WAR IN IRAQ:

WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE KURDS?

19 March 2003

TABLE OF CONTENTS

WAR IN IRAQ: WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE KURDS?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Assuming the U.S.-led military operation to topple Saddam Hussein proceeds, the threat is very great of large-scale violence, centred on Kirkuk, erupting in Northern Iraq between Kurds and Turks. If that is to be averted, the United States must urgently take three important steps: get its own forces to Kirkuk first, ensure that Turkey exercises restraint, and simultaneously persuade the Iraqi Kurds to take no action that will risk provoking Turkey.

The native Kurdish population has succeeded in carving out a degree of de facto political independence since Iraqi forces withdrew unilaterally from the area more than a decade ago. Freed from government domination and largely sheltered from external interference, the Kurds have lived in a bubble, developing the early trappings of democracy and enjoying the economic benefits of the UN "Oil-for-Food" program, even as intermittent fighting between the two principal Kurdish parties effectively cut the region into two halves. A U.S.-led war in Iraq is very likely to upset this arrangement, and prompts the question: what's next for the Iraqi Kurds?

Deep in their hearts, the Iraqi Kurds want nothing less than full independence, if not in all of "Kurdistan" (a longed-for nation-state without precise boundaries), then at least in Northern Iraq. Aware of the odds, they keep their secessionist dreams mostly to themselves and say they will settle for no more than an expanded autonomy arrangement, possibly as part of a federal Iraq. The present configuration of forces, however, might well augur something entirely different for Iraq's Kurds, a scenario with which they are already familiar: a limited autonomy or, worse, if not even their minimal demands are met, a forced return to the mountains and renewed insurrection against central control.

In any one of these scenarios, the future status of the city of Kirkuk will play a pivotal part. The Kurds are not the only ones with their eyes on what to them is the ultimate prize. Claimed not only by them but other minority groups such as the Turkomans and Assyrians, not to mention the Arab population that, as a result of the Baath regime's deliberate Arabisation policy, has swelled its ranks in recent years, the city of Kirkuk is both the object of desire and a source of future strife. Moreover, any central government in Baghdad is likely to assert its claim to Kirkuk and environs as indivisible parts of Iraq. This is as true today, under Saddam Hussein, as it is bound to be the case under a successor regime in the aftermath of a U.S.-led war, and has to do as much with the emergence of Iraq as a unitary Arab state from the wreckage of the Ottoman empire in the early 20th century as with the fact that the Kirkuk-Mosul region sits atop oil-bearing formations containing 10 billion barrels of proven reserves.

In contemplating their future inside or outside Iraq, the Kurdish parties know they will have to contend with a number of powerful actors who may either assist or thwart their ambitions. Among these are, most prominently, the United States, Turkey, and the non-Kurdish Iraqi opposition groups with which the Kurdish parties are currently aligned. Iran, which has its own interests to protect in Northern Iraq, is also carefully eyeing developments from the sidelines. Syria's Kurdish population has also been a source of concern for that country's governing regime. Nor is the majority Arab population of Iraq particularly sympathetic to Kurdish aspirations.

The United States has publicly expressed its commitment to the territorial integrity of Iraq. This is another way of saying that independence for the Kurds is not for the United States an acceptable outcome to the Iraq crisis. Turkey, too, has stressed

the importance of a unitary Iraq, and for reasons largely having to do with its relationship to its own Kurdish population will not tolerate any degree of sovereignty for Iraqi Kurds. For years Turkish forces have been in Northern Iraq combating guerilla forces of its own Kurdish opposition, the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK). At least several thousand Turkish troops are now in Northern Iraq, occupying a key airstrip, and tens of thousands more are poised to enter the country. If last-minute talks between the United States and Turkey fail to yield an agreement over basing and overflight rights for U.S. forces, Turkey may choose not to heed Washington's call to refrain from unilateral action in Iraq's Kurdish region, while Washington may not be able to deploy a force in the North sufficiently large to block any move on the part of either the Turks or the Kurds. Even in the event of an agreement, Turkey may be drawn by its own sense of its national interests or by actions taken by the Kurds.

In the gathering storm this has left the Kurds of Iraq with essentially two options, both of which are fraught with serious risk: to cooperate with the United States in its war against the regime in Baghdad and thereby hope to extract the most favorable concessions, short of independence, from those who will rule a post-Saddam Iraq; or to gamble on their own military capabilities in the chaos of war and make a headlong dash for Kirkuk, thereby creating facts on the ground that any successor regime in Baghdad, American commanders in Iraq or the government of neighbouring Turkey would find difficult to reverse.

Either approach may fail. After a decade of lukewarm support for the Kurds, driven in part by the desire to keep the Baghdad regime on the defensive, the United States will predictably throw its full weight behind a successor government of its own creation or liking. In the messy bargaining process that is sure to follow a transition in Iraq, the Kurds may be rewarded for their support of the American war effort, but not by as much as they might wish. They will have served their role, and, more importantly, the U.S. will have to address the needs of non-Kurdish Iraqis who constitute a significant majority of the population and who view Kurdish aspirations with hostility. Kurds may come to be seen as an irritant and potential spoiler, but they will be bereft of the leverage they can bring to bear in pre-war Iraq today. But a less than satisfactory settlement of the Kurdish question, including one that would not give the Kurds certain rights to Kirkuk, might trigger

a return to armed conflict and prolonged instability in the North.

Likewise, a Kurdish rush on Kirkuk might backfire, even it does not elicit Turkish military intervention (the worst-case scenario). Assuming that the Kurds can both capture and hold Kirkuk, a feat they signally failed to pull off during the post-Gulf War uprising in March 1991 when they were counter-attacked by superior Iraqi forces, it would set them up for a direct confrontation with U.S. troops. Moreover, in the Kirkuk region itself there may be considerable mayhem if Kurdish civilians, forced out by the Baathist regime over the past decades and now backed by armed Kurdish factions, seek to return, only to find their homes occupied by settlers brought in to Arabise the area. Under Kurdish tutelage, the Baath regime's ethnic "cleansing" of Kirkuk may be replaced with a new wave of expulsions and attendant violence, this time targeting the region's Arab population.

