

ABSTRACT

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The Legacy of Mullah Mustafa Barzani

(Under the Direction of DR. ADAM SABRA)

This paper attempts to answer the question of the quality of Kurdish leaders' discernment in predicting, interpreting, and responding to American foreign policy from the end of World War II until the collapse of the Barzani-led revolt in 1975. The goal of this paper is to establish the geopolitical and personal reasons for Kurdish misinterpretations of U.S. Foreign policy from 1945 to 1975. Specifically, the decision-making of long-time Kurdish leader Mullah Mustafa Barzani will be examined to reveal how both personal and wider socio-political interpretations of U.S. foreign policy led Barzani to make decisions that compromised the livelihoods of Iraqi Kurds. What were Barzani's options? Were his mistakes avoidable?

INDEX WORDS: Kurds, Iraqi Kurdistan, Mullah Mustafa Barzani, U.S. Foreign Policy, Cold War, Iran, Mahabad Republic

THE LEGACY OF MULLAH MUSTAFA BARZANI

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Honors Council of the University of Georgia
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

BACHELOR OF ARTS

in HISTORY

with HIGHEST HONORS

Athens, Georgia

2010

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge Professor Adam Sabra for being an excellent resource and instructor to me in Middle Eastern history and for his patience and guidance in helping me to “come to a conclusion.” I would also like to acknowledge Professor Timothy Cleaveland for guiding my in the sharpening of my analytical writing skills. Finally, I would like to thank the University of Georgia Honors Program, Dr. David Williams, Mrs. Jessica Hunt, and Dr. Pamela Kleiber for their time and support.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CENTO	Central Treaty Organization
GOI	Government of Iraq
ICP	Iraqi Communist Party
INOC	Iraqi National Oil Company
IMK	Islamic Movement of Kurdistan
IP	Istiqlal (Independence) Party
IPC	Iraqi Petroleum Company
KDP	Kurdish Democratic Party
KDPI	Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran
KIU	Kurdistan Islamic Union
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
OPC	Operation Provide Comfort
PKK	Kurdish Worker's Party
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
UAR	United Arab Republic
UN	United Nations
USG	United States Government
USSR	Union of the Soviet Socialist Republic

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Iraqi-Kurdish history can be reduced to a series of decisions made by a few key leaders with very few options. The responses of these few leaders to direct and indirect American foreign policy initiatives are key to understanding the trajectory of Kurdish history in the second half of the 20th century. As the leader of the most powerful Kurdish faction for over half of the 20th century, Mullah Mustafa Barzani's role in shaping modern Kurdish history was paramount. Barzani's actions as the long-time leader of the Kurdish Democratic Party and the organizer of Kurdish revolts in Iraq from the 1940s until his death on March 1, 1979 proved to be of fateful consequence for Kurdish nationalist aspirations and livelihoods in Iraq. Specifically, Barzani's leadership of the early 1970s revolt against the Iraqi government (his final military and political pursuit of Kurdish autonomy) ended in tragedy for the Kurdish people. The revolt collapsed suddenly upon the withdrawal of Iranian and United States support following the Iran-Iraq Algiers agreement.

In 1976, under the leadership of Representative Otis Pike, the Select Committee on Intelligence within the House of Representatives investigated illegal activities of the CIA and the FBI both domestically and internationally, but the report was never officially published. A media-leaked excerpt of the Pike Report states that the United States and Iran "acted with calculated disregard for the fate of the Kurds, hoping to benefit from a perpetual cycle of

violence in which the Kurds never got their autonomy and Saddam never quite wiped them out.”¹

There is little debate about the fact that the United States was more concerned with its relationship with Iran than the well-being of Iraqi Kurds in this Cold War context. Indeed, as soon as Iran, which had been supporting the Kurdish rebels as a way to torment the Iraqi government, halted its support of the Kurds the United States followed suit. Indeed, the tragedies of peoples and nations used as Cold War pawns are a sad reality of American history. The interesting and debatable question that remains is that of the quality of Barzani’s leadership given the particular circumstances of the Kurds in the 1960s and 1970s. Did Barzani expect, instead, a calculated regard for the fate of his own geo-political aspirations? If so, on what evidence or precedent was he basing this expectation? Would Barzani, lying on his deathbed in the United States in 1979, have recoiled in surprise at Brent Scowcroft’s (Kissinger’s deputy in the early 1970s) characterization of U.S. termination of support for the Kurds in 1975 as “just small potatoes”?² Surely Barzani would have acted differently in retrospect given the outcome of the revolt, but was the evidence already available in the 1970s to guide him toward more prudent decisions?

This paper attempts to answer the question of the quality Barzani’s discernment in predicting, interpreting, and responding to American foreign policy from the end of World War II until the collapse of his revolt in 1975. The goal of this paper is to establish the geopolitical and personal reasons for Kurdish misinterpretations of U.S. Foreign policy from 1945 to 1975. Specifically, the decision-making of long-time Kurdish leader Mullah Mustafa Barzani will be

¹ Quil Lawrence, *Invisible Nation: How the Kurd’s Quest for Statehood is Shaping Iraq and the Middle East* (New York: Walker & Company, 2008), 28.

² Ibid., 28.

examined to reveal how both personal and wider socio-political interpretations of U.S. foreign policy led Barzani to make decisions that compromised the livelihoods of Iraqi Kurds. I argue that Barzani's mistakes were avoidable given the presence of alternative options and that his mistakes can be attributed to arrogance about what he mistakenly perceived to be U.S. support for his goals.

CHAPTER 2 GEOGRAPHIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

An examination of Kurdish interpretations of U.S. foreign policy necessitates the condition that the Kurdish people have a spokesperson or representative whose interpretations of U.S. foreign policy and subsequent actions can reasonably be understood to affect the majority of Kurdish peoples. For the purposes of this paper, I will co-opt Quil Lawrence's definition of a Kurd as "any native speaker of Kurdish."³ Kurds reside primarily at the nexus the national boundaries of Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Syria. Iraqi Kurdistan is understood in modern parlance to comprise the three northernmost provinces of Iraq: Dohuk, Erbil, and Sulimaniya.⁴

Kurdish speaking peoples adhere primarily to the Sunni branch of Islam, but there is a substantial Shi'i minority within the Kurdish community. The smaller population of Jewish Kurds resides primarily in Israel.⁵ While an ethnic, anthropological history of the Kurdish people would extend thousands of years into history, the concept of Kurdish international relations only appeared during the course of World War I. For most of the period of Ottoman predominance in the Near East, Iraqi Kurds had not been subject to central Ottoman authority due to a combination of their geographical isolation in the mountain regions (far from the central Ottoman authority in Istanbul) and poor communications characteristic of that era.⁶ From 1914-1918, the Kurdish community was forced by the Ottoman Empire into combat with Russia,

³ Lawrence, 11.

