, the

Peshmerga, which fought for an agreement with the Iraqi government for a settlement that was intended to establish an autonomous Kurdish enclave within the Republic of Iraq. The KDP fought sporadically until the end of the 1960's when it was finally able to negotiate a deal with the Ba'athist regime in Baghdad, which was then in power, to guarantee Kurdish inclusion into the new constitution. "The Government of Iraq considered that the 11 March 1970 agreement constituted, 'a complete and constitutional settlement of the Kurdish issue'." ¹¹

This agreement protected the Kurdish rights to self-government within their region and to share in the Iraqi legislative process in a manner proportionate to their population. The agreement, also stated that one of the Republic's vice-presidents would be a Kurd, and recognized the Kurds as a group equal to that of the Arabs. The agreement facilitated four years of interrupted peace until 1974 when the Iraqi government revised Article 33 of its constitution without approval of the Kurdish political leaders, in effect reducing the rights previously granted in 1970. The Iraqi government gave the Kurds a mere 14 days to accept the new version, and when they refused, Baghdad sent in its military to occupy the Kurdish region.

The constitutional documents of 1970 provide the Kurds today with their justification for establishing an autonomous region within the Republic of Iraq and its integration into the current political process. As a result of this guarantee of integration into the political process, Jalal Talibani, an Iraqi Kurd, was elected as the Iraqi President in 2005.

Turkey

Turkey initiated a program of assimilation towards all ethnic groups within its borders and adopted a policy of Turkification, defining all citizens of Turkey as Turks, regardless of ethnic background, shortly after it attained formal recognition in 1923 from the international community as a sovereign state. The Kurds have not been exempted from these efforts. Since the early 1920s the Turks prosecuted numerous suppression campaigns to counter revolts led by Kurdish leaders. The extent of this prosecution was captured by Law No. 1850 which legalized “[M]urders and other actions committed individually or collectively, from the 20th of June 1930 to the 10th of December 1930 . . . during the pursuit and extermination of the revolts,” in Kurdish areas.¹²

From 1925 to 1938, Turkey forcibly relocated over one million Kurds and banned the use or practice of anything relating to Kurdish history. Even with numerous changes in Turkish governmental control, the policy of Turkification remained.

In 1977, Abdullah Ocalan established the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK)¹³ in an attempt to win autonomy from Ankara, similar to that granted the Iraqi Kurds from Baghdad. PKK military actions led to numerous conflicts inside Turkey and provoked a significant military response from the Turks, almost equal to the actions of the 1930s. However, the PKK’s influence also spurred stronger feelings of Kurdish nationalism among Kurds inside Turkey. Turkey’s response was based on the protection of its internal security, but because of the terrorist tactics used by Ocalan and his established relationships with both the Palestinians and Syria, PKK actions also caused the US to include the PKK on its list of terrorist organizations. Turkey, however, also found grounds to use the PKK threat to its advantage by permanently basing two of its four

Armies within the Kurdish region along the Iraqi border, arguing its actions were supporting Western strategic interests during the 1980s. This action provided Turkey with both the means and opportunity to carry out its suppression campaign into the Iraqi Kurd held areas of northern Iraq, under the guise of attacking elements of PKK operating from safe havens provided by Iraqi Kurd groups.

The Turkish anti-PKK campaign led an unnamed European diplomat to observe; “What the Kurds are asking for--an independent state--is simply unacceptable to Turkey and will never be considered. . . . But the Turks haven’t been able to quash Kurdish culture and nationalism in 50 years and there is no reason to believe they will be any more successful this time. The sad fact is there is no solution. . . . [T]he Kurds cannot be simply declared not to exist and Turkey cannot be expected to give in to their demands.”¹⁴

More recently, since the US assistance to the Turks in the capture of Ocalan in 1999 at the Greek Embassy in Kenya¹⁵ terrorist attacks inside Turkey by the PKK (now operating in coordination with, the Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress (KADEK) since capture and prosecution of Ocalan) have decreased. With the invasion of Iraq and the resulting inclusion of the Iraqi Kurds into the Iraqi political processes, in addition to pressure from European powers, the Turks have been forced to lessen their stance of Turkification. Turkey’s desire to be admitted into the European Union (EU) has been hindered in the past due to their assimilation policy. Hence, the Turks have begun to make some concessions in response to some EU member charges of Turkish human rights abuses against the Kurds. The Turks now acknowledge the existence of the Kurds as an ethnic group, not merely as “Mountain Turks,” and have recently made an offer to

grant partial amnesty for all PKK members living in northern Iraq who wish to return to Turkey.

Iran

As in Turkey, the Iranian government has generally tried to suppress any Kurdish movement towards autonomy or outright independence of its Kurdish community. The Kurds in Iran were relatively quiet until the end of World War II. When the Allies withdrew forces from Iran, the Kurds, as at the end of World War I, tried to fill the vacuum by claiming historical land. Kurdish control of northeastern Iran lasted only one year, until Kurdish unity began to fragment along tribal and political lines. The Iranians seized the opportunity and reoccupied the territory in 1947. Following the 1979 revolution, and the rise to power of the Ayatollah Khomeini (Ruhollah Mousavi), the Kurds once again saw an opportunity to establish an autonomous region. But, consistent with Khomeini's belief in the unity of the Islamic community, Iran quickly extinguished this hope.

Syria

The relations between the Kurds and the Syrians remained relatively amiable throughout most of their history. However, in the late 1950s the Syrian-Kurds began to complain that the opportunities provided to them paled in comparison to Arab-Syrians. The Kurds complained about economic underdevelopment in their areas and discrimination in educational and employment opportunities. The Syrians responded with forced relocation programs, increased repression and harassment campaigns. In 1976, Syrian President Assad stopped the actions against the Kurdish minority and the situation

stabilized. However, the Kurds have yet to be recognized as a separate ethnic group by the Syrian government and have no formal political representation in Damascus.

With the Iraqi Kurds participating in the ongoing political process in Iraq, and the resulting increase in Kurdish self-determination and autonomy, there has been resurgence in demonstrations and calls for acknowledgment by the Kurds living within Syria. The Syrian-Kurds are looking to the Iraqi Kurds as an example for increased autonomy and recognition within their national political system.

In summary, the principal difference in the Kurdish issue today and the end of World War I is the rise of Kurdish nationalism. Although still somewhat fractured by international borders, the Kurds today, unlike times in the past, not only see themselves as part of a Kurdish clan or tribe, but as part of a “nation,” related by ethnic ties as well as a common history of state sponsored repression since the end of the First World War. Kreyenbroek and Sperl argue that, “Nationalism is an essentially modern development, and . . . the emphasis of Kurdish ethnicity is also a relatively new phenomenon. Modern communications, printing, radio, and the cassette recorder, contribute much to the creation of the Kurdish ‘nation’ as an ‘imagined community’.”¹⁶

The advances of technology have also educated the international public: The world now knows about the Kurds. The plight of the Kurds and the atrocities they have endured have been reported to the world. The gassing of the Iraqi Kurds by Saddam Hussein in Halabja during the Anfal Campaign in 1988 provided all the moral argument the Kurds would ever require in support of their desire to be autonomous, if not independent.

Additionally, neither the United States nor its partners from the international community in Iraq are required, or inclined to reestablish the international borders through actions similar those taken following the end of World War I. The broad US intent is to stabilize the region while concurrently democratizing Iraq, allowing Iraqis to determine their own future, but ensuring the Iraqi Kurds are included in this attempt. These are positives for the Iraqi Kurds within the United States' goal of internal and regional stability.