There is a third scenario, one in which the Kurdish parties would initially exercise restraint and stay in their area while Kurdish civilians in Kirkuk, joined by those returning from their displacement camps in Kurdish-controlled territory, would take administrative control of the city. Unlike the second pro-active scenario, the Kurdish parties (militias), while themselves appearing to play a responsible role, would here effectively encourage the displaced Kirkukis to act, then use the civilians' return as justification to enter the city themselves: an act that in turn might trigger both Turkish intervention and a military move by the Kurdish parties to support their kin. Given past rivalry over control of resources and domination of the Kurdish national movement, the fragile pact between Masoud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) may collapse in their rush to seize command of "their" Kurds in Kirkuk.

How is one to prevent matters from spinning out of control while protecting the basic rights of the Kurds, who have suffered so grievously at the hands of the Baghdad regime during its long reign? Two challenges present themselves. The first is to prevent any major confrontation between Kurds and Turks during the duration of the war. The second is to help put together a structure for the Iraqi state that preserves its territorial integrity while addressing the legitimate aspirations of the Kurdish people. They are interrelated, of course, for the more secure the Kurds feel about their future after the war, the less

likely they are to take matters into their own hands during the war.

To meet these challenges, three things must happen. First, it is imperative that U.S. forces get to Kirkuk quickly – before the Turks, and before Kurdish forces. This is a pre-condition for preventing a dangerous and unpredictable conflict between Turkey and the Kurds. Only a strong military force in Kirkuk (preferably a neutral one, not including Turkish troops) can maintain the peace and set the stage for a subsequent fair adjudication by a competent and impartial body of competing claims to property and resources.

Secondly, to buttress that effort, the United States should make publicly clear to the Kurds that it expects them not to take any action that risks provoking Turkey, and in particular that they should refrain from unilateral military steps and consent to a temporary international presence in Kirkuk. In exchange, the U.S. would make an explicit, public guarantee to the Kurds that it will protect them from attack (from either Turkey or a post-Saddam regime in Baghdad) and ensure they have a major role in the creation of a new Iraqi state, with their concerns adequately addressed and their achievements recognized. The Kurdish parties must be persuaded to overcome the deep suspicion born of their historical dealings with Washington and agree to work with the United States and other members of the international community to bring about a post-war situation in Iraq in which Kurds can live in peace and security and in full enjoyment of their human rights

Thirdly, and simultaneously, the United States should reiterate to Turkey that it too will need to show restraint and in particular avoid any unilateral military moves in Northern Iraq. There is little doubt that Turkish forces will enter Northern Iraq if they feel it necessary, regardless of Washington's pressure, and the failure so far to conclude a U.S.-Turkey military agreement in advance of the war has further complicated matters. But the U.S. must do everything within its power to both lessen Turkey's concerns (by restraining the Kurds) and heighten the political and diplomatic costs of its intervention.

This report does not address the question whether a U.S.-led war against Iraq will or should take place:

the recommendations which follow are premised on the assumption that, for better or worse, it will.[1]

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the United States:

1. Urgently place U.S. forces in Northern Iraq to protect the Kurds against Iraqi forces and to provide a buffer between Turkish forces and Iraqi Kurdish militias in order to prevent violence and reassure the Kurds that Turkey will not expand its mission beyond the legitimate pursuit of its security interests in the border area.

2. Make clear to the Kurdistan Regional Government and militias affiliated with the Kurdistan Democratic Party and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan that it will resolutely oppose any unilateral military or political initiatives, including entering Kirkuk or Mosul, that would provoke Turkey or prejudge a consensual settling of the Kurdish question.

3. Place U.S. military officers in Turkish-secured camps within the territory of Iraq designed to shelter Iraqi displaced persons to oversee their safety.

4. Reiterate its call on Turkey to continue to exercise military restraint and, in particular, to restrict deployment of its forces to the immediate area of the Iraqi-Turkish border.

5. Ensure that Turkish forces withdraw from Northern Iraq forthwith once the region has fallen under overall U.S. command and central authority has been re-established in Baghdad.

6. Once U.S. forces are present in Mosul and Kirkuk, act to protect the local population from possible reprisals and their property from destruction, and administer these two cities until replaced by a neutral force, possibly a UN peace keeping mission.

7. In managing the political transition in Iraq, commit to ensuring a major Kurdish voice in the transitional process that will decide the ultimate constitutional structure of Iraq.

---

[1] For an analysis of the merits of the various options as they stood in late February, see ICG Middle East Report N°9, *Iraq Policy Briefing: Is There an Alternative to War?,*24 February 2003.

To Turkey:

8.   Limit any military operations inside Iraq to the immediate border area in a defensive posture aimed at maintaining security and taking care of any displaced persons.

9.   Withdraw troops from Northern Iraq forthwith once the region has fallen under overall U.S. command and central authority has been re-established in Baghdad.

10. With regard to Iraqis fleeing toward the Turkish border, and assuming no preparedness to open that border generally to Iraqi refugees:

   (a)   in coordination with the U.S., and until such time as Turkish troops are withdrawn, ensure the security of camps in areas under their control that shelter Iraqi displaced persons;

   (b)   provide international relief organizations with access to displaced Iraqis living in the camps and work in close coordination with such organisations;

   (c)   be prepared to open the border should Iraqis need to escape a humanitarian emergency or military attack; and

   (d)   allow the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to participate in the screening process for any Iraqi who crosses into Turkey.

To the Kurdish Parties and the Kurdistan Regional Government:

11. Publicly commit to making no unilateral military moves inside Iraq.

12. Prevent displaced Kurdish civilians returning to Kirkuk from Kurdish-controlled territory from carrying weapons, and issue public warnings they should refrain from mob justice and "reverse ethnic cleansing" at pain of prosecution.

13. Publicly commit to a multi-ethnic Kirkuk with claims to property to be settled by an impartial international technical body to be established by the UN Security Council.

14. Publicly commit to protect the fundamental rights of minorities living among the Kurds, in particular the Turkomans and Assyrians/Chaldeans.

15. Refrain from military action against other Kurdish parties, including those of an Islamist bent, that are not engaged in armed opposition to the Kurdistan Regional Government.

16. Prohibit the use of Kurdish-controlled territory by the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) of Turkey to support, prepare or launch military operations against Turkey.