⁴ Ibid., 12.

⁵ Ibid., 11.

⁶ Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958: From Revolution to Dictatorship* (London: KPI Limited, 1987), 2.

leading to 800,000 Kurdish deaths.⁷ The British invaded Basra in 1914, and the post-War division of the Ottoman Empire into European spheres of influence resulted in the British occupation of Baghdad, Mosul, and Basra.⁸ Foreshadowing future conflict over the Kurdish region, Ottoman authorities attempted to argue at the Armistice of Mudros (October 30, 1918 on the HMS Agamemnon) that Mosul was not part of Mesopotamia—an argument lost to the Europeans who had the luxury of dictating the armistice terms.⁹

⁷ Lawrence, 12.

⁸ Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 31.

⁹ Tripp, 32.

CHAPTER 3 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

At the onset of the Mandate period, the Kurdish population of the three provinces combined stood at approximately 20%. While the Shi'i population was numerically dominant (about 50%), the three provinces were primarily administered by Sunnis connected to a wide network of tribal patronage.¹⁰ The Kurds were initially optimistic about the possibility of improving their status under British rule and, after a meeting of tribal leaders in Sulaimaniya, even "offered the rule of their country to Great Britain."¹¹ Unfortunately, Britain had decided without Kurdish consultation to appoint Shaikh Mahmud Barzinji as governor of Lower Kurdistan, believing him able to command a large degree of authority among the Kurds. Barzinji was to be the British vehicle for indirect rule but quickly antagonized both the Kurdish community (by sparking revolts) and British administrators (by declaring the independence of Kurdistan in 1919) such that Britain captured Barzinji and imposed direct rule at the behest of British officials in Baghdad. Not surprisingly, Kurdish revolts continued, fueled by dreams of self-determination and founded in "Kurdish linguistic Nationalism."¹²

The allied-formulated Treaty of Sèvres in 1920 granted the Kurds the right to form their own country. However, the treaty was essentially nullified by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne which created the modern state of Turkey under the leadership of Kemal Ataturk, giving him de

¹⁰ Tripp, 31.

¹¹ Ibid., 34.

¹² Ibid.

facto authority over part of what was an ostensibly Kurdish region.¹³ Kurdish relations with British Mandate administrators in Iraq were affected by several factors. First of all, the Mosul province was not under direct British administration; it was, for logistical reasons, only under indirect British supervision via appointed local officials. However, given the oil-richness of Mosul (oil was discovered in the region in 1927) the British were intent on sponsoring an Iraqi nation that included the Mosul province.¹⁴ Finally, the Kurds were unable at this point to rally for their own interests due to a chronic lack of unity resulting from age-old rivalries among families and clans.¹⁵ Thus, Kurdish political and military actions in the 1920s lacked cohesion, direction, and a clear military or political goal. For example, the Kurdish seizure of towns near the Iranian border during the 1920 Iraqi revolt was “opportunistic” instead of proactive.¹⁶

The Mandate period was a time of bickering over territory and natural resources, namely, oil in Mosul. Thus, the Kurdish population, along with the nascent Turkish nation, was the primary obstacle to the goal of British Mandate administrators to reap all the benefits of oil production in the province.¹⁷ As far back as 1922, the British tried to use what they perceived to be Barzinji’s authority to rein in Kurdish manpower and apply it to the resistance of Kemal Ataturk’s pretensions in Northwestern Kurdistan. By 1923, Barzinji had again overstepped his bounds by making overt demands for autonomy and was forced by British administrators to flee to Persia. From Persia, Barzani organized guerilla revolts against the British administration for the next eight years until the British took him into custody in 1931.¹⁸

¹³ Lawrence, 13.

¹⁴ Trip, 71.

¹⁵ Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, 24-25.

¹⁶ Tripp, 43.

¹⁷ Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, 13.

¹⁸ Tripp, 54-5.

Torn between the competing interests of the nascent Turkish nation and Mandate authorities in Baghdad, (not to mention deprived of their strong leader, Barzinji), Iraqi Kurds failed to establish a coherent and consistent policy toward the British during the Mandate period and were at the mercy of outside events and actors. Even after Iraq gained nominal independence in 1932, the status quo under British-backed King Faisal and then his son, Ghazi, amounted to a mere extension of the Mandate.¹⁹ Thus, the Kurds merely responded ineffectively to the vacillations in British relations with Baghdad.

The joint Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930 established the foundation for the gradual dismantling of the British Mandate. In principle, the declaration granted Kurds the right to develop a Kurdish government on Iraqi soil. Charles Tripp explains the political reality of the Treaty:

[The Treaty] reassured the central elites in Baghdad that the British would not use the Kurdish question as a pretext for intervention. However, this made many Kurds increasingly apprehensive and they were not much reassured by Nuri al-Sa'id's promises to institute special administrative, educational, cultural and linguistic measures in the Kurdish region.²⁰

Unfortunately for the Kurds, the treaty did not grant minority rights.²¹ Moreover, as Kurdish leaders feared, Nuri al-Sa'id did not take Kurdish opposition seriously, preferring to forego granting concrete Kurdish concessions in favor of making token gestures in recognition of a distinct Kurdish identity.²² For instance, while the British administration continued to suppress subsequent Kurdish revolts, it also implemented the Local Languages Law in an effort to display

¹⁹ Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, 14-15.

²⁰ Tripp, 66-67.

²¹ Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, 26.