The other major difference between today and the end of World War I is the political power gained by the Kurds over the past eighty years. The international community has on multiple occasions, recognized the Kurds as an ethnic group, if not as a recognized nation. The regional states that include a Kurdish population have recognized them to different degrees, but it is the Iraqi Kurds that have succeeded in forcing their national government to provide them with constitutionally guaranteed rights. In addition, with the US providing support to the Iraqi Kurds and protecting them since 1991, following the Gulf War, through 2003 and OIF, the Kurds have been provided the opportunity to strengthen both their autonomy and potential for independence. The Gulf war in 1991 stimulated the Kurdish nationalist movement.¹⁷ They have proven to themselves, but more importantly to the international community, that they are capable of operating independently. These successes have promoted the recent development of Kurdish nationalism, adding to the recent recognition of internationally known Kurdish nationalist leaders like Barzinji, Barzani, Talibani, and Ocalan. They each established representation in foreign capitals while simultaneously utilizing the international press to tell their story and build notoriety. These successes could prove to become the negatives

in the stability equation; the Iraq-Kurds have tasted independence and if the internal political situation in Iraq fails, it is likely that the Iraqi Kurds that will bring the bordering states into a regional conflict.

This thesis will explore whether or not the United States should support an Iraqi Kurd attempt to establish an independent state within what is now the recognized border of Iraq. It will further analysis the effects of such an attempt internal to Iraq? The internal effects of the Iraqi Kurds attempt to expand the current autonomous region to include Mosul but more importantly the Ta'mim province that includes Kirkuk. Lastly, this thesis will analyze the regional effects of a move for expanded autonomy or independence by the Iraqi Kurds inside Iraq.

¹Robert D. Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy," *The Atlantic Monthly* (February 1994): 44-76.

²Ruth Lapidoth, *Autonomy, Flexible Solutions to Ethnic Conflicts* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), 31.

³Ibid., 49.

⁴The Joint Staff, JP 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 30 November 2004), 178.

⁵Webster's II New Riverside University Dictionary (Riverside: Boston, 1984): 685.

⁶ Ibid., 1112.

⁷ Ibid., 507.

⁸David McDowell, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (New York: St. Martin Press, 1996): 115.

⁹Ibid., 450-451.

¹⁰Hurst Hannum, *Autonomy, Sovereignty, and Self Determination* (Pittsburg, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 185.

¹¹Ibid., 190.

¹²Ibid., 186.

¹³ Philip G. Kreyenbroek, and Stefan Sperl, *The Kurds: A Contemporary Overview* (New York: Routledge, 1992): 102.

¹⁴Ibid., 189-190.

¹⁵ Ivan Eland, "The United States as Global Cop: Arresting Consequences." The Cato Institute, 26 February 1999.

¹⁶ Kreyenbroek and Sperl: 48.

¹⁷ Robert Olson, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement in the 1990's* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1996): 1.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Due to events in Iraq since the early 1990s, the attention paid to the Kurdish issue has grown exponentially. With the completion of operation Desert Storm and the subsequent US led missions during operation Provide Comfort, which established a safe haven for Kurds in northern Iraq, the amount of information available is far-reaching.

The extensiveness and sheer volume of information available on the Kurd's makes the research initially seem effortless. Reports and published accounts on current Kurdish issues that can be cited from The Congressional Research Service, the Brookings Institute, the International Crisis Group and other print media sources abound. In fact, just conducting a general Internet search on the subject of the Kurds will result in a number of hits that can only be described as astronomical. So, as effortless as it is to find readily available information, the act of working through the weight of information available to find what is specifically relevant to the subject at hand can only be described as nothing short of laborious and intimidating.

The purpose of this chapter is to review the predominant works cited and used during research. As stated previously, the amount of information available is not the issue; it is the attempt to determine what is useful compared to that available. To provide organizational structure to this chapter it has been organized it into sections; the first covering historical literature, the second covering analysis, both internal and external to Iraq and the third section covering US policy options and reviews.

Historical Literature

Of the many books written on the history of the Kurds, three are of special benefit in determining how the current situation in relationship to Kurdish autonomy developed. Mehrdad Izady's *The Kurds: A Concise Handbook*, David McDowell's *A Modern history of the Kurds* and *The Kurd: A Contemporary Overview* edited by Philip G. Kreyenbroek and Stefan Sperl, all provide an in-depth history of the Kurds through the present day, and all work to illustrate to varying degrees the factors that led to the current Kurdish call for independence. To read each, in full, is not required to get a flavor of whom the Kurds are, where they come from, or their current plight, but each of the authors does focus in some specific areas.

All three books take a balanced look at history through the end of World War I, but then weight their focus in the establishment of the border system that did not take into account historic Kurdish territories, and the division of that nation by the newly established state borders. Izady concentrates on providing a general overview of the Kurds' ancient history, the cultural differences between tribes, geographical locations and society. McDowall analyzes how the countries of the region have used the internal friction of the Kurdish tribes to their advantage to protect against a unified effort by the Kurdish nation as a whole to re-establish its independence. He shows how the Kurds' fight to establish an autonomous foothold is characteristically different in each country. Kreyenbroek and Stefan speak of the specific characteristics of each country's Kurdish population and the political implications of their claims of self-determination.

National Guidance

To help determine the inputs to the strategic estimate a review of President George W. Bush's written strategy and public statements require in-depth review. The written policy and verbal statements of the President can assist civilian and military leaders of the United States in developing recommendations in response to a given issue. Likewise, foreign governments and officials as well as non-state actors use such statements, written, or verbal, in their determining the current or future policy of the US.

The September 2002 *National Security Strategy* (NSS), provides the initial direction in determining probable US policy in dealing with the Kurdish issue. In the preface to the NSS, President Bush writes, "the United States will stand beside any nation determined to build a better future by seeking the rewards of liberty for its people."¹ Additionally, in Section II of the NSS President Bush expands on this point by writing, "America must stand firmly for the non-negotiable demands of human dignity; rule of law; limits on the absolute power of the state; free speech; freedom of worship; equal justice; respect for women; religious and ethnic tolerance; and respect for private property."²

In his 2005 inauguration address, President Bush spoke to these ideals again when he stated, "Across the generations we have proclaimed the imperative of self-government, because no one is fit to be master, and no one deserves to be a slave. Advancing these ideals in the mission that created our Nation. . . All who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know: the United States will not ignore your oppression, or excuse your oppressors. When you stand for liberty, we stand with you."³

These statements, whether taken individually, collectively, or out of context can cause difficulty when trying to determine the direction of policy. Taken out of context, these statements can be used to the advantage of and, ultimately, fuel the efforts of any ethnic group referring to itself as a “nation.” Based on an analysis of these statements individually, one could erroneously conclude that it is the stated policy of the United States to ensure that nations such as the Kurds claim the independence and liberty they are entitled to. However, Bush clarifies this sentiment of liberty and human rights in the NSS by saying, “America’s experience as a great multi-ethnic democracy affirms our conviction that many people of many heritages and faiths can live and prosper in peace.”⁴ This statement provides the basis for better understanding the assurance from President Bush to Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Prime Minister of Turkey, in 2004 that the United States did not intend to support the establishment of an independent Kurdish State. “Mr. Bush reassured the Turkish Leader that the United States does not want to see Iraq’s Kurds get their own state...Mr. Bush left no doubt he sees their future as part of a multi-ethnic Iraq, and not part of a breakaway nation that might inflame separatists ambitions among Kurds in neighboring countries.”⁵ This statement especially provides this paper its direction.