17. Make every effort to coordinate efforts of the Kurdish parties to prepare for the establishment of a new Iraqi government.

To the United Nations Security Council:

18. Set up an impartial international technical body to adjudicate property claims in Kirkuk.

To the international donor community

19. Urgently provide humanitarian assistance for Kurdish displaced persons.

Amman/Brussels, 19 March 2003

international
crisis group

WAR IN IRAQ: WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE KURDS?

I. INTRODUCTION: THE KURDS IN THE SHADOW OF THE BAATH

The conflict between Baghdad and the Iraqi Kurds did not emerge with the rise to power of the Iraqi Baath party in 1968. It found its origin in the modern Middle Eastern state system that arose from the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, and has been reinforced by the growth of regional nationalisms. The Arab Baathist brand of Arab nationalism in particular, though, has been on a collision course with that of the Iraqi Kurds, and the latter's experiences with the rule of Saddam Hussein are shaping their perceptions of how a post-Saddam regime in Baghdad ought to approach the unresolved issue of their status in Iraq. The twin events of 1988 – utter defeat and devastation in the "Anfal" counter-insurgency campaign – and 1991 – mass uprising, yet another crushing defeat, then an astonishing renaissance – were so monumental as to constitute a watershed in Kurdish history.[2] While the Kurdish leadership can be expected to do everything in its power to prevent a recurrence of such national traumas, the unintended consequences of Kurdish and Turkish actions can lead to yet another tragic outcome.

A. FAILED AUTONOMY, GENOCIDE, UPRISING

Shortly after the Baathists came to power in 1968 fighting broke out between the central government and the Kurds, despite an initial pronounced desire by the Baath regime to resolve the Kurdish problem peacefully. The Kurdish leader at the time was Mullah Mustafa Barzani, who as the head of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) commanded the Kurdish national movement, a position his successors have sought to emulate but none has matched. The on-going rivalry between Kurds after the defeat of the KDP's rebellion in 1975 and the demise of its leader in exile four years later has defined Kurdish politics for more than two decades, as well as the Iraqi Kurds' relations with the sovereign nation state in which their stateless nation found itself in the aftermath of World War I.

Fighting in Northern Iraq was brought to an end with the March Manifesto of 1970, which was signed by the Kurdish movement led by Barzani and the government in Baghdad. This agreement provided for Kurdish autonomy within the framework of unity for Iraq, to be achieved over a period of four years.[3] The agreement offered more concessions and freedom than any previous governments had ever considered granting the Kurds. Its implementation, however, proved to be difficult, with the greatest stumbling block being the oil-rich city of Kirkuk, which the Kurds wanted to serve as the capital of an autonomous Kurdish region – an aspiration they continue to entertain today. Pressing for advantage during a period of peace, the Baath regime launched a large-scale campaign to shift the demographic balance in traditionally Kurdish or mixed regions in and around Kirkuk and other oil-rich areas (Sinjar, Khanaqin, Mandali). This policy of "Arabisation"

---

[2] The best modern histories of the Kurds are, Jonathan C. Randal, *After Such Knowledge, What Forgiveness: My Encounters with Kurdistan* (New York, 1997); David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London, 2000); and Chris Kutschera, *Le défi kurde, ou le rêve fou de l'indépendance* (Paris, 1997). See also, http://www.chris-kutschera.com. For a detailed analysis of the Anfal campaign, see Human Rights Watch, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide: The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds* (New Haven and London, 1995).

[3] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London, 2000), pp. 327-335.

entailed the deportation and resettlement of large numbers of Kurds. Limited in scope during the early years, Arabisation was to become the defining trend in these regions throughout the 1980s and 1990s up until today, constituting the regime's most significant and sustainable non-military measure aimed at frustrating Kurdish aspirations.[4]

The peace-time dialogue between Baghdad and the Kurds broke down largely because of irreconcilable differences over Kirkuk and the distribution of power between the central government and the government of the autonomous region. In 1974 Baghdad announced its own design for Kurdish autonomy, enshrined in the Autonomy Law, which notably excluded Kirkuk and other strategic areas in.Kurdish Northern IraqKurdish Northern Iraq[5] Since the plan fell short of Kurdish claims to Kirkuk, Barzani rejected the new law and returned to the mountains. Soon fighting resumed; the KDP received military and logistical support from Iran, which was backed by the United States and Israel.

The Kurdish insurgency put the Baath regime on the defensive. It recognized that unless Iran could be persuaded to cease its military support of the Kurds, the Iraqi army had little chance of suppressing their rebellion. Instead hostilities threatened to escalate into a full-scale war with Iran. Negotiating from a position of weakness, Saddam Hussein was forced to settle the conflict largely on terms favourable to Iran. In Algiers in March 1975 he and the Shah resolved to share control over the disputed Shatt al-Arab waterway, Iraq's lifeline to the Gulf, in exchange for a cessation of Iran's support for the Barzani insurgency.[6]

The result of the Algiers Accords was that the Kurdish national movement collapsed and Barzani was forced from the scene. In the years that followed, his son Masoud emerged as the new leader of the KDP, which began to splinter as smaller groups broke away to form separate political parties.[7] Jalal Talabani, a long-term personal and political antagonist of Mullah Mustafa's, together with his associates on the KDP-Politburo, set up a new party, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), which today is the KDP's main rival.[8]

There is little that distinguishes the PUK from the KDP. Both parties are led by strong leaders whose personalities frequently clash and who have brought family members into their circle of senior aides. Moreover, the two parties are dominant in different geographical areas: the PUK rules supreme in the southern and eastern Surani-speaking parts ofKurdish Northern IraqKurdish Northern Iraq, called Suran, whereas the KDP is the primary power in the Kurmanji-speaking area of Badinan near the border with Turkey.[9]

In September 1980 Iraq invaded the newly established Islamic Republic of Iran. During the horrific eight-year war that followed the Iraqi Kurds sought the aid of Tehran to press their own claims against the regime. In their growing insurgency, they posed both a threat in their own right to Iraq's control over the Kurdish areas, and a much more serious threat to the regime itself when they engaged in tactical alliances with Iran, which was bearing down on Iraqi forces along a wide front. This turned the Kurdish parties into a virtual "fifth column" in