²² Tripp, 68.

sincerity behind its recognition of Kurdish uniqueness.²³ The Law was intended to show the Iraqi Government's commitment to identifying a distinct Kurdish identity and to suggest to the League of Nations the Government's intention to uphold the tenets of the Treaty, i.e. eventual Kurdish autonomy. However, the law as passed amounted merely to an official commitment on behalf of the Iraqi government to treat Kurdish as an official language and did not even provide for the appointment or election of Kurdish officials.²⁴

This and other inequalities remaining at the end of the Mandate period sparked several Kurdish revolts, including a 1935 revolt against mandatory conscription.²⁵ At other times, the Kurdish position appeared more positive. For instance, Nuri al-Sa'id's 1944 invitation to Mulla Mustafa Barzani to meet in Baghdad and come to peaceful terms with attention paid to Kurdish goals would appear to be a successful landmark in Kurdish history²⁶. However, time and again Kurdish goals were crushed by the revolving door of Iraqi politics. When al-Pachachi took over administrative leadership shortly after this 1944 meeting, the former agreement was rendered moot.²⁷

While Iraqi Kurds struggled for rights and recognition under the British Mandate, Iranian Kurds were spear-heading efforts of their own. Given the more precarious level of control in Iran at the end of WWI, it is not surprising that one of the first major Kurdish movements of the 20th century was to establish an autonomous Kurdish government in Iran that lasted from 1918 until 1922. Led by Isma'il Agha Simko, the revolt was not expressly nationalist and was primarily an

²³ Tripp, 67-68.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 87.

²⁶ Ibid., 111.

²⁷ Ibid., 113.

attempt by Simko to assert his tribal authority in the context of a weak central government. Simko's autonomous government was short-lived—it was sacked by Reza Khan's army in 1922.²⁸

The suppression of Kurdish nationalism in Iran lasted until the 1941 Allied invasion. The British occupied the South of Iran and the Soviet Union occupied the North. The Soviet occupation provided a foothold for Kurdish nationalists in Northern Iran and would lead to the establishment of the Mahabad Republic of 1946 (see Chapter 4) in the same area as Simko's autonomous government two decades earlier.²⁹ Fereshteh Koohi-Kamali argues in his essay “The Development of Nationalism in Iranian Kurdistan” that the shared history between many Kurds and Persians combined with the similarities between the Kurdish language and Farsi has led Iranian-Kurdish nationalists to avoid demanding a completely separate Kurdish state in favor of pursuing a specifically administrative autonomy.³⁰

²⁸ Fereshteh Koohi-Kamali, “The development of nationalism in Iranian Kurdistan.” In *The Kurds: A Contemporary Overview*, ed. Philip G. Kreyenbroek and Stefan Sperl (London: Routledge, 1992), 175.

²⁹ Koohi-Kamali, 177.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 179.

CHAPTER 4

MULLAH MUSTAFA BARZANI

I Barzani, the Mahabad Republic, and the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP)

The history of Kurdish nationalist movements in Iraq is long and convoluted, as the term “nationalist” has been applied to movements that were, in actuality, seeking only independence, autonomy, or a higher stake in financial resources.³¹ For instance, Kurdish autonomous kingdoms existed as early as the 10th century, and Kurdish tribal leaders attempted to gain autonomy under Ottoman rule throughout the 19th century.³² In 1929, during the Mandate period, Kurdish deputies petitioned the British government for the development of a nominally Kurdish province in Dohuk and other heavily Kurdish-populated areas of Mosul along with increased Mandate spending in Kurdish areas,³³ but it lacked sufficient leadership and organization to do any more than plead with the ruling elites (British and Iraqi) to act in Kurdish interests.

Mullah Mustafa Barzani emerged as the most powerful leader in the Kurdish Nationalist movement from its formative years until the collapse of the Kurdish revolt in 1975. Barzani was born March 3, 1903, and cut his military and political teeth in the 1930s organizing local revolts in Barzan with his brother, Sheikh Ahmad of Barzan. Barzan is a city in the northernmost part of Iraq, right near the point where the borders of Iraq, Turkey, and Iran meet. Barzani was born into a family of Kurdish rebels who fought Ottoman authority, and the rebels naturally resisted

³¹ Tripp, 64.

³² Hussein Tahiri, *The Structure of Kurdish Society and the Struggle for a Kurdish State* (Cosa Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers, 2007), 34-6.

³³ Tripp, 64.

British control as well once it became clear that the British did not have any intention of granting Kurdish rights.³⁴

For his early indiscretions, Barzani was exiled to Sulaimaniya, only to escape in 1943 to lead a large revolt in the midst of World War II.³⁵ When his rebellion failed, Barzani fled to Soviet-occupied Iran with about 3,000 followers and the hope that the Soviet Union would follow through with an agreement to back the formation of a Kurdish state in Iran. Qazi Muhamad, leader of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI), founded the Mahabad Republic in 1946; this Republic remains the only declared Kurdish state in history.³⁶

The Mahabad Republic, like the Simko autonomous region in Iran after WWI, was short-lived. When the Soviet Union withdrew from Iran at the beginning of the Cold War in 1947 the Republic collapsed without its support. Quil Lawrence argues that “What undid the Mahabad Republic at first is not clear- the internal divisions or the fact that the Soviets withdrew their support in the spring of 1946 under pressure as the other former Allied powers lined up behind the shah of Iran, Mohamad Reza Pahlavi.”³⁷ Fereshteh Koohi-Kamali argues similarly that both the retraction of Soviet support and Kurdish factionalism contributed to the fall of the Republic.³⁸

Although short-lived, the Mahabad Republic proved remarkably growth-provoking for the politics of Kurdish nationalism. Undoubtedly, the grounding of the Republic in Kurdish

³⁴ Massoud Barzani, *Mustafa Barzani and the Kurdish Liberation Movement* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 21-25.

³⁵ Kerim Yildiz, *The Kurds in Iraq: Past, Present and Future* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 16.

³⁶ Lawrence, 17.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Koohi-Kamali, 178.

intellectual and leftist thought (despite necessary tribal backing) contributed to this growth.³⁹ It was in the Mahabad Republic that a split occurred in the already extant Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (which had a base in Iraq led by Ibrahim Ahmad), and the Iraqi KDP emerged as an independent party with Mullah Mustafa Barzani as its President.⁴⁰

On 16 August, 1946, at the first KDP congress in Mahabad (marking the inception of the party), the new leadership recognized the fundamental differences between the political and economic circumstances of Iraqi Kurds and Iranian Kurds. The new KDP leadership made autonomy for Iraqi Kurds one of its founding tenets. Additionally, the KDPI faction led by Ibrahim Ahmad in Sulaimaniya joined the Iraqi KDP in 1947.⁴¹

Meanwhile, a split also occurred in the “Shorish” (Revolution) Party that had been founded by Salih Haidar in 1945 on a Kurdish leftist/communist platform. The Shorish party had spawned Rizgari Kurd (the Kurdish Liberation Party) in 1946. When Rizgari split, supporters who wished to follow Salih Haidar joined the Iraqi Communist Party that had been established in 1932 and already counted many Kurdish intellectuals among its members. Those who did not wish to join the ICP joined the recently established KDP, thus strengthening its ranks.⁴²

Hussein Tahiri describes post-WWII Kurdish nationalism in terms of a tribal versus non-tribal dichotomy. Ironically, both tribal and non-tribal nationalist movements supported the creation of an autonomous Kurdish entity only under the condition that the movements’ leaders would possess control of said entity. The non-tribal nationalists adhered to the belief that a truly

³⁹ Koohi-Kamali, 179.