Iraq: Internal Analysis

There are numerous articles and reports that analyze the effects the Iraqi Kurds are having on events internal to Iraq. The positive effects are predominantly only positive from the Kurd perspective: the increase in Kurdish nationalism, the potential to increase the size of the Iraqi Kurd controlled autonomous area and equal representation within the Iraqi national government. There is one negative to this rise in Iraqi Kurd hegemony and

it is not focused on the Arabs but on the Iraqi Kurds themselves. Annia Ciezadlo, published an article in the *Sulaymaniya Dispatch*, “Northern Aggression: The New Republic,” in which she describes what is happening inside the Iraqi Kurd areas as the Kurdish political parties consolidate power, specifically the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) under Talibani and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) under Barzani, in preparation for the Iraqi national election. She argues that the national elections have cemented the rule of dominant political parties instead of making Kurdistan more democratic.⁶ In an attempt to ensure the Iraqi Kurds won seats in the Iraqi national election, both Talibani and Barzani worked to keep other independent and smaller Iraqi Kurd political parties off the national ballot. This did ensure the Iraqi Kurds significant representation in the national assembly, but did so at the expense of true democratic practice. She ends her article with a quote from an Iraqi Kurd claiming that the current political practices of Talibani and Barzani are establishing a dictatorship, masked as nationalism.⁷

The International Crisis Group (ICG) published a report in April of 2004, “Iraq’s Kurds: Towards an Historic Compromise?” that analyzes the Kurdish demand for a “unified, ethnically-defined region of their own.”⁸ The ICG warns that the greatest point of friction in the Iraqi Kurd campaign to expand their autonomous area is the decision of how to handle the Ta’imim province and its capital Kirkuk. The Kirkuk area is not only the largest oil reserve area in Iraq; it maintains a demographic that is nearly equal in population between Iraq Kurds, Shia Turkmen, and Arabs. The Kurds, who argue a historic claim on the Ta’imim province, are continuing to press for either its inclusion in

the Iraqi Kurd area, or a less preferred option, as an area of special status, not controlled by any one group.

In January 2004 the Iraqi Kurd leadership invited selected Arab representatives to a conference in order to remind them that they had supported Kurdish rights while in exile. Although an agreement on the Kirkuk issue was left unresolved, the conference highlights the importance that the Iraqi Kurds maintain on Kirkuk.

The report also analyzes the options for the Iraqi Kurds in respect to maintaining an autonomous region; increasing the size of the current Iraqi Kurds controlled autonomous region or their integration into a Federation of Iraqi States. Each option includes the positives and negatives each will have on the internal situation in Iraq. The report also makes recommendations to the Iraqi Kurds political leadership, the United Nations and the United States in how to proceed in order to best protect against overall failure. The report recommends to the Iraqi Kurds to agree to a special status for Kirkuk, and halt the return of displaced Kurds to the Kirkuk area. The United States should continue the ban on local civilians carrying weapons and to conduct searches of political party offices for illegal weapons inside Kirkuk, and most importantly, tell the Iraqi Kurds that the US will not support an independent Kurdistan. And, to the United Nations, play an active role in the development of the Iraqi Constitution and the intercommunity relations between the separate ethnic groups.

Iraq: Regional Analysis

Daniel Byman, in his 2003 article, “Building the New Iraq: The Role of the Intervening Forces,” describes what he believes will happen with the premature withdrawal of coalition forces; “Iraq’s neighbors are likely to meddle once again in Iraqi

affairs.”⁹ The Turks, concerned about the security and stabilization of their own country will maintain military presence in the northern areas of Iraq to stem Kurdish guerilla activity. Iran will influence activities inside Iraq by using “exiles it has armed and trained to intervene.”¹⁰ Byman goes on to discuss how Iran will counter US presence and US nation building operation’s in Iraq by continuing with its proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and related programs, which in turn will force Iraq to reestablish its own WMD efforts, once the US withdraws, to maintain a regional balance of power.

Byman establishes one of the US priorities in Iraq as the “forging of agreements between Turkish and Kurdish leaders with an eye towards avoiding hostilities and suppressing provocative anti-Turkish guerilla operations out of Iraq. . .”¹¹

Byman followed up his 2003 article with “Five Bad Options for Iraq,” in 2005. The five options he discusses are, first, staying the course with the same political approach and level of forces; second, dramatically expanding the US and allied presence; third, a smaller expansion, but with a much greater shift toward counterinsurgency operations; fourth, a drawing down to a far smaller force that would have a more limited mission; and, lastly, a complete withdrawal.¹² Byman freely admits that none of the five options are good, but that staying the course with the same political approach and level of forces “represents an unhappy middle ground.”¹³ Byman recommends either expanding US and coalition presence with a focus on counterinsurgency, or initiating a drawdown. He does not advocate a complete withdrawal under any circumstance, explaining that Iraq would not only devolve into a jihadist training area for operatives sent to attack the United States but, “Iran would be free to exploit its already strong influence, and

undermine leaders hostile to Iran and bolster those who favor Iran's interests in a chaotic political environment.”¹⁴ Additionally, “The Kurds would probably push for even greater autonomy or even independence. In response, Turkey would intervene.”¹⁵

US Policy Options and Reviews

An analyst for the Congressional Research Service (CRS), Kenneth Katzman, in his April 2005 updated report to Congress, “Iran: US Concerns and Policy Responses,” discusses the options of regime change, engagement, military action, and US and international sanctions and multilateral policies. Katzman makes no specific recommendations but does provide an assessment that current unilateral sanctions are having little to no effect, and that any additional unilateral US action, either economic or military in nature, “could harden Iran's positions without necessarily easing the potential threat posed by Iran.”¹⁶

Alfred Prados' CRS report to Congress, Syria: US Relations and Bilateral Issues,” dated March of 2005, analyzes the ongoing diplomatic issues between the United States and Syria. The March 2005 report included the effects on Syria following the assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and Syria's subsequent military withdrawal from Lebanon. The report also covers in detail the current unilateral sanctions imposed by the United States on Syria. In addition, it discusses the role Syria has played in support of US operations in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), and Syria's assistance in providing intelligence on Al-Qaeda cells in Canada, were planning an attack on the United States. Although the relationship between the US and Syria remains strained due to Syria's continued support of terrorist groups other than Al-Qaeda, Prados makes it clear that:

Recent Administrations, though not inclined to lift sanctions on Syria at this time, tend to believe it is in US interests to encourage Syria to play a positive role in the Arab-Israeli peace process and support other US initiatives. The issue for US policy makers is the degree to which the United States should work for better relations with Syria in an effort to enlist Syrian cooperation on regional and international issues such as the war on terrorism.¹⁷

The report provides an inclusive synopsis of US aid, general and specific sanctions and recent congressional action in place against Syria, as well as recent administration statements warning Syria of additional sanctions if they continue to support terrorist organizations or continue to allow insurgents to pass freely into Iraq from Syrian lands.

“Iraq: The Turkish Factor,” also a CRS report by Carol Migdalovitz, states in the first sentence, “Turkey, a long time NATO ally of the United States which borders Iraq, will likely be pivotal to any US military operation against Iraq.”¹⁸ Migdalovitz discusses the national interests of Turkey and how the US policy affects those interests. The report includes a review of Turkey’s concern of a destabilized Iraq, the potential prominence the Kurds will play in its future, Turkey’s economic issues and related US financial support, and Turkey’s expectation that the United States will play a significant supporting role in its acceptance into the EU.

Kenneth Pollack conducts an analysis of US-Iranian relations in “Tackling Tehran,” and points out the pressure points on Iran’s current regime. He argues that Iran is more susceptible to international pressure than commonly believed or acknowledged, and that their most sensitive point is their economy. Pollack proposes a multi-track approach, referred to as the “Triple Track.”¹⁹ His strategy is for a multi-directional approach where each of the three is mutually supporting of the other. The first track is to “hold open the prospect of a comprehensive settlement . . . Trading off its various political

and economic sanctions against Iran in return for Iran desisting from terrorism, opposition to the Middle East peace process, and pursuit of nuclear weapons.”²⁰ The second track is “a true carrot and stick approach,”²¹ rewarding Iran for cooperation or imposes consequences if they fail to remain confrontational. This track would not be unilateral, but in cooperation with Japan, Europe, Russia and China. The third track, a fallback option is “preparing for a new containment regime,”²² if the first and second tracks fail. The “sticks” from the second track will help create the effects of the third if required, effectively laying the groundwork for a regime the US will find easier to contain. Pollack also argues that because the United States conducted the second track multilaterally, the potential that track three is unilateral is diminished..

¹George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, September 2002) 1.