---

[4] The Global IDP Project concluded in July 2002 that the vast majority of the 1.5 million internally displaced people in the Middle East are to be found in Iraq. (See "Internal displacement in the Middle East", at http://www.idpproject .org) Moreover, a recent report on the internally displaced people of Iraq estimates that in the north of the country alone some 600,000 to 800,000 people have been displaced. Of these, at least 60,000, and perhaps as many as 100,000 originate from Kirkuk, victims of the regime's Arabisation policy. John Fawcett and Victor Tanner, "The Internally Displaced People of Iraq", An Occasional Paper, Washington, D.C., The Brookings Institution – SAIS Project on Internal Displacement, October 2002, p. 16. Available at http://www.brookings.edu. See also, Human Rights Watch, "Iraq: Forcible Expulsion of Ethnic Minorities", Briefing Paper, New York, March 2003, available at: http://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/iraq0303/Kirkuk0303.pdf.
[5] McDowall, , op. cit., pp. 335-337.

[6] Edmund Ghareeb, *The Kurdish Question in Iraq* (New York, 1981), p. 171. Saddam Hussein was nominally vice-president in 1975 but in reality already the regime's strongman.
[7] After the collapse of the Barzani revolt, the KDP was initially led by Sami Abd-al-Rahman (1975-78), then by Mustafa's sons Idris and Masoud Barzani, and finally, after Idris's death, by Masoud Barzani since the early 1980s.
[8] McDowall, op. cit., p. 343.
[9] Asked about the ideological difference between the PUK and KDP, KDP leader Masoud Barzani laughed and said in a recent interview: "There isn't any difference. Whatever has been stated in the manifestos is the same. The difference is some historical background and some other minor issues." Interviewed by Tanya Goudsouzian, "Kurds will not take part in U.S.-led war – Barzani", *Gulf News*, 30 January 2003. See also ICG Middle East Report N°6, *Iraq Backgrounder: What Lies Beneath,* 1 October 2002 pp. 25-28.

Baghdad's eyes, and the regime responded with intensified repression, even if its forces were tied down on the southern front. As the fighting wore on, KDP and PUK rebels succeeded in taking control over large swathes of territory, restricting central government control to the main towns and primary roads, albeit only during daylight hours.

Once the end of the war came in sight in 1987, Iraq freed up some of its divisions and went after the Kurds with a vengeance, first via a massive village destruction and population relocation campaign accompanied by chemical weapons attacks on rebel strongholds, and ultimately via the eight successive Anfal operations in the spring and summer of 1988. The Anfal was a highly organised, comprehensive program aimed at destroying the rural population that had harboured the insurgents and resulted in what Human Rights Watch and the U.S. State Department Legal Advisor's office determined to be genocide. In its most intensive phase in April and May 1988, tens of thousands of men, women and children were taken by the military from the Germian area adjoining Kirkuk and "disappeared". An estimated 100,000 never returned from what eyewitnesses say were vast killing grounds.[10] What lingers in the public memory from this period is the Iraqi chemical strike on the Kurdish town of Halabja, in which some 6,800 civilians died.[11]

In razing the countryside and killing its population, the Anfal campaign succeeded at once in eradicating a Kurdish way of life and massively weakening the Kurdish national movement in a blow more devastating than the defeat of 1975. Its leadership fled into exile in Iran, where they remained until the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait dramatically altered their fortunes.

B.   A TURNING POINT IN KURDISH HISTORY

Despite the severe setbacks the Kurdish national movement suffered in the second half of the twentieth century, its very survival demonstrated that it was not only a force to be reckoned with but that attempts to suppress it by military force contained the seed of regional destabilisation. No event brought this home more clearly than the Iraqi response to the Kurdish uprising that followed in the wake of the successful allied campaign to dislodge Iraqi forces from Kuwait. At substantial human cost, the previously rather anonymous Kurds suddenly entered the limelight as desperate refugees vainly seeking protection in Turkey (they were blocked at gunpoint by Turkish troops), and found themselves overnight at the receiving end of international protection and support.[12]

The popular uprising broke out when Iraqi citizens, in both the predominantly Shiite south and the Kurdish north, sensed that the allied victory in Kuwait had substantially, possibly fatally, weakened the central government and its repressive apparatus. For the Kurds, it started in the small town of Rania in early March, then spread to the cosmopolitan city of Suleimaniyeh, and soon covered the entire Kurdish region. The exiled parties returned hastily to take control of events, and soon the newly-empowered insurgents made a dash for Kirkuk and its oil installations.[13] Confronted, however, with the refusal of the Gulf War allies to provide any form of military assistance for their uprising and instead permit Iraq to use the might of its helicopters, the Kurds were able to hold on to their liberated areas for no more than three weeks in the face of a determined Iraqi counter-offensive. In re-capturing the main Kurdish towns, the regime sent notice to the upstart Kurds that what had befallen them in Halabja might come to pass once again.[14] So great was the fear of renewed chemical attacks and mass executions that the Kurds gathered up whatever possessions they could carry at the first signs of an Iraqi troop advance and fled in mass panic across the mountains into Iran and Turkey.

---

[10] Human Rights Watch, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide,* op. cit.
[11] Casualty figure provided by Halabja-based organisations that provide relief to the relatives of the victims. ICG interview, Halabja, May 2002.

[12] As one observer put it, "The Kurds owed their salvation first and foremost to television, that blunt instrument which quickly won over public opinion." Jonathan Randal, *Kurdistan: After Such Knowledge, What Forgiveness?* (London, 1998), p. 59.
[13] Sheri Laizer, *Martyrs, Traitors and Patriots: Kurdistan after the Gulf War* (London, 1996), pp. 4-5.
[14] In late autumn 1990, during the Western build-up in the Gulf, Saddam reportedly sent a senior aide to the Kurdish leadership with the message, "If you have forgotten Halabja, I would like to remind you that we are ready to repeat the operation." Cited in John Bulloch and Harvey Morris, *No Friends but the Mountains: The Tragic History of the Kurds* (London, 1992), p. 9.