⁴⁰ Yildiz, 16.

⁴¹ Tahiri, 105.

⁴² Ibid., 104.

autonomous Kurdish entity necessitated the destruction of the tribal power structure that had long reigned in Kurdistan.⁴³ Thus, the Iraqi Kurdish Nationalist movement was divided into two factions. Barzani's tribal network was led by himself and his two deputies, Sheikh Agha and Sheikh Latif while the urban intellectual movement was led by Ibrahim Ahmad and Hamza Abdullah. The urban intellectual movement was divided once more between Ahmad and Abdullah, with followers of Ahmad favoring social and economic reform of a Socialist bent.⁴⁴

II In Exile

Following the collapse of the Mahabad Republic, Barzani returned to Iraq and then left for the Soviet Union (via Azerbaijan) where he remained in exile for the next eleven years with a few hundred members of his military attaché.⁴⁵ Unfortunately for the tribal faction, the KDP came under the control of Ibrahim Ahmad during Barzani's absence. Ahmad attempted to move the party toward Socialism. In 1953, at the third KDP congress in Kirkuk, Ahmad was elected secretary general, and the party formally declared its support for Socialism in concert with its rejection of the West. At the congress, the KDP also demanded that the Iraqi government grant Kurdish self-determination.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, Mullah Mustafa Barzani remained in exile until the creation of the Republic of Iraq following the 1958 coup of Abd al-Karim Qasim and Abdul Salam Arif.

⁴³ Tahiri, 106-7.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 107.

⁴⁵ Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, 79.

⁴⁶ Tahiri, 108.

III Barzani in the New Republic

After the 1958 coup, Barzani was permitted to return to Iraq, and the new Iraqi constitution recognized the bi-national (Arab and Kurdish) nature of Iraq.⁴⁷ Barzani easily recovered leadership of the KDP as his tribal faction was much more effective than the urban intellectuals at garnering the support of most Kurds.⁴⁸ The KDP had supported the 1958 revolution, believing that the new regime would be willing to give the Kurds better representation and grant reasonable concessions. While the KDP was not invited to formally participate in the new government (neither was the Communist party),⁴⁹ Qasim was careful to include Kurdish positions in his new government in order to create a counterweight to his other opposition, the Iraqi nationalists.⁵⁰ However, the appointment earlier in 1958 of Ahmad Mukthar Baban as the first Kurd asked to set up a government in Iraq was a short-lived Kurdish moment of success. Shortly after the 1958 coup, Iraqi Nationalists teamed up with Iraqi Ba'athists in a rebellion, and the Kurds supported the Iraqi government in violently quelling the rebellion.⁵¹

Unfortunately, Qasim's initially cordial treatment of the Kurds did not last. In July 1961 the Government prevented the KDP from holding its annual congress. The same month, the Government rejected a petition for Kurdish autonomy, leading Barzani to start a new rebellion against the government in September 1961 that would last until 1963.⁵² Shortly thereafter, also in 1963, the very same Ba'athists and Nasserists whose rebellion the Iraqi Government had

⁴⁷ Tripp, 153.

⁴⁸ Tahiri, 108.

⁴⁹ Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, 49-50. The new government turned immediately to Soviet and other communist countries.

⁵⁰ Lawrence, 18.

⁵¹ Ibid., 19.

⁵² Tahiri, 109.

repressed with the help of the Kurds ended up overthrowing Qasim's government.⁵³ It is not surprising that the Ba'athists annihilated the communists in an extremely violent period from February to November 1963.⁵⁴ Additionally, the Ba'ath party refused to grant the Kurds an autonomous region including Mosul and Kirkuk

The Ba'ath party was only prevented from perpetrating further violence by Abd al-Salam Arif's overthrow of the regime in late-1963. Arif installed Kurds in two of his cabinet positions⁵⁵ but was otherwise ineffective at or uninterested in solving the Kurdish issue. Following Abd al-Salam Arif's death in 1966 and the installation of his brother, Abdul Rahman Arif, as the new head of state, Prime Minister Abdul Rahman al-Bazzaz made a grand overture to the Kurds. In his July 1966 Fifteen Points, al-Bazzaz recognized the "binational character of the Iraqi state," and the need for Kurdish autonomy.⁵⁶ Unfortunately, al-Bazzaz was unable to deliver on this promise before the Ba'athist coup of 1968.

IV The March Manifesto

When the Ba'ath party returned to power in 1968, it attempted to eliminate the Kurdish threat by joining forces with Barzani's rival Kurdish faction (led by Ibrahim Ahmad) against Barzani's peshmerga. Barzani's forces resisted domination by the Iraqi military, a military success that precipitated the Ba'ath decision to institute the March Manifesto in order to mollify the Kurds and buy time to consolidate the party's political power.⁵⁷

⁵³ Lawrence, 19.

⁵⁴ Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, 85-86.

⁵⁵ Tahiri, 109.

⁵⁶ Yildiz, 17.

⁵⁷ Tahiri, 111.

An autonomy agreement signed between Saddam Hussein and the KDP on March 11, 1970 granted recognition of Kurdish as an official language, promised land distribution, and guaranteed the repatriation of Kurds displaced by war.⁵⁸ The published statement of the Iraqi government is often referred to as the March Manifesto. Peter Sluglett and Marion Farouk-Sluglett shed light on the reasons why the new Ba'ath regime was willing to grant these concessions to the Kurds. They explain the new Iraqi regime's decision to compromise with the Kurds as a result of general Ba'athist insecurity concerning its ability to maintain power combined with the regime's paranoia about Barzani's close relationship Iran. The Ba'athist regime regarded an Iraqi-Kurd alliance with Iran as militarily "invincible,"⁵⁹ and thus sought to appease the Kurds in order to avoid the formation of such a force.