²Ibid., 20

³George W. Bush, Inauguration speech, 20 January 2005, Washington D.C. Article on-line. Available from:
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/01/20050120-1.html>

⁴George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, September 2002) 21.

⁵Paula Wolfson, “US Opposes Independent Iraq Kurd State, says Bush,” *Voice of America*, 28 January 2004. Article on-line. Available from:
<http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/iraq/2004/01/iraq-040128-voa.htm>

⁶Annia Ciezadlo, “Northern Aggression,” *The New Republic*, 7 February 2005, Article on line. Available from: <https://ssl.tnr.com/p/docsub.mhtml>

⁷Ibid., 4

⁸International Crisis Group, “Iraqi Kurds: Toward an Historic Compromise?” *ICG Middle East Report*, No 26 (8 April 2004): 1.

⁹Daniel L. Byman, "Building the New Iraq: The role of Intervening Forces," *Survival*, 45, no. 2 (summer 2003): 60.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹*Ibid.*, 63

¹²Daniel L. Byman, "Five Bad Options for Iraq," *Survival*, 47, no. 1, (spring 2005): 7.

¹³*Ibid.*, 8

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 21-22

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 21

¹⁶Kenneth Katzman, "Iran: US concerns and Policy Responses," *Congressional Research Service* (Library of Congress, 15 April 2005): 1

¹⁷Alfred B. Prados, "Syria: US Relations and Bilateral Issues," *Congressional Research Service* (Library of Congress, 25 March 2005): 1

¹⁸Carol Migdalovitz, "Iraq: The Turkish Factor," *Congressional Research Service* (Library of Congress, 31 October 2002):1

¹⁹Kenneth M. Pollack, "Tackling Tehran," *The Road Ahead: Middle East policy in the Bush Administration's Second Term*, (Bookings: 2005): 68.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 70

²¹*Ibid.*, 73

²²*Ibid.*, 75

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this research is a direct approach based on the structure of a strategic estimate found in Joint Publication 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, and the article by LTC Mark R. Wilcox and Dr. Bruce W. Manning, “Guide to the Strategic Estimate,” from the C200 Strategic Studies Reading Book and Advanced Sheets of the Command and General Staff Officer Course (CGSOC). The purpose of the strategic estimate “is to assist commanders and their staffs to get their arms around a given situation in order to decide whether and how to act.”¹

The first step in the estimate process is determining inputs and the questions to be answered; table 1 from “Guide to the Strategic Estimate” provides an example. The inputs to the estimate should answer; “the nature of the problem . . . , what’s happening, why it’s important and what’s to be done.”² This step, completed in chapter one, included a review of Kurdish history, concentrating on the events that transpired from the end of World War I through the end of OIF. By completing this step, the first subordinate question; what, if any are the differences between the end of World War I and today in respect to the Kurds desire for self-determination, was answered.

The second step in the estimate is the situation analysis. The situation analysis will examine the regional effects of the Iraqi Kurds attempting to establish an independent state from two perspectives. First, the internal effects of the Sunni and Shia populations in side Iraq are determined, then from a geo-strategic perspective, the external effects such a move will have on the neighboring states has been analyzed. The options facing the United States will help determine an answer for the third and fourth

subordinate questions, what are the likely internal and regional effects of the establishment of an autonomous Kurdish region inside a democratic Iraq, and, what are the likely internal and regional effects of the establishment of an independent Kurdish state outside a democratic Iraq?

Table 1. Inputs to the Strategic Estimate	
Input	Questions
Strategic Setting	What are the geopolitical characteristics of the area?
	What is the history of the area?
	What actors - state and non-state - can influence the situation in the area?
	Why does the US care about this area?
	What are the actors' sources of power?
	What is the US domestic situation?
Current Events	What is occurring that concerns the US?
	What has changed or is changing?
	What is the significance of the change(s)?
	What actions have relevant actors - including the US - taken?
National Guidance	What US national interests are involved?
	What is US policy towards the area, the actors involved, and the situation?
Peacetime Planning	What plans already exist to deal with the area/ situation?

The third step in the process is the course of action development and analysis. “The object is to identify for the commander various options and alternatives either for coping with a given situation or for completing a stated mission.”³ The analysis and determination of what courses of actions are available to the United States Administration and the regional Combatant Commander (COCOM) focuses on the instruments of

national power; diplomatic, informational, military and economic. The course of action analysis will explore the question, what should the US response be , if any, to the external effects bound to take place in other regional countries by ethnic Kurdish ethnic areas, especially Turkey, a NATO ally, if those factions want independence or autonomy? This step will be analyzed from the perspective of the internal Iraqi groups and the regional states and finally, options available to the United States in response to each will be included.

The last step is determining a recommendation based on the analysis. The recommendation will answer the thesis question; should the United States support the establishment of an independent Kurdish State? The answer to this question will be derived from the analysis completed in chapter four. Why the problem is important is defined in the beginning of Chapter 4, followed by an analysis of how the United States can approach the problem through the use of its instruments of national power. The recommendation of what the United States should do is included in Chapter 5.

¹Mark R. Wilcox and Bruce W. Manning, "Guide to the Strategic Estimate," C200 Strategic Studies, Readings Book and Advanced Sheets (CGSC, Ft Leavenworth, June 2004, pg 167).

²Ibid., 169.

³Ibid., 170

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

The Kurds' Strategic Importance

Following World War I the Kurds found themselves a nation divided between multiple states, but occupying what has become, arguably, one of the most strategically important geographic locations in the entire Middle East. To this point, this thesis has reviewed the historical factors that have brought the United States and the regional countries to the present circumstances, especially the increasing Kurdish influence within the boundary regions of Iraq, Turkey, Iran and Syria. This chapter will review the rights of states as defined by Richard Haass--historical legitimacy, viability, internal stability and regional stability--and analyze options for the United States in addressing the Kurdish issue.

Based on the historical context in which the current situation developed, as illustrated in detail in chapter 1, it is clear the Kurds can argue legitimacy from at least three positions. First, the Kurds can argue historic legitimacy. They are by definition a nation in the sense that they maintain their own cultural identity through language, tradition, and historical occupation of a geographic area. Second, they maintain legitimacy through the recognition by the United States and by the League of Nations, following World War I, as a legitimate nation, based on the initial plans in the Treaty of Sevres and the League of Nations Commission in 1930 to establish a separate Kurdish state. Third, their inclusion in the Iraqi Constitution guarantees their participation in the national government, providing them one of two vice president positions and representation in the parliamentary assembly equitable to their population. Additionally,

within the past year, Turkey has recognized the Kurds as a separate ethnic group rather than “mountain Turks,” a derogatory designation commonly used in the past. The Syrians and the Iranians have also increasingly granted recognition to the Kurds as an ethnic body within the last few decades.

The issue of whether or not the Kurds can survive as an independent and viable state is dependent upon the where the state boundaries are drawn. If an independent Kurdistan includes all land area guaranteed to the Kurds in the Treaty of Sevres, the natural resources the Kurds would control will easily guarantee the economic base required to maintain a strong and independent economy. Most notably, the oil reserves in the Kirkuk and northeast Iraq area would make the Kurds one of the largest owners of oil and natural gas reserves in the world (figure 4).