The huge refugee crisis that resulted from this mass exodus was without parallel.[15] Pressed by the destabilising situation on and inside their borders, Ankara and Tehran appealed for immediate international assistance and urged the United Nations to find a solution to the humanitarian crisis. The sight of refugees huddling in the rain on Kurdish mountaintops in Turkey did much to rally international public opinion to support the refugees, if not the Kurdish cause.

On 5 April 1991, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 688 to deal with the humanitarian crisis on Iraq's northern borders. The resolution condemned the repression of Iraqi civilians and demanded that Baghdad grant international humanitarian organisations "immediate access" to people in need. A week later, allied forces launched Operation Provide Comfort, dropping emergency relief supplies on both sides of the Turkish border. The next day they went a step further when the U.S. President announced that allied forces would establish temporary enclaves, or safety zones, in Northern Iraq, which would allow the refugees to return to Iraq, if not their homes.[16] This was originally an initiative of Turkish president Turgut Özal that arose from Turkey's concerns about the presence of large numbers of Iraqi Kurds in its own Kurdish regions.[17] Finally, the Gulf War allies established a zone north of the 36th parallel that they declared off-limits to Iraqi fixed-wing aircraft. (They set up a similar zone beneath the 32th parallel, later extended to the 33rd parallel.) In order for the international community to enforce the northern no-fly zone and provide humanitarian relief, U.S., French, British and Turkish aircraft began operating from the Inçirlik military base, near Adana in southern Turkey, with a co-ordination centre located in Zahko, an Iraqi Kurdish town in the safe haven close to the border

with Turkey. Their mandate was subject to a six-monthly review in the Turkish parliament.[18]

Although the no-fly zone excluded large chunks of Kurdish-controlled areas of Northern Iraq, such as Suleimaniyeh, Kalar and other towns (while including non-Kurdish towns such as Mosul), and the safe haven only covered a small area along part of the Turkish border, many refugees and internally displaced Kurds chose to return to their homes from Iran and Turkey over the following few months, as the Kurdish parties agreed to a security arrangement with the Iraqi government. This included joint patrols in the major towns. Meanwhile, a weakened Iraqi regime engaged in negotiations with the Kurds over the same old issue: the extent of Kurdish autonomy and the status of Kirkuk. Barzani and Talabani both travelled to Baghdad more than once, but eventually the talks collapsed over, once again, the intractable Kirkuk issue. By October the security arrangement had also come apart, and government forces unilaterally withdrew from the Kurdish areas to a line, north of Kirkuk, that was roughly equivalent to the border of the 1974 Kurdish Autonomous Zone. The security agencies abandoned their offices, which were taken over at once by the Kurdish parties, nominally united in the framework of the Kurdistan Front, a coalition of parties set up in 1986. The Front began to administer the area, but constant political infighting and the veto power of each of its eight constituent parties drove home the need for a central governing authority.[19] In May 1992, the Kurds turned out in droves for their first-ever elections, which were deemed free and fair by independent observers, choosing representatives to a 105-member National Assembly.

At the beginning of October 1992, the Iraqi Kurds went a step further to announce the formation of a Kurdish federal state, with the aim of becoming incorporated as a member of a future Iraqi federation. This proclamation was fully accepted by the Iraqi opposition umbrella group, the Iraqi National Congress (INC), a few weeks later.[20]

In late December 1993, armed conflict broke out between the PUK and the Islamic Movement of Kurdistan, the IMK, as the latter sought to increase

---

[15] As the UNHCR noted, never before had the world experienced such large numbers of people leaving their homeland in such a short time. It was reported that the number of Iraqi Kurds in Iran between April 7 and 8 increased from 563,000 to 771,000 in less than 24 hours. *Svenska Dagbladet* (Stockholm), 1 April 1991. In total, more than 1 million Kurds fled to Iran, and some 450,000 tried to enter Turkey. Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, *Asylum Under Attack*, New York, 1992, p. 3.
[16] Bill Frelick, "Operation Provide Comfort: False Promises to the Kurds", in Gérard Chaliand, ed., *A People Without a Country: The Kurds and Kurdistan* (London, 1993), p. 235; and Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, op. cit.
[17] Nader Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism* (London, 1992), p. 153.

[18] Chris Kutschera, *The Middle East* (London, November 1995).
[19] McDowall, op. cit., p. 380.
[20] Rend Rahim Francke, "The Opposition", in Fran Hazelton, ed., op. cit., p. 174.

its influence in traditional PUK-controlled territory.[21] This was only a precursor to a vastly more destructive conflict between the PUK and KDP that erupted in May 1994, effectively dividing the region into two zones.[22] The PUK accused the KDP of keeping the bulk of customs duties levied on traffic crossing the northern border to Turkey to fatten its own party organisation rather than the common Kurdish Administration; the KDP accused the PUK of embezzling large sums from the joint Kurdish Ministry of Finance and of collaborating with the Iraqi government.[23]

Things completely fell apart after the KDP, incensed over a resurgent alliance between the PUK and Iran, invited Iraqi troops back into the Kurdish region in August 1996.[24] These forces, some 30,000 men, captured Arbil in a lightning dash, while a resurgent KDP advanced on Suleimaniyeh, driving out the PUK. When international pressure forced Iraq to withdraw its forces a couple of days later and the PUK managed to fight its way back into Suleimaniyeh, the KDP assumed full control over Arbil, where it established its seat of government; the PUK did likewise in Suleimaniyeh, and from then until late 2002 there were parallel Kurdish administrations in Kurdish Northern Iraq with their own "cabinets" headed by "prime ministers"; the Kurdish parliament stayed in Arbil, becoming a strictly KDP affair.[25]

In September 1998, and with strong U.S. mediation, both parties agreed to a settlement of their armed conflict, and the resulting Washington Agreement provided a lasting cease-fire. It did not, however, succeed in easing the strained relations between them. Under renewed pressure in the summer of 2002, the leaders of the two parties finally signed a new accord that was followed by the reconvening of the Kurdish parliament in Arbil in October.[26] In an important step, the assembly accepted for review a set of draft constitutions for Iraq and a federal "Kurdistan" region, prepared by experts contracted by the KDP. On 2 March 2003, the two parties issued a statement announcing the formation of a "Joint Higher Leadership" in Kurdish Northern Iraq, to be co-chaired by Barzani and Talabani.[27]