The March Manifesto was not without its preconditions, however, and two facets of the declaration proved to be problematic. First, the Kurdish autonomous administrative region was to be defined by demographic majority, that is, areas with a Kurdish majority would be part of the region. The Iraqi Government proceeded to delay the official census called for in the Manifesto in order to forcefully alter the demographics of desirable areas in the North, especially oil-rich Kirkuk.⁶⁰ By May 1971, Barzani was making complaints about a government project to populate Kirkuk with Arab Christians. This forced migration of Arab Christians coupled with the deportation of many Iranian Kurds who had been residing in Iraq infuriated Barzani who

⁵⁸ Lawrence, 21.

⁵⁹ Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, 130-132.

⁶⁰ Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, 131.

interpreted the government's actions as efforts to maintain control of valuable areas of Kurdistan.⁶¹

The March Manifesto *did* appear to constitute a step toward Ba'athist resolution of its Kurdish insecurities, especially since the Kurds, still under the leadership of Mullah Mustafa Barzani, broke their relations with Iran shortly after the release of the Manifesto.⁶² Also, late in 1971, the government in Baghdad released the National Action Charter, reiterating many of the points of the March Manifesto.⁶³ The subsequent honeymoon period between the government in Baghdad and the Kurds proved to be short-lived—as was any possibility that the elements of the Manifesto would actually be implemented. The infamous incident of the exploding imams on September 21, 1971 (presumably a government attempt to assassinate Barzani) marked a renewed split between Kurdistan and Baghdad. The Kurdish leadership wasted no time renewing its relationship with the Shah.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Ibid., 158.

⁶² Quil Lawrence, 21.

⁶³ Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, 143.

⁶⁴ Lawrence, 21.

CHAPTER 5 BARZANI AND THE KURDS IN A COLD WAR CONTEXT

I. Barzani and Iran

The 1968 Ba'athist coup sparked the beginning of deteriorating relations between Iraq and Iran. Iran threatened Iraq's two primary geographic assets at the time: the Shatt al-'Arab waterway and recently discovered oil reserves in northern Iraq, near the Iranian and Turkish borders. The Shatt al-Arab waterway, Iraq's sole access to the sea, had long been a point of contention between Iran and Iraq.⁶⁵ Complicating matters for the government in Baghdad was the fact that the Kurds were being supported by the Shah as the Iranian leader's way of keeping Iraq in check by tying up the Iraqi military. The Shah began increasing its aid to Barzani shortly after the 1968 coup, primarily in protest to the "anti-imperialist" ideology propagated by the Ba'ath regime.⁶⁶ Beginning in late 1968 and continuing into 1969, Barzani's forces, angered at the new government's favoring of the Ahmad-Talabani faction, began attacking the infrastructure of the Iraqi Petroleum Company, particularly around Kirkuk.⁶⁷ Kurdish unrest was significant enough that the government in Baghdad prudently acted to bring Iraqi Kurdistan within the national fray by instituting the aforementioned March Manifesto, if only to buy time for the government to secure its power and control of Iraq.

⁶⁵ Tripp, 89-90.

⁶⁶ Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, 122.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 129. Barzani's forces also attacked a train in December 1968, killing twenty soldiers and civilians.

II. Barzani and the United States

Awareness and concern for the non-Arab Kurdish minority in the Near East had entered official political discourse in the United States as early as 1936. In May of that year, the Chargé in Iran, Gordon Merriam, wrote to the Secretary of State on behalf of the Lutheran Mission currently operating in Iran requesting U.S. support in relocating the mission from Kurdish Iran to Kurdish Iraq. Merriam wrote:

As the policy of the Iraqi government towards the Kurds is both lenient and enlightened, at least by contrast with the severe Kurdish policies of the Iranian and Turkish governments, the presence of the Lutheran mission would be welcomed by the government of Iraq. [...] Iran is acutely conscious of the fact that Kurdish nationalism, while perhaps not a matter of great immediate concern, may raise its head in any one of the three countries in which the Kurds dwell, and it has done and is doing everything possible to prevent this from happening in Iranian territory.⁶⁸

This document is evidence of a keen awareness both of Middle Eastern politics and the existence of Kurdish nationalism in Iran and Iraq. This awareness only grew as geopolitical developments after WWII brought the situation in Iran, Iraq, and the rest of the Middle East to the forefront of U.S. foreign policy concerns during the Cold War.

The first argument Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett make of American policy in terms of Cold War maneuvering in Iraq concerns the Ba'athist annihilation of the communists in 1963. They write:

Although individual leftists had been murdered intermittently over the previous years, the scale on which the killings and arrests took place in the spring and

⁶⁸ Meho, Lokman, ed., *The Kurdish Question in U.S. Foreign Policy: A Documentary Sourcebook*, (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 409. (Document 214: The Charge in Iran (Merriam) to the Secretary of State, May 1, 1936).

summer of 1963 indicates a closely coordinated campaign, and it is almost certain that those who carried out the raid on suspects' homes were working from lists supplied to them. Precisely how these lists had been compiled is a matter of conjecture, but it is certain that some of the Ba'th leaders were in touch with American intelligence networks, and it is also undeniable that a variety of different groups in Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East had a strong vested interest in breaking what was probably the strongest and most popular Communist Party in the region.⁶⁹

By the mid-1960s, communications between the State Department and U.S. officials in Iraq indicated the U.S. government's awareness of its disjointed rapport with Kurdish leaders.

Although a full-scale war would not begin until the early 1970s, fighting between Kurdish rebels and the Government of Iraq was a simmering problem throughout the 1960s. The State Department frequently had to dispel incorrect interpretations or assumptions about its policy toward Iraq and Iraqi Kurds. One statement in a telegram from the State Department to the Embassy in Iraq explicitly stated that "There is no truth to the story reported by the Kurds to Embassy Cairo officer that US has promised assistance to Kurds through third country in event fighting renewed in Iraq."⁷⁰ A few months later, a telegram from the Embassy in Iraq to Washington informed the State Department that "Mulla Mustafa regard USG as key to settlement of Kurdish problem and USG can get what it wants. He had told Iraqi colleagues he lunching with me to discuss tentative agreement."⁷¹ In an addendum to this message to clarify the nature of the lunch with Barzani, Robert Strong claims to have informed Barzani that "USG intends to continue avoid getting into specifics of the problem. Minister commented he understood our position and he appreciated learning what I had said. He had no sign of objecting

⁶⁹ Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, 86.

⁷⁰ Lokman, 456. (Document 249: Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Iraq, June 5, 1964).