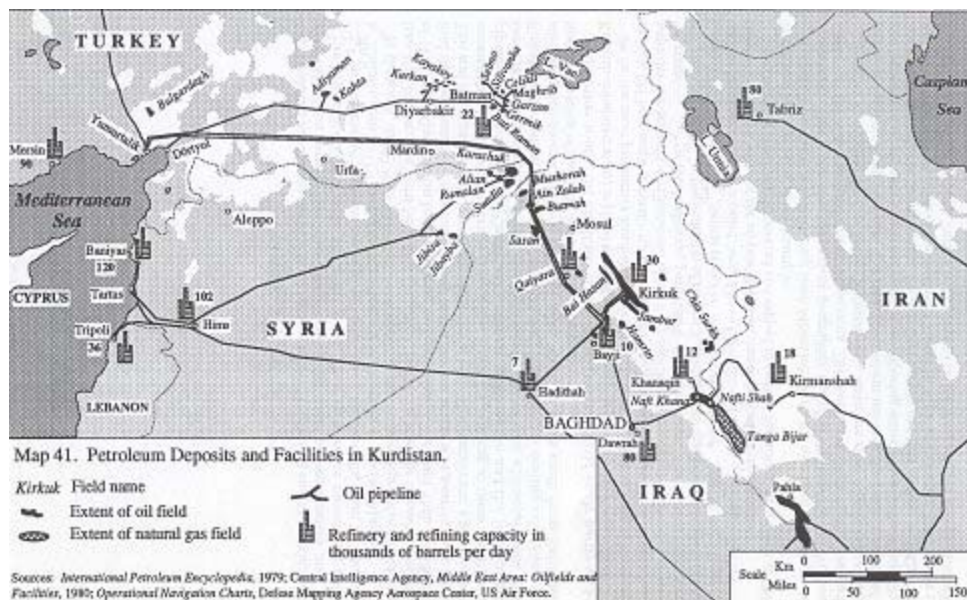


Figure 4. Petroleum Deposits and Facilities in Kurdistan

Source: Izady, *The Kurds: A Concise Handbook*, pg222.

Kurdistan has among the largest oil reserves in the Middle East and the world. With about 45 billion barrels, Kurdistan contains more and larger proven deposits than the entire United States, and ranks 6th in the world.

By far the most productive Kurdish petroleum fields are in Kirkuk. Oil here seeps naturally up to the ground. . . .

The Iraqi government has over the years constructed a vast network of oil pipelines, internally and in neighboring states. These include Red Sea outlets...Persian Gulf outlets...and Mediterranean outlets at Tartus in Syria and Dortyol-Yumurtalik in Turkey. The pipeline through Turkey has proven the most reliable and profitable in the past decade.¹

The control and regulation of water flow and production of hydro-electrical power for development already completed by the Turks will support a strong existing infrastructure and provide additional, complimentary economic resources. The headwaters of both the Tigris and Euphrates rivers are located in the Anatolian Plateau region of south-central Turkey. Near the end of the 1980s the Turkish Government established a commission to undertake the planning and development of the Southeast Anatolian Project (also known as GAP, based on the Turkish language).

The GAP project will encompass nine Turkish provinces in the Tigris-Euphrates Basin area and include the construction of approximately thirteen dams, which will eventually control the rivers' flows from Turkey into Syria, and Iraq. There are also plans to pipe the water reserves as far away as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and even Israel, providing a substantial economic impetus and establishing a position of geostrategic leverage for Turkey. The two largest dams, the Ataturk and Kiralkizi, located on the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers respectively, combine to produce approximately 2,500 megawatts of electricity, and impound water reserves large enough to irrigate in excess of 2 million acres of farmland. These facts become even more significant considering that, prior to 1985, Turkey could only produce approximately 34 megawatts of electricity and irrigate

1.4 million acres of land.² This newly harnessed potential led the Ataturk Dam supervisor to declare in 1999, “Water is a weapon. We can stop the flow of water into Syria and Iraq for up to eight months without overflowing our dams, in order to regulate the Arabs’ political behavior.”³ Figure 5 provides a general picture of the area the GAP occupies along the southern border of Turkey. Figure 6 illustrates the specific location of the dams as part of the GAP project, the majority of which fall within the Kurdistan area and the rest within their span of influence.



Figure 5. GAP Area

Source: USDA (<http://fas.usda.gov/pecad/pecad.html>)

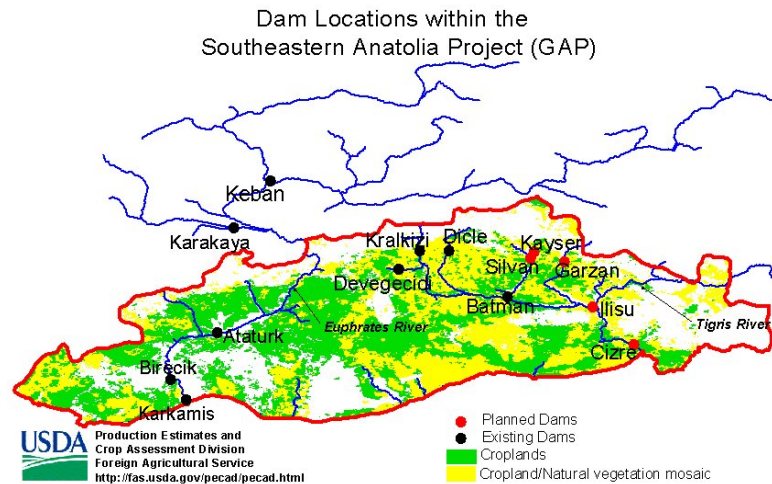


Figure 6. GAP Dam Locations, Current and Planned
Source: USDA (<http://fas.usda.gov/pecad/pecad.html>)

In addition to oil, natural gas and water-related resources, the agricultural region of the country already under the control of the Kurds in Iraq will easily support the grain requirements of its population. When combined with the agricultural capacity of southern Turkey, it is evident that the Kurds will be able to produce a surplus significant enough to augment their economy through the exportation to neighboring countries.

Despite strong evidence that the Kurds could flourish as an independent nation in regard to economics and control of natural resources, the question of whether or not Kurdish independence is a viable political option is another matter, and this question is tied directly to the third and fourth rights of states as defined by Haass. This analysis demands that internal and external stability must first be examined before developing a course of action in support of or against sovereignty.

An Autonomous Area as Part of a Democratic Iraq

With the understanding that the definition of “autonomy” can vary widely based on the context in which that word is used, it is important to note that the benchmark of Kurdish autonomy is synonymous with the terms “self-governing” or “self-rule” for the purposes of the following analysis. Based on this definition, the guidelines set forth in 1952 by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) have been used as a start point. As part of these guidelines, a subcommittee of the UNGA defined three separate required elements of autonomy as follows:

1. *Territorial government*: Freedom from the control or interference by the government of another State in respect of the internal government (legislature, executive, judiciary) and administration of the territory.

2. *Participation of the population*: Effective participation of the population in the government of the territory by means of an adequate electoral and representative system.

3. *Economic and social jurisdiction*: Complete autonomy in respect of economic and social affairs.⁴

The first section of the analysis will cover an autonomous Kurdish area defined as the “status quo.” In the case of “status quo” autonomy, the Iraqi Kurds will maintain the current autonomous area, which includes the Erbil, Dohuk and Sulaymaniya provinces they now control, without gain or loss of area inside Iraq. The second case in this section is referred to as autonomy “plus.” Autonomy “plus” is defined as the inclusion of Ta’imim province, including its capital Kirkuk. In short, the following discussion focuses on two potential autonomous Iraqi Kurdish areas within the borders of Iraq, operating within the parameters of its own self-interests, but also including the requirement to represent itself in Iraqi governmental processes as a member of a three-part coalition with Arab Sunni and Shia.

“Status quo” Autonomy

It is not in the best interests of the Iraqi Kurds to relinquish the autonomy they have gained since the end of the Gulf War. Since 1991 the Iraqi Kurds, while under the protection of US and coalition partners, have successfully established a stable, self-governing region with a thriving economy in comparison to the rest of Iraq.

Compared to the option of autonomy “plus” or independence, “status quo” autonomy is the best option for Iraq, the United States and its coalition partners, and Iraq’s regional neighbors. The Iraqi Shia and Sunni groups have become accustomed to and accept the degree of autonomy of Iraqi Kurds in northern Iraq. It is unlikely that Arab groups inside Iraq will challenge the rights of the Iraqi Kurds to continue with this practice. Likewise, Iraq’s regional neighbors, Turkey, Syria and Iran, have also become accustomed to this standard of autonomy. By maintaining the status quo, it is arguably less likely that any of Iraq’s regional neighbors will increase their level of involvement and interference inside Iraq. The US led coalition will also benefit from the maintaining of the status quo. Without any significant change in the ethnic balance of power in northern Iraq, the environment is likely to remain relatively stable.