Despite the internecine fighting and the existence of two parallel administrations, the Kurds were able to carve out an oasis (or two oases, really) of relative prosperity in the 1990s. This is all the more remarkable given that the Kurds inherited a devastated land. Much work was done to improve the infrastructure, great strides were made in education and public health, and the area now enjoys a vibrant free press. The countryside has largely been rehabilitated. Structural problems remain, though. The UN Oil-for-Food program's emphasis on food imports discourages local farming and its emphasis on rebuilding infrastructure has done little to spawn sustainable development. Imports of spare parts and other goods needed for manufacturing are regulated under the UN program and are channelled through Baghdad, leading to bureaucratic bottlenecks and political interference.[28] In order to make a decisive shift from a society living on international handouts to a thriving economy in its own right, the Kurdish region will have to be reintegrated into the wider world, even as it seeks greater autonomy within the Iraqi state system and breaks out from the suffocating embrace from its two powerful neighbours, Turkey and Iran.

---

[21] McDowall, op. cit., p. 387.

[22] David Hirst, *The Guardian*, 14 May 1994.

[23] Douglas Waller, *Time*, 27 March 1995. The United States tried to bring the two parties back together but made little headway, stumbling over key issues such as finding a common approach to the Kurdish Workers Party in Turkey (the PKK) — with whom the KDP had clashed militarily, and which the PUK had supported — the allocation of customs duties on goods crossing the Turkish border, and the demilitarisation of their de facto capital Arbil. See Najm Jarrah, *Middle East International*, N°506, 4 August 1995.

[24] See, for instance, Hugh Pope, *Middle East International*, N°533, 6 September 6 1996.

[25] Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett, *Iraq since 1958. From Revolution to Dictatorship*, (London, 2001), p. 299.

[26] "Iraqi Kurds endorse peace deal, win US plaudits, at landmark meet", Agence France-Presse, 4 October 2002.

[27] Available at: http://www.krg.org.

[28] ICG interview with PUK Prime Minister Barham Salih, Suleimaniyeh, 28 May 2003.

II. THE TURKEY – TURKOMAN FACTOR

A. BACKGROUND: TURKEY, NORTHERN IRAQ AND THE TURKOMANS

Turkey shares a 400-kilometre mountainous border with Iraq – all of it the Iraqi Kurdish region – and so has had a major interest in developments in Northern Iraq, in particular in preventing a spill-over effect of Kurdish nationalism, but also in defeating Turkey's own Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), which has used the area as a sanctuary for its guerrilla forces. A Turkish defence analyst laid out Turkey's four primary interests in Iraq: the continued flow of oil, the prevention of a Kurdish state, denial of safe haven for the PKK, and the dismantlement of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.[29]

Some vocal sectors of Turkish politics see more than defensive and economic interests in Iraq: to the small but strident ultra-nationalists the original Ottoman vilayet of Mosul (comprising the regions of Mosul, Kirkuk and Suleimaniyeh, i.e., an area roughly equivalent to Kurdish Northern Iraq) still forms an integral part of Turkey, one that was lost when the Ottoman Empire was carved up after World War I and Mosul was attached to Iraq.[30] As recently as January 2003, Turkey's Foreign Minister, Yasar Yakis, asserted his country's "legitimate and strategic interests" in Mosul and Kirkuk,[31] though his statement may have derived from a desire to overcome strong anti-war sentiment in Turkey and pave the way for Turkish agreement to a military alliance with the United States in the context of that war.

The military defeat of the PKK in the late 1990s, capped by the arrest of its leader, Abdullah Öcalan in February 1999, can be attributed to Turkey's ability to move about in Northern Iraq at will, dealing blow after blow to the PKK's retreating forces.[32] Despite the PKK's decline, Turkey has maintained that the PKK remains present in Northern Iraq with its basic

structure intact, justifying a continued Turkish military presence there.[33] It has also raised another justification for its presence, one consonant with the unltra-nationalists' expansionist dreams: to be the protector of the "equal rights" of the Turkoman community, ethnic Turks who live predominantly in Iraq's main cities, including Kirkuk, Mosul and Arbil.[34] There are no reliable figures for the size of this minority group, but most sources seem to point at 350,000 to 500,000; they are, in other words, vastly outnumbered by the 3 or 3.5 million Kurds. The willingness of at least part of the Turkoman community to accept Turkish tutelage has facilitated Turkey's projection into the Kurdish region, setting up Turkomans against Kurds, and even Turkomans against Turkomans.

The Turkomans' relations with the Kurds have been testy, but there is no history of fighting between the two communities.[35] The Turkomans boycotted the 1992 elections, ostensibly because the National Turkmen Party (NTP) at the time was denied a seat

---

[29] ICG interview with Seyfi Teshan, Bilkent University, 5 February 2003.

[30] Kendal Nezan, "Kurdistan in Turkey", Gérard Chaliand, ed., *A People Without a Country* (London, 1993), pp. 50-51.

[31] He did so in an interview in the Turkish daily *Hürriyet*, 6 January 2003.

[32] "Turkey seizes Ocalan in heavy blow to rebels", Reuters, 16 February 1999.

[33] ICG telephone interview with journalist Cengiz Candar, Istanbul, 10 September 2002.

[34] "Turkish Foreign Minister Comments on Iraq, Turkomans, and Oil", RFE/RL Iraq Report, vol. 6, N°1, January 13, 2003. As with all minorities in Iraq, the size of the community is fraught with controversy. Representatives of the pro-Turkish Iraqi Turkmen Front (ITF) have offered a figure of 3 million Turkomans in Iraq (13 per cent of the Iraqi population). The rival Turkmen Cultural Association (TCA) hews to a much smaller number: one million Turkomans, of whom some 25,000 are said to reside in the territory controlled by the Kurdistan Regional Government (mostly in the town of Arbil). ICG interview with Jawdat Najar, TCA leader, Arbil, 27 August 2002. The head of the Islamic Union of Iraqi Turkomans based in Damascus, Abbas Bayati, has said there are between 1.5 and 2 million Turkomans in Iraq, evenly divided between Sunnis and Shiites, and that some 300,000 of these live in the KRG-controlled area. Chris Kutschera, "Les visées turques en Irak et la carte turkmène", Radio France Internationale, 8 March 2003, at http://www.rfi.fr. None of these figures can be verified. The main culprit is the regime's policy of "nationality correction" by which Turkomans have been encouraged to assume Arabic names and register as Arabs in the national census. Many Arabised Turkomans are likely to reclaim their true ethnicity the moment the opportunity arises.