⁷¹ Lokman, 457. (Document 250: Telegram From the Embassy in Iraq to the Department of State, October 26, 1964).

to our role and his manner was as friendly and relaxed when I left as it had been throughout.”⁷² Strong, the primary U.S. official in Iraq, was communicating his concerns about Barzani’s ideas early in the 1960s, a full decade before the collapse of Barzani’s revolt in 1975. Over that decade, Barzani seems not to have changed his perception that U.S. support for Iraqi Kurds was an immutable facet of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. There is also no evidence that Barzani reevaluated his feelings or reliance on American support at the onset of the Vietnam War—a gross oversight suggesting Barzani possessed arrogance about the importance of his Kurdish cause to U.S. interests that blinded him to geopolitical realities.

That the U.S. was struggling to maintain its steadfast policy toward the Kurdish issue was made clear in December 1964. At a United Nations summit in New York on December 10th Iraqi Foreign Minister Naji Talib expressed concern about Kurdish links to Iraqi communists.⁷³ He claimed that “If a Kurdish state were established, it would be a Communist enclave which would split the Arab world, pierce the protective CENTO belt, and shatter the stability of Turkey and Iran.”⁷⁴ The conversation continued:

[Naji Talib] asserted that he did not wish to suggest that the U.S. was supporting the Kurds but he did wish to emphasize that his Government is sore-perplexed by the machinations of some mysterious force which is supporting the Kurds. In reply, the Secretary categorically assured the Minister that the United States was not directly or indirectly supporting the Kurdish movement. The U.S. supported the independence, integrity, and prosperity of Iraq. It had no other interests in Iraq affairs. Furthermore, he shared the Minister’s concern about the dangers of Communist penetration of the Near East by means of a Kurdish independence movement.⁷⁵

⁷² Lokman, 457. (Document 250: Telegram From the Embassy in Iraq to the Department of State, October 26, 1964).

⁷³ Ibid., 458. (Document 251: Memorandum of Conversation, December 10, 1964).

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Only four days later, on December 14th, in a telegram to the U.S. Embassy, the State Department expressed strong feelings against Kurdish participation in overthrowing the current government of Iraq. The State Department acknowledged that that they were responding to indirect Kurdish inquiries as to the position of the United States on said matter.⁷⁶ Two days later, on December 16th, the State Department received a telegram from the Embassy in Iraq. The telegram stated that Kurdish leaders had informed embassy officials that the Iranians were prodding the Kurds to create more trouble for the Iraqi government. The telegram outlined what was to be the position conveyed by embassy officials when they met with Kurdish leaders in the next few days. The strategy read as follows:

Without mentioning any specific plot he will refer to their earlier statements that Iranians trying to stir up Kurds; he will tell them we think Kurds have wisely resisted Persian blandishments and we hope they will continue remain calm and try work out solution with GOI—many of whose members favorably disposed towards Kurds; we think Kurds cause will be severely damaged in Iraq if Kurds appear to act as agents for interest of others.⁷⁷

U.S. foreign policy toward Iraq and the Kurds, then, was not without its contradictions. The question arises as to whether the Iraqi Government and Barzani chose to believe (as stated at the UN summit) that the U.S. had no interests in Iraq other than in Iraq's success as a nation or that the U.S. indeed had a distinct policy of communication with Barzani.

Mullah Mustafa Barzani appears to have favored the second explanation, sending a message through the Iranian Embassy⁷⁸ to the Department of State in April 1965 that the U.S.

⁷⁶ Lokman, 459. (Document 252: Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Iraq, December 14, 1964).

⁷⁷ Ibid., 460. (Document 253: Telegram From the Embassy in Iraq to the Department of State, December 16, 1964).

⁷⁸ Barzani was having difficulty communicating through Baghdad, so was communicating through Iran. He also mentioned in the telegram that he would like to develop a direct communication with Washington—a request that was essentially ignored by the State Department.

ambassador to Iran described in detail before assuring the State Department of his firm rejection of Barzani's pleas for support:

[It was] essentially a strong plea for direct US assistance. He said Iraqi Kurds need financial and military assistance, especially heavy weapons, and would be willing to receive American officials in their area and wanted to be regarded as "another state of the union." [Barzani] also considers oil resources should be handled by an American firm in direct arrangement with the Iraqi Kurds. We of course gave him no encouragement whatsoever.⁷⁹

The matter-of-fact tone of this message does not reflect attempted obscurity or conniving on behalf of the ambassador and reflects strong adherence to a stated policy of not encouraging the Kurds to rely on U.S. support.

In response to concerns of the Iraqi government about Iranian aid to the Kurds, Dean Rusk sent a telegram in May 1965 to the Embassy in Iraq explaining, "As we have often said to Iraqis, we do not control Iranian foreign policy, just as we do not control foreign policies Turkey, Pakistan, Greece, India, others. [...] our reply to Kurdish petitions is always the same, we regard their problem as an internal affair of Iraq."⁸⁰ This is another public, matter-of-fact statement made by the highest ranking official in the State Department of the U.S. policy of avoiding involvement in the Kurdish issue in Iraq.

On August 11, 1965, in a telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy of Iran, the United States seemed to reverse its policy toward the Kurdish issue. The telegram reads:

Iraqi request for support efforts halt flow of arms from Iran to dissident Iraqi Kurds cannot reasonably be refused. Our consistent policy has been Kurdish insurrection matter concerning only Iraq and flow of arms and men across border to bring pressure to bear against Iraqi government incompatible our goal area

⁷⁹ Lokman, 460. (Document 254: Telegram From the Embassy in Iran to the Department of State, April 12, 1965).

⁸⁰ Ibid., 462. (Document 256: Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Iraq, May 6, 1965).

stability. Kurdish victory in Iraq in pragmatic terms could have only most ominous import for stability if not integrity Iran and Turkey.”⁸¹

That the Kurdish leadership at the time, especially Barzani, might have been unable to accurately interpret U.S. policy toward the Kurds in the 1960s certainly appears a possibility. U.S. foreign policy developments affecting the Kurds would become more ambiguous in the early-1970s as violence between the Iraqi government and its Kurdish adversaries rapidly escalated. However, U.S. wavering on the issue should have made Barzani weary and encouraged his caution in relying on American support which seemed mercurial at best. Moreover, U.S. policy does not appear throughout the 1960s to take Kurdish interests into account at any point. That the goals of Iraqi Kurds (separate from the goals of the Iranian and Iraqi governments) were of no interest to U.S. officials is an obvious fact that should have been obvious to Barzani as well.