Autonomy “Plus”

Autonomy “plus” is defined as the Iraqi Kurds’ retaining a significant degree of autonomy, but with the inclusion of Ta’imim province. The assumption for this section is that the Iraqi Kurds will bring Ta’imim into their autonomous region through pressure or force, not through diplomacy and negotiation with other Iraqi ethnic groups involved in the constitutional process. The Ta’imim province, and especially the inclusion of Kirkuk, is a significant friction point for the Iraqi Kurd community. Likewise, the determination

of Kirkuk is an emotional issue for the Turkmen and Iraqi Arabs as well. The issue of whether or not Kirkuk will or will not fall within Iraqi Kurd control resulted in the death of five non-Kurdish demonstrators after they were fired upon by the Kurdish *Peshmerga*.⁵

Internal Effects of Autonomy “Plus”

The internal effects of Kirkuk and Ta’imim province being integrated into the Iraqi Kurd autonomous region will be significant. Following OIF, and before the coalition established any degree of domestic control, the Iraqi Kurds in Kirkuk, with the support of their *Peshmerga*, initiated a de-Arabisation program. In effect, notifying Iraqi Arabs that they needed to evacuate the homes and businesses they occupied within the Kirkuk area. This action by the Kurds was in reaction to the Arabisation program executed, in the 1980s, under the Saddam Hussein regime in an attempt to build an ethnic demographic larger than that of the existing Iraqi Kurd community. The aggressiveness in which the Iraqi Kurds attempted to complete this de-Arabisation was a result of the Ba’athist regime’s atrocities committed against the Iraqi Kurds in the Kirkuk area during the Anfal campaign that followed the Iran-Iraq war.⁶ While the *peshmerga* and local Iraqi Kurds living in Kirkuk initiated their own de-Arabisation plans, the KDP and PUK attempted to immediately fill the post-war vacuum by seizing control of the key governmental directorates and staffing them with their own governmental representatives from Erbil and Sulaymaniya.⁷ The Turkmen also residing in the Ta’imim province are concerned that the actions taken in the de-Arabisation program also will eventually lead to their expulsion. However, the Iraqi Kurd leadership is currently inclined to look at the Turkmen as co-victims of the Arabisation program and to allow them to remain, with a

census to follow in order to provide equitable representation within the province.⁸ The Turkmen, however, remain unconvinced. It is plausible that the Iraqi Kurds are attempting to allay the fears of the Turkmen, in order to garner their initial support for de-Arabisation, only to initiate a forced evacuation of the Turkmen later. It is, however, arguable, that if the Iraqi Kurds include the Ta'mim province into their autonomous region by force, they will repeat events that transpired immediately following OIF.

External Effects of Autonomy "Plus"

Similar to the effects created by a Kurdish attempt to establish an independent state, it is easy to speculate on the effects created by a Kurdish attempt at autonomy "plus." Turkey will most likely feel obligated to protect the Turkmen's interests in the Ta'mim province. This would not necessarily provoke a major military response with significant Turkish forces invading northern Iraq; however, it is plausible that Turkey will increase its numbers of Turkish forces already in Iraq to "protect" the Turkmen. Additionally, if the Iraqi Kurds achieve complete control of Ta'mim and the oil fields, Turkey will be in a position to significantly reduce the amount of crude oil exported from the Iraqi Kurd autonomous area to the Mediterranean through Turkey, significantly reducing the economic viability of an Iraqi Kurd autonomous region. The worst case is a potential Turkish-sponsored Turkmen insurgency within the Ta'mim province that will grow in size and scope to include other Turkmen concentrations in areas of Iraq such as Tuz.

Independent State

Based on personal experiences working as a liaison officer (LNO) in the Kurdistan area of Iraq and dealing directly with the senior leadership of the PUK, as well as socializing with the community, the author has a unique perspective on the political outlook of the Iraqi Kurds. During numerous meetings with the PUK Prime Minister, Vice President and General Staff of the PUK *Peshmerga*, they defined the political end state of OIF as “the reintegration of Iraq’s Kurdish region back into the Iraqi state, as part of a new federal arrangement.”⁹ That said, some members of the PUK community describe the ongoing actions in Iraq to establish the Kurds into the new Iraqi state as “Phase I.” The subsequent phases are the establishment of an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq, which would include the Ta’imim province along with Erbil, Dohuk, and Sulaymaniya. Once the Iraqi Kurds are established in Iraq they will begin a campaign of influence and support from Iraqi Kurds to Kurdish groups in the three remaining regional countries with large Kurdish populations. The end state or “final phase” is the establishment of an independent Kurdish state that includes all Kurdish areas within Iraq, Turkey, Iran, and Syria. The boundaries of this state would be the Kurdish occupied areas of Syria and Iran on the west and east, south of Kirkuk in Iraq that would include Mosul, and north to the Lake Van area in southeastern Turkey.

This concept, although brazen, is not entirely unrealistic. Despite the solidification of the Kurdish political situation inside Iraq, the overall situation in regards to the success of democratization remains perilous. When the US eventually withdraws and leaves the Iraqis to determine their own independent destiny, a series of minor events, as witnessed on numerous occasions throughout history, can lead to a catastrophic

event – the disillusionment of the current paradigm. If this occurs, and the Iraqi Kurds are left with the decision of protecting the Iraqi state or establishing their own, the prevailing attitude among the group will likely lead them to make the latter.

Internal

The immediate result of the implosion in Iraq, on the heels of a failure of democratization, will be the infighting between the Sunni and Shia for determination of rule along religious rather than political lines. The Kurds, as an ethnic group, will re-employ the military capabilities of its *Peshmerga* and immediately move to regain the “historically Kurdish” territories surrounding Mosul and Kirkuk, and the area in the vicinity of the oil pipelines. The Arabs, divided along religious lines, would be unlikely to have the capacity to build the combat power necessary to stem such a move.

Now that Saddam Hussein is gone, the Kurds are the best armed and organized Iraqi force, having tens of thousands of fighters under arms. Left to themselves, they could easily take northern parts of Iraq that historically had large Kurdish populations, including Kirkuk.¹⁰

Once the land is back under Kurdish control they will reinforce their boundaries and initiate a de-Arabization campaign of the area, reversing the program developed by Saddam Hussein during his rule. Once Iraqi Kurdistan is secure, the political wing of the Kurdistan Parliament will initiate action in the international community by providing access to its hydro-carbon resources. Once they have stabilized their gains inside Iraq, they will move to protect their borders, focusing their attention north towards Turkey. Following the stabilization of their external borders they will initiate campaigns in Iran, Turkey and Syria, bolstering support for Kurdish-led uprisings in those countries, and in effect, destabilizing the entire center of the Middle East.

External

Turkey could mobilize its forces, and if provided opportunity, conduct an incursion into northern Iraq to destroy the remnants of the PKK, and establish a security zone to protect against Iraqi Kurd influence in its southern territories.

Syria likewise could mobilize and position forces along the border, in anticipation of internally displaced Iraqi Sunnis attempting to find sanctuary from the fighting. It is unlikely that the Syrians will move into Iraq. If they do, however, the action would aim at protecting the distribution of the required natural resources from the northern Iraq and southern Turkey regions.

Iran will mobilize but will be hesitant to initiate a cross border invasion into the eastern provinces of Iraq. Tehran will most likely continue to influence the situation through the support of groups and individual players to maintain Iraq in a state of disorder.

United States

The United States is executing the best current option available to it. Maintaining the appropriate level of military force in accordance with the current situation and continuing of US military operations in Iraq, while it simultaneously trains, equips and transitions authority to the new Iraqi Army. The US must continue to provide the world an “Iraqi face” to the Iraqi fight for democratization. Even with the expected duration of US involvement in the country, the sooner the US military can reduce its profile in the ongoing operations the better.