[35] Fighting between Kurds and Turkomans in Kirkuk in July 1959 seems to have had a political rather than an ethnic character. See Hanna Batatu, "Kirkuk, July 1959", reproduced from his monumental study, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq* (Princeton, 1979), available at: http://www.kirkukcity.cjb.net.

on the election committee,[36] but just as likely so as not to anger either Turkey or the Iraqi regime by seemingly endorsing the Kurds' strides toward self-government.[37] In the same spirit the Iraqi Turkmen Front (ITF) turned down an invitation to take part in the revived Kurdish parliament in October 2002.[38]

Established in 1995, the ITF is an umbrella organisation that originally consisted of 26 Turkmen organisations and political groups but lost some support in the late 1990s over its close alliance with Turkey. Its key members, each with a different agenda, are the Iraqi NTP, which promotes Turkoman autonomy within a unitary Iraq; the Turkmeneli Party, which advocates an Iraqi federation comprising four federal regions for Turkomans, Kurds, Sunni Arabs and Shiite Arabs; and the Turkmeneli Independence Movement, which strives for an independent Turkoman state. Though close to Turkey, the ITF claims it receives no direct financial support from the government in Ankara and dismisses suggestions it needs its neighbour as a protector against the Kurds.[39] Its relations with the KDP are strained, those with the PUK somewhat better.[40] The ITF is a member of the Iraqi National Congress, a coalition of opposition groups, but has complained that Turkomans are underrepresented.[41]

The ITF's claim that it represents all Iraqi Turkomans[42] is gainsaid by other Turkoman parties. For example, the head of the Iraqi Turkmen Brotherhood Association, Nafi Qassab, has said that "no party has the right to speak as the real representative of the Turkmen people, and the

Turkmen cause is not the cause of the ITF".[43] Another group, the Turkmen Cultural Association (TCA), has accused Turkey of harassment of its political work and the ITF of acting as an agent for Turkey.[44] At the same time, the KDP has accused Turkey of using the ITF to stir trouble between Turkomans and Kurds.[45] There is some truth to this charge: the Turkoman presence in Northern Iraq allows Turkey to mask its core objectives (listed above) and declare that its forces were invited into the area to protect an embattled minority of kinsfolk.[46]

B.   TURKEY AND THE U.S.-LED WAR

As war rhetoric built in the fall of 2002, Turkey began to formulate a policy position that was primarily based on fear: fear of refugees spilling across the border, of an independent Kurdish state emerging in Northern Iraq and of the effect a war might have on Turkey's ailing economy. At the same time, Turkey (though hardly hungry for a military confrontation) saw in a war an opportunity to take steps – unilaterally or if possible in cooperation with U.S. forces – to defeat Kurdish aspirations to statehood, in part by playing the Turkoman card. Given a surge of popular opposition to the war at home, the Islamist government that came to power in November 2002 has had to tread a careful line. It has urged a peaceful solution to the conflict through the United Nations, while domestically pushing for permitting U.S. forces access to Northern Iraq via Turkey. It has also brought its own forces into a state of preparedness, both to keep Iraqi refugees out and to send troops into Iraq to pre-empt a Kurdish rush for Kirkuk. It has pre-positioned relief materials on

---

[36] ICG interview with Mostafa Ziya, ITF representative in Turkey, Ankara, 12 September 2002.
[37] The majority of Turkomans remained under Baghdad's control. See McDowall, op. cit., p. 381.
[38] "PUK to host 2nd session of Kurdish parliament", *TDN*, 8 October 2002.
[39] ICG interview with Mostafa Ziya, ITF representative in Turkey, Ankara, 12 September 2002.
[40] At the same time, PUK leader Jalal Talabani convened a press conference with ITF leader Sanan Ahmet Aga at the end of 2002 to welcome improved relations with Turkey and agreeing that relations with the ITF should be improved as well. "PUK Fears Foreign Occupation", RFE/RL Newsline, vol. 6, N°240, 27 December 2002.
[41] ICG interview with Mostafa Ziya, ITF representative in Turkey, Ankara, 12 September 2002.
[42] Claim made by ITF representative Mustafa Kemal Yaycili in "Federation debate among the Iraqi opposition groups", *Turkish Daily News*, 4 November 2002.

[43] Quoted in, *Kurdistan Dispatch*, 23 December 2001, quoting the daily *Brayati* (Erbil), 15 December 2002.
[44] ICG interview with Jawdat Najar, leader of the Turkmen Cultural Association, 27 August 2002.
[45] Jawhar Salim, KDP Political Bureau Secretary. ICG interview, 27 August Arbil.
[46] Turkey's Defence Minister, Sabahattin Cakmakoğlu, declared in August 2002 that Northern Iraq had been "forcibly separated" from Turkey by the Western powers that partitioned the Ottoman Empire, and that the presence of Turkomans in Kirkuk and Mosul meant these two cities constituted "Turkish soil." Quoted by Charles Recknagel, "Turkey: Ankara and KDP Battle Over Shape of Post-Saddam Iraq", Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, 29 August 2002, available at: http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/2002/08/29082002151341.asp.

the Iraqi side of the border[47] and transferred forces and heavy military equipment to the Bamarni airstrip, the only usable airfield in the area bordering Turkey, over the KDP's vociferous objections.[48]

By early January 2003 the Turkish media reported the presence of "more than 30" tanks and "some 2,000" Turkish troops in Northern Iraq.[49] These moves may have been precipitated by fears of unilateral American military use of the airstrip, fears that became more real with the Turkish Parliament's "no" vote on providing additional basing rights to U.S. forces in early March.[50] Under current planning the Turkish military is prepared to send tens of thousands of troops into Northern Iraq.[51]

Turkey knows it could go it alone, but this would not be its preference. Financially, it would stand to lose U.S.$15 billion or more in loans and grants if it did not cede basing and over-flight rights to the United States, not to speak of the economic benefits that would accrue from being on the "good" side in a post-Saddam Iraq.[52] Moreover, American forces

might lend a very welcome gloss of legitimacy to Turkish forces operating in the North. Turkish sources maintain that the role Turkey will play in a potential war will very much depend on what Washington says the endgame will be and how firm are its commitments.[53] But whatever the grumbling and bargaining of its officials and the anti-war murmuring of its population, if Kurdish independence is Turkey's main fear, a tactical military alliance with the United States might be its best insurance policy. Any U.S. thrust into Iraq from the north would aim at Iraqi Republican Guard forces in Mosul and Kirkuk, with a view to securing the Kirkuk oil fields and cutting the regime off from its support in the Sunni-dominated areas of northwestern Iraq.[54] It equally would deprive the Kurds of unimpeded access to Kirkuk.