⁸¹ Lokman, 463. (Document 257: Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Iran, August 11, 1965).

CHAPTER 6 U.S. FOREIGN POLICY DURING THE REVOLT

U.S. foreign policy toward Iraqi Kurds during Barzani's 1972-1975 revolt was primarily dictated by U.S. policy toward Iran. U.S.-Iraq relations had been severed since 1967, and Iraq and Iran officially severed their relations on November 30, 1971 as a result of the conflict over the Shatt al-Arab waterway. Since its relations with Britain had also fallen through, Iraq was relying solely on the support of the Soviet Union and other communist countries in the early 1970s. By the fall of 1971, America began to increase its military support to Iran.⁸²

Whether or not the U.S. actually feared the development of Iraq's relations with the communists and the Soviet Union is still unclear. The government in Baghdad had certainly been courting Soviet oil interests for some time: several deals made in 1969 granted Soviet access to oilfields in Iraq, particularly in the North Rumaila fields.⁸³ The Iraqi-Soviet Friendship Treaty of April 7, 1972 (essentially a weapons deal) combined with the government's nationalization of the Iraqi Petroleum Company later that summer certainly would have caused the U.S. to be weary of the possible consequences of Iraq's relationship with the Soviet Union.⁸⁴ However, Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett make a compelling argument that a combination of reasons motivated U.S. interests in the conflict, specifically, its support of Iran: "Iraq's pro-soviet stance, its apparently uncompromising foreign policy pronouncements and the threat it appeared to be posing to the 'stability' of the Gulf area, had combined to arouse intense concern

⁸² Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, 144.

⁸³ Ibid., 124.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 147

on the part of the United States and Iran.”⁸⁵ Quil Lawrence adds to this argument the claim that the United States viewed Iran as its “anchor” in the Middle East and so felt compelled to support the country in its conflict with Iraq.⁸⁶

To complicate matters, discussions in Congress about U.S. aid to the Kurds suggest that the United States Government was avoiding an official policy toward the Kurds and was, instead, framing its foreign policy specifically toward Iran. On November 6, 1974, Representative Lee Hamilton from Indiana breached the issue of direct U.S. policy toward Iraqi Kurds. Hamilton, who had recently met with KDP representatives, told Congress, “While I believe that the question of any aid, overt or covert, to the Kurdish rebels is absolutely out of the question, I regret the unwillingness of senior State Department officials to meet informally with two former Iraqi ministers who are also members of the KDP.”⁸⁷ The text both of Hamilton’s initial request to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and its reply are also included in the Congressional Record, and the reply from the Subcommittee on the Near East and South Asia reads:

We have received several requests from Kurdish representatives for meetings. For the past year, contacts with the KDP have been limited to the Country Officer or Country Director level. To change this policy at this time could well be subject to misinterpretation by both the Kurds and the Government in Baghdad. We have noted as a result of our policy, a fall-off in Iraqi allegations that the United States is supporting the Kurdish insurrection. [...] We do not wish to encourage the Kurds to believe that we are prepared to support overtly or covertly, their insurrection in Iraq.⁸⁸

The language of the Chairman of the Subcommittee suggests a keen awareness of the possibility of Kurdish misinterpretation of U.S. policy. The statement also reflects a substantial effort on

⁸⁵ Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, 159.

⁸⁶ Lawrence, 24-5.

⁸⁷ Lokman, 30. (Document 2: The Kurds in Iraq, Hon. Lee H. Hamilton of Indiana, In the House of Representatives, July 11, 1974).

⁸⁸ Ibid.

behalf of the State Department to maintain a consistent policy toward the Kurds in order to avoid further misinterpretation of U.S. goals.

From 1972-1975, Iran funneled money and weapons to Iraqi Kurds. The Kurds received this material support from Iran in return for weakening the regime in Baghdad by fomenting unrest. Iran also pledged its support of the Kurds against the Iraqi government.⁸⁹ When the Shah reached an agreement with Saddam Hussein at Algiers in 1975—the result of secret negotiations to which the Kurds were not privy- the conflict was settled and Iran immediately halted its support of the Kurds. The government in Baghdad was free to discipline the rebellious Kurdish minority as it saw fit.

The consequences for the Kurds were severe. Saddam Hussein pursued a harsh policy of ethnic cleansing in Iraqi Kurdistan. Within three years of the truce with Iran, over 1,000 villages had been razed to create an 18-mile-deep buffer zone along Kurdistan's external borders. Entering the zone prompted immediate execution.⁹⁰ Barzani's supporters had few options: about 100,000 escaped across the border to Iran (the Shah accepted Barzani and these supporters as refugees), others surrendered to the government in Baghdad, and others, unwilling or unable to take advantage of these two options, committed suicide.⁹¹ Later, Kurds who returned to Iraq under the promise of amnesty were deported to desert camps in Southern Iraq.⁹²

Saddam Hussein, intent on ensuring that the Kurdish factions would no longer pose a threat to his regime, immediately split the province of Kirkuk in half, producing two new provinces: Ta'mim and Salahudin. This geographical reorientation meant that the Kurds would

⁸⁹ Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, 151.

⁹⁰ Lawrence, 29.

⁹¹ Ibid., 27.

⁹² Tahiri, 114. Estimates for the number of Kurds exiled to Southern Iraq range from 50,000 to 350,000.

no longer enjoy a political or ethnic majority in either province, dashing their hopes for collective political action in the foreseeable future.⁹³

⁹³ Lawrence, 29-30.