The first US response to any Kurdish group attempting to establish an independent state is that by the United States will not support such a move. The

immediate effects of such an attempt by the Kurds are the complete destruction of all work to establish a democratic Iraq to date and an immediate threat to regional stability. If the United States were to support such an action, it would be creating another situation similar to the one it faces in Israel, and this is not in the best interests of the US. The United States would be forced to support the fledgling nation that will only survive through the direct support of the United States, and, like Israel, will be threatened on all sides by regimes that do not want it to exist.

US-Turkey Relations

US-Turkey relations are longstanding; the Turks are a key NATO ally and a coalition partner in the war on terrorism. Turkey was one of the first nations to support Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan. In support of OEF, Turkey was one of the first countries to provide troops for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan and assumed leadership of that force in 2002. Turkey extended its deployment in Afghanistan, in support of the US, when the Germans and Dutch could not arrive as early as required. US bases in Turkey, especially the Turkish airbase at Incirlik in southeastern Turkey, are key to US military operations in that part of the world and have supported the Persian Gulf War, Operation Northern Watch (ONW) and OEF. The only strain on US-Turkey relations in recent years was due to the Turkish government's not supporting a US plan to deploy a US Army division through Turkey in order to open a northern front against Iraq in OIF. However, Turkey remains one of the United States' most steadfast allies in the region and as a coalition partner in the war on terrorism.¹¹

The US acts as the Turks primary lobbyist to the European Union (EU) for the admittance of Turkey into that organization, and Turkey expects the US to exert pressure

on the EU for membership. In December of 1999, Turkey became a candidate for membership in the EU. The European Commission recommended that the European Council granted Turkey a date to begin formal accession in October of 2005. Two of the primary issues for acceptance into the EU remain Turkish protection of minorities and the stability of their economy.¹²

Since 1947 the US has provided Turkey with approximately \$14 billion in military assistance, and remains as the primary supplier of military weapons and hardware to Turkey. As late as April 2005, the US approved a \$1.1 billion contract for the Lockheed Martin Corporation to upgrade the avionics of the Turkish F-16 fleet.¹³ US military aid is also increasing; Foreign Military Financing jumped from \$17.5 billion in 2003 to \$50 billion in 2004. This money is intended to assist Turkey in the modernization of its armed forces, assure compatibility as a NATO force, and provide necessary resources in its participation in the war on terrorism. In addition, money for military training nearly doubled from 2003 to 2004 to approximately \$5 billion¹⁴

The US and Turkey have established a Joint Economic Commission and a Trade Investment Framework Agreement. Subsequently, in 2002, they established a Economic Partnership Commission that eventually led to Turkey's being designated as an Emerging Market for US exports and investment by the Department of Commerce. The US is now Turkey's third largest export market. In 2001 the trade balance between the two countries was nearly equal, equating to approximately \$3 billion annually.¹⁵ Since 2003, Turkey has received approximately \$1.6 billion in loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to help stabilize its economy. Over the same time period, Turkey has received in excess of \$900 million in grants and loans from the World Bank, including a \$9 million

grant providing direct cash assistance to the poorest families in Turkey.¹⁶ Prior to the 1991 Gulf War, Turkey incurred a loss in trade revenues of \$30 to \$100 billion from Iraq, after it closed its border in support of the US and UN policy.¹⁷ Since the end of OIF, Turkish companies have been granted contracts in excess of \$100 million for the refinement of gasoline and other fuels from Iraq. Turkey is also providing Iraq a billion kilowatts of electricity a month in exchange for oil.¹⁸

In reaction to any move by Turkey to interfere with the ongoing situation in Iraq, the US has a multitude of options. Diplomatically, the US can reduce its support for Turkish acceptance into the EU. Militarily, the US can cut funding for the Turkish military. Economically, the US can reduce the amount of money Turkey is receiving from loans and grants from international organizations and reduce the amount of goods that Turkey exports to the US. These hard-line approaches carry with them residual effects, which can be detrimental to the US.

The first effect will be the potential loss of a coalition partner in the war on terrorism. Second is a potential loss in regional military bases relied upon by the US, in support of ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan to include overflight rights and the potential future loss of the Incirlik airbase in Turkey, reducing the US influence in the region.

Another approach to deter Turkey is to increase the information campaign in support of Turkey, highlighting their recent improvements in minority rights in addition to supporting their ongoing defense against their own internal terrorist organization, the PKK and KADEK. Second, the US can continue with its public statements that it does not support the idea of an independent Kurdish state and that it believes the best option is

Kurdish integration into the new Iraqi democracy. The US can also work to protect Turkish economic gains from Iraq by protecting the ongoing “oil for power” deal as the internal situation in Iraq is restabilized.

The US response to Turkey, for any situation or outcome, will be the most complex. However, the best option to facilitate US interests is through the support of Turkey’s desire for admittance into the European Union (EU). The Europeans have been split in recent years on whether or not Turkey should be allowed to join. Some European countries have debated as to whether or not Turkey is actually within the boundaries of Europe; those that maintain that it is not within these boundaries believe that Turkey’s entry should not be granted. Others claim that until Turkey improves its record of human rights with ethnic groups inside its borders, specifically the Kurds, then Turkey’s pursuit of membership should not even be considered. The second response is to apply pressure to the Kurdish political parties in Iraq to either expel all PKK members, or to cease all protection of PKK elements operating from northern Iraq.

US-Syrian Relations

Relations between the US and Syria remain strained. With Syria’s continued support of Islamist fundamentalist groups and terrorist organizations throughout the region, the United States is finding it more difficult to find common ground. The US has not provided any aid or assistance to the Syrians since 1981. Since 1981, the United States has applied numerous general and specific sanctions against Syria, the majority of which are in direct response to Syria’s support of terrorist organizations, such as the Lebanese Hezbollah militia and Palestinian groups. The rhetoric between the US and Syria has increased since the US-led coalition initiated operations to remove Saddam

Hussein. The US has repeatedly warned the Syrian government to reduce the numbers of insurgent fighters infiltrating into Iraq from Syria, to reduce weapons, ammunition, and military equipment coming from Syria, and to stop its attempts to influence the political situation. A recent positive in US-Syrian relations was the intelligence provided by the Syrian's that led to the capture of an Al-Qaeda cell in Canada planning to conduct a terrorist strike inside the US.¹⁹

Diplomatically, the United States can continue exerting pressure on Syria by maintaining the international pressure that caused the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon, resulting from the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, in March of 2005. Other members of the international community, including France, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and most notably Russia, can also be influenced by the US in support of its ongoing sanctions. Russia, Syria's primary weapons supplier, can have a significant impact if the United States can entice it to apply additional pressure. Syria had incurred a debt to the former Soviet Union of approximately \$13.4 billion for military hardware and weapons. Recently, President Putin, reportedly forgave the Syrians from approximately \$9.8 billion (73 percent) of the debt.²⁰ This existing and long-established relationship between the Russians and the Syrians can potentially provide the US an indirect approach in dealing with the Syrians.

The Syrians are also in debt to the US. As of 2001, the Syrians owed the United States almost \$238 million in principle payments and an additional \$138 million in interest from aid programs in years past. Forgiving or rescheduling this debt could be used as by the US as a carrot in response to Syria's making positive steps against its support for terrorist organizations.

Militarily, the United States can continue with operations in Iraq similar to Operation Matador. Matador was conducted in areas of western Iraq, near the Syrian border, against insurgent camps and strongholds. The captured insurgents and the intelligence gathered from these areas that support US claims of Syrian interference in Iraq can be used to inform parties in the international community, already applying pressure to Syria due to the Hariri assassination, to bolster US diplomatic efforts against Syria.