Meanwhile, Iraqi Kurdish parties have rushed to reassure Ankara that their intentions are good and their goals limited. Masoud Barzani, visiting Turkey in mid-January, criticised the Turkish troop presence in Northern Iraq as unnecessary, as the Kurds, he said, could be counted upon to protect vital Turkish interests: "We give importance to Turkey's security and interests", he asserted. "We would not allow any threats against Turkey's security or interests".[55] At the same time, the KDP has warned Turkey repeatedly that a military intervention would be met by armed Kurdish resistance.[56] As for the "day after",

---

[47] Reports suggest Turkey had started preparations for the establishment of 13 camps for displaced persons inside northern Iraq, as well as 5 refugee camps inside Turkey. "Turkish Daily Reports on Establishment of Refugee Camps", RFL/RL *Iraq Report*, vol. 6, N°1, 13 January 2003.
[48] ICG interview with Necdet Gundem, foreign affairs spokesman for the Kurdish-Turkish political party HAK-PAR, Ankara, 11 September 2002; and "Kurdish leader wants Turkish troops out of Iraq", Reuters, October 18, 2002.
[49] "Turkey ramps up military presence in northern Iraq," *Daily Star* (Beirut), 6 January 2003. Other sources reported a higher number, even up to 12,000 Turkish troops in northern Iraq in early 2003. "Turkey has doubled presence to 12,000 troops in Southern Kurdistan," Associated Press, 7 January 2003.
[50] These fears were generated by the visit of some 40 U.S. officers and military experts to the area in the early spring of 2002 to inspect potential military bases as part of U.S. planning for an attack Iraq. See "Iraqi Oppositionists (Kurdish parties) in Damascus to Gain Support", *Al-Hayat*, 12 March 2002. Several follow-up visits by U.S. military personnel have been reported. For example, "Iraqi Kurds say US in Northern Iraq", *Los Angeles Times*, 12 November 2002.
[51] "Turks, Fearing Flow of Refugees, Plan Move Into Iraq", *The New York Times*, 22 November 2002; and "Turkey Said Ready to Send Troops to Iraq", Associated Press, 17 December 2002. In February 2003 the talk was of some 80,000 Turkish soldiers striking 150 miles into Iraq. See Kevin McKiernan, "Urgent Request: Kurdish Rebels Fear Turkish Aggression May Accompany U.S. Troops", ABC News.com, 25 February 2003, at: http://abcnews.go.com/sections/world/2020/ kurdistan030225.html.
[52] An additional enticement may be the U.S. promise that if the war is short—shortened by the use of Turkey as a staging area for U.S. ground troops—the flow of refugees toward

Turkey may be minimal. Senior U.S. officials quoted in Esther Schrader, "Northern Front is Part of U.S. War Strategy," *Los Angeles Time*, 22 December 2002. By the middle of March, Turkey seemed set to lose the promised financial aid in the face of its continued refusal to grant the United States the basing and overflight rights: Michael Howard and Owen Bowcott, "Threats fly after Ankara's flight ban", *Guardian*, 17 March 2003.
[53] ICG telephone interview with, among others, journalist Cengiz Candar, Istanbul, 10 September 2002.
[54] There may be a separate thrust eastward toward PKK bases near the town of Qala Dizeh.
[55] "Barzani makes rare overture to Ankara", *Daily Star* (Beirut), 11 January 2003.
[56] KDP spokesman Hoshyar Zeibari declared in February 2003 that "We will oppose any Turkish military intervention. This is our decision. Nobody should think we are bluffing on this issue. This is a very serious matter. Any intervention, under whatever pretext, will lead to clashes". Quoted in, Bryar Mariwani, "KDP: Turkish intervention, under whatever excuse, will lead to clashes", KurdishMedia.com, 23 February 2003, available at: http://www.kurdmedia.com/news.asp?id=3479. Earlier, the KDP had warned Turkey that the Kurds would turn their homeland into a graveyard for Turkish soldiers. Quoted by

Turkey is concerned that the Kurds' weight in a post-Saddam Iraq might be disproportionate to their numbers, allowing them to extract major concessions from the central government (in which they would play an important part). Here, too, the Kurds would approach a red line. As one Turkish defence analyst told ICG, "We can only accept Kurdish autonomy on the basis of the 1974 Constitution, not more. And if things don't go the way we want them to, we will intervene".[57] If this happens, the Kurds are unlikely to stand for it.

C. TURKEY AND IRAQI DISPLACED PERSONS AND REFUGEES

The government of Turkey has made clear it does not intend to open its borders to fleeing Iraqis. Instead, it plans to establish camps to shelter the displaced in "safe areas" under the control of the Turkish army in the valleys close to its border. Turkey is wary of allowing Iraqi Kurds to enter Turkey given its own difficult relationship with its Kurdish minority. Moreover, maintaining camps on the Iraqi side of the border provides the Turkish military with another justification for remaining in Iraq.[58] Turkey also claims it fears a repetition of what happened in 1991, when several thousand PKK militants allegedly entered Turkey among the refugees.[59]

At this point, Turkey has signaled that neither NGOs nor any UN agency will be able to use the border crossing at Silopi to provide relief to the refugees in the protected areas. Rather, the camps will fall under army supervision and relief will be the duty of the Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRCS). NGOs and UN agencies