CHAPTER 7 BARZANI'S INTERPRETATIONS OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

The United States directly supported Iran throughout the conflict and was thus indirectly supporting the Iraqi Kurds. Barzani began making appeals to Washington for support in 1972, and he made it publicly clear that he was relying on support from the United States, telling the Washington Post in 1973, “We do not trust the Shah, I trust America. America is too great a power to betray a small people like the Kurds.”⁹⁴ Despite his public statements of reliance on the U.S., Barzani upheld the covert nature of American aid as per Cold War protocol at the time, and his appeals were always sent by way of Israel or King Hussein of Jordan.⁹⁵

The memories of U.S. decision makers at the time tell a different story. Quil Lawrence explains, “Brent Scowcroft, Kissinger’s deputy at the time, remembers American support for the Kurds as strictly an appendage of U.S.-Iran policy. ‘The Kurds were derivative. The shah was a good ally. And he was having this problem with Iraq. We were emotionally supporting the Kurds, but it wasn’t a big deal,’ said Scowcroft.”⁹⁶ Based on Scowcroft’s interpretation of events, the fact is not surprising that the U.S. halted support for the Iraqi Kurds when Iran made the decision to do so. Lawrence argues that while Kurdistan viewed American support as a “covenant with God” and “Barzani made it clear that he saw American involvement as a

⁹⁴ Lawrence, 22-24.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 24.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 25.

guarantee that Iran wouldn't pull the rug out," that Barzani, with his ample political and Cold War experience, "should have seen the low blow coming."⁹⁷

When Saddam had offered Barzani a truce on March 11, 1974 (an attempt to win the war on Saddam's terms), Barzani declined the offer and instead sent Washington a "pipe-dream request" for greatly increased U.S. aid.⁹⁸ Years later, Barzani's son would insist that his father believed the Americans would honor their commitment to the Kurds.⁹⁹

Is Barzani to blame for Kurdish suffering following the collapse of the 1975 revolt? Hussein Tahiri argues that Barzani is to blame for not realizing that once Iran and the United States had reached their own objectives that they would stop supporting the Kurds. He goes on to accuse Barzani's supporters of being "overconfident"¹⁰⁰ due to their support from Iran and the U.S., suggesting that without U.S. support (which Barzani considered key to any Kurdish victory), Barzani may have been willing to accept Saddam's 1974 truce offer.¹⁰¹ There is also evidence that Barzani disregarded (and kept from his compatriots) a mid-1973 warning from Saddam urging Barzani "not to take a stand which could force the Iraqi Government to make border concessions to Iran so to end the Kurdish revolt."¹⁰² The results of this study, performed by the KDP-Preparatory Committee which had broken away from Barzani in 1975, could, however, suggest efforts by the Preparatory Committee to distance itself from Barzani's defeat.

⁹⁷ Lawrence, 25-6.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 26.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 27. Shortly after the end of the conflict, the KDP representative in Washington arranged to have Barzani, who recently discovered he was dying of lung cancer, transported to a hospital in the United States.

¹⁰⁰ Tahiri, 115.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 116.

¹⁰² Ibid., 117

If true, however, the study is evidence of Barzani's awareness of the possibility of an imminent border agreement between Iran and Iraq that would leave the Kurds without recourse.¹⁰³

The question then arises as to how Barzani perceived U.S. support in the early 1970s and if he was aware of any contingencies attached to the support. Barzani clearly overestimated the U.S. perception of Iraq as a Communist threat. In 1962, Barzani ominously told Dana Adams Schmidt of the New York Times that without U.S. assistance, the Kurds would "be pushed towards communism."¹⁰⁴ Taken together, Barzani's failures to accurately interpret U.S. foreign policy spelled defeat as early as the 1960s, and Barzani never changed course.

¹⁰³ Tahiri, 115.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION

Shortly after the collapse of the 1975 revolt, Mullah Mustafa Barzani had it on his physician's authority that he was suffering from lung cancer and sought treatment in the United States. Barzani was aided by a Kurdish representative in the Washington, D.C. who blackmailed the U.S. Government into allowing Barzani to seek medical treatment in the States by threatening to reveal the details of U.S. involvement in the Iran-Iraq conflict.¹⁰⁵ When Barzani received messages in his sickbed from Kurdish leaders in Iraq proposing unification of Kurdish factions (including the KDP, PUK, and Kurdistan Socialist Party), he promptly rejected them.¹⁰⁶ Thus was the character of the great Kurdish Nationalist leader: rejecting a unification that would surely strengthen the Kurdish cause from his deathbed. Barzani was undoubtedly still reeling from what he perceived to be abandonment of the Kurdish cause by Iran and the United States.

In his recent history of the Kurds, *Invisible Nation*, Quil Lawrence states the recurring question, inquiring whether Mullah Mustafa Barzani was "audacious or naïve" in his assumption that the Iraqi Kurds enjoyed British support against Baghdad during WWII.¹⁰⁷ In his history of the Kurdish struggle for independence, Hussein Tahiri argues that "reliance of the Kurdish leadership on foreign powers, factionalism within the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), the Kurdish leadership's lack of political experience, enmity between Kurdish tribes and Mullah Mustafa, and the autocratic manner of the Kurdish leadership, all undermined the strength of the

¹⁰⁵ Lawrence, 28.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 30.

¹⁰⁷ Lawrence, 17.

Kurdish insurgency in Iraq and precipitated the collapse of the Kurdish revolt in 1975.”¹⁰⁸ In addition to these internal causes, Tahiri also discusses the external causes, namely, the fact that Barzani was “used by foreign powers.”¹⁰⁹ However, Tahiri makes a strong argument for the primacy of Kurdish leaders’ (i.e. Barzani) mistakes in leading to the collapse of the revolt. In other words, he argues that Kurdish leadership was responsible for leaving the fate of its people to the whim of foreign powers.¹¹⁰ Indeed, lack of political experience and naïveté are both charges commonly thrust on Barzani and his Kurdish contemporaries and rivals. The conclusion of this paper concurs with the findings of Lawrence, Tahiri, Yildiz, and Koohi-Kamali on the fact of Barzani’s audacity (which was probably in part a product of his naïveté) and the grave consequences of his attitudes for the Kurdish people. From the early 1960s, Barzani had reason to reevaluate his relationship with the United States but failed to do so. I argue that, based on the preponderance of the evidence provided in this paper, it appears that Barzani relied on the U.S. primarily because he *wanted* to rely on the U.S.. Barzani was so convinced of the essentialness of U.S. support that he never stopped to consider his other options (i.e. accepting a truce offer with Saddam would, given the information available at the time, seem a prudent course of action). Instead, Barzani acted as if he had U.S. support only to be let down when this proved a false reality. I also argue that, regardless of any still classified or destroyed communications between Barzani and various U.S. actors (the State Department, CIA, etc.), the nature of U.S. policy as shown in the preceding evidence should have been enough for Barzani to conclude that the United States had no intention of unconditionally supporting the cause of Iraqi Kurds.

¹⁰⁸ Tahiri, 8.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 131.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 115-132.

United States policy of using ethnic and political minorities as Cold War pawns is certainly an embarrassing facet of U.S. history. Mullah Mustafa Barzani's continuing to rely on U.S. support given the available evidence as to the risks of this approach proved a costly setback in the road to Kurdish autonomy.

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