Recent US military operations in Iraq have focused attention on the lack of effort by the Syrians to control their shared border with Iraq and, in effect, the introduction of weapons, munitions, and third country nationals to the Iraqi insurgency. The Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon in recent weeks could have additional negative effects on Iraq. The Syrian government, in an attempt to hurt the reputation of the US and derail the establishment of Iraqi democracy, may increase its support and protection of insurgent groups.

US-Iranian Relations

Similar to US-Syrian relations, the relations between the United States and Iran are tenuous, and like Syria, numerous US sanctions are in place. Unlike the situation with Syria, European governments and the EU have maintained more open relations with Iran arguing that dialogue and economic opportunities provided Iran could moderate Iran's behavior.²¹ Other members of the World Bank outvoted the US in 2000 in approving \$232 million in loans to Iran. Since then, the World Bank has approved an additional \$975 million in additional loans. The US will continue to vote against such loans from the World Bank, but admits that it is unlikely to successfully block any future requests. In

2000 Iran requested and was approved for approximately \$400 million in loans from the IMF, but refused to accept the IMF's conditionality of the loans and decided not to accept the money. Since 2001, the US has successfully blocked Iran's membership into the WTO. The Bush administration has stated that if Iran reaches agreement with the EU to stop its nuclear weapons program, the US would consider allowing Iran into the WTO.²²

US unilateral military action against Iran is not currently a plausible course of action, especially while it continues operations in Iraq. Any attempt at strategic bombing by the US is unlikely to significantly damage the weapons development program of Iran, due to its dispersion and site locations. Ground operations are also unlikely due to the ongoing requirements in Iraq.

Economic actions against Iran will also be difficult. Although the US has imposed sanctions on Iran, Iran is not under sanction by the UN. Additionally, the US remains doubtful of the success of European efforts to influence Iranian behavior through dialogue and economic opportunity, although the US seems content to allow them to continue in their attempts.

Diplomatically the US remains committed in its attempts to deal with Iran through the UN first. If Iran continues to fail in fully cooperating with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspections, the US could finally receive the support it needs to receive support from the UN on unilateral sanctions.

The key to diminishing the negative impacts Iran is having may well be through an indirect approach at the national level, while the military continues efforts on the operational and tactical levels inside Iraq. The US Department of State (DOS) must find an approach through Europe to deal effectively with the Iranians. The threats to Iran over

its nuclear program will continue, but they have typically had little or no direct impact on Iran's actions, a country that has historically not concerned itself with world opinion. If the US cannot bring to bare the combined influence and power of Europe or the United Nations (UN), to force Iran to comply, then the situation will likely continue to escalate.

¹Mehrdad R. Izady, *The Kurds: A Concise Handbook* (Washington: Taylor and Francis, Inc., 1992), 221.

²*Ibid.*, 225-6.

³Scott Peterson, "What could float – or sink – peacemaking," *The Christian Science Monitor* (July 14, 1999) Article on-line. Available from: <http://csmonitor.com/cgi-bin/durableRedirect.pl/durable/1990/07/14/fp1s3-csm.shtml>.

⁴Ruth Lapidoth, *Autonomy: Flexible solutions to Ethnic Conflicts* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997): 53.

⁵International Crisis Group, "Iraq's Kurds: Toward an Historic Compromise," ICG Middle East Report No. 26 (8 April 2004): 2.

⁶*Ibid.*, 11.

⁷*Ibid.*, 12.

⁸*Ibid.*, 12.

⁹Braham Salah, "Iraqi Kurdistan and the Transition, Post-Coalition Provincial Authority," *Policy Watch, Analysis of Near East Policy from the Scholars and Associates of the Washington Institute*, (29 January, 2004) 829.

¹⁰Daniel L Byman, "Building the New Iraq: The role of Intervening Forces," *Survival* 45, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 59.

¹¹US Dept of State, *Congressional Budget Justification: Foreign Operations, Fiscal Year 2004* (Washington: US Government Printing Office 2004): 380

¹²*Ibid.*, 380.

¹³US Report on the Middle East, 26 April, 2005 (<http://www.usrom.com>)

¹⁴*Ibid.*, (<http://www.usrom.com>)

¹⁵US Dept of State, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, *Background Note: Turkey* (<http://state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgm/3432.htm>)

¹⁶US Report on the Middle East, April 26, 2005 (<http://www.usrom.com>)

¹⁷Congressional Research Service,

¹⁸US Report on the Middle East, April 26, 2005 (<http://www.usrom.com>)

¹⁹Alfred B. Prados, "Syria: US Relations and Bilateral Issues," *Congressional Research Service* (Library of Congress, 25 March 2005): 10

²⁰*Ibid.*, 21

²¹Kenneth Katzman, "Iran; US Concerns and policy Responses," *Congressional Research Service* (Library of Congress, 15 April 2005):9

²²*Ibid.*, 35-6

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This thesis presented an objective analysis of the current Kurdish debate by utilizing the factors defined by Richard Haass to determine if the United States should support the establishment of a state: historical legitimacy, viability, internal stability, and regional stability. The concepts were developed using the strategic estimate outlined in Joint Publication 3-0. It involved analyzing two primary courses of action, whether the United States should support or not support the establishment of an independent Kurdish state.

Chapter 1 summarizes the case involving the Kurds' historic legitimacy. The Kurds can provide a compelling argument that they have the historic legitimacy to request the right of independence. Since the end of World War I, the international community has recognized the Kurds as a nation with a "right" to establish a state on numerous occasions. The regional states established after World War I have also recognized the Kurds as a separate ethnic group to varying degrees, and Iraq once recognized the Kurds as an ethnic group equal to Arabs in its constitution.

The second factor, viability, can also be supported, if restricted to the specific case of "economic" viability. If the Kurds were allowed to occupy the region initially promised to them following World War I, they would harness enough natural resources to support themselves. The oil fields in the Kirkuk area would make them the controllers of one of the largest oil reserves in the world. The Anatolian plateau, with its control of the headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, will easily provide them with enough hydroelectric power to support a large part of the region and with the water rights to

cover the same. It is in reference to political viability that the Kurds begin to falter, which brings this thesis to the third and fourth factors.

The effects the Kurds would currently have on the internal Iraq dynamic and the surrounding external region if they attempted to establish an independent state is where we find failure. The internal situation in Iraq is already having potentially destabilizing effects on the neighboring states. Any attempt by the Iraqi Kurds to establish their own independent state by breaking away from the democratization process ongoing inside Iraq will likely result in an immediate reaction by neighboring states, especially Turkey. The Turks, at the first indication of Kurdish independence, will move to ensure any attempt is suppressed. It is unlikely that the Kurds will be able to control the area of southern Turkey under any scenario. The Turkish government will move quickly and decisively, first inside its own border and then into Iraq, if required, to defeat any such move at independence. Likewise, the Iranians will not sit idly by. The Iranians have the ability to introduce elements inside Iraq that will ensure the country remains destabilized in order to keep Iraq from becoming a regional threat or until they are able to bring to power a regime compatible to its own. This is not a situation that the United States is currently prepared to address, unilaterally or in cooperation with other states.

If the United States were to support such an action, it would be creating another situation similar to the one it faces in Israel, and this is not in the best interests of the US. The United States would be obligated to support the fledgling nation that will only survive through the direct support of the United States. Like Israel, it will be threatened on all sides by regimes that do not want it to exist. The difference between an independent Kurdistan and Israel is that, more than likely, Kurdistan will remain a

landlocked country. It could control the oil reserves in Kirkuk, but the surrounding states could easily prohibit the exportation of the oil by pipeline through their countries, effectively placing a strangle hold on the Kurdish economy and causing oil prices worldwide to respond to yet another oil crisis.

The answer to the primary question posed in this thesis--should the US support the establishment of an independent Kurdish state--is clearly no. The establishment of such a state is not in the national interests of the United States due to the immediate negative effects such a state would create for regional stability and the secondary effects it would have on the United States interests throughout the world.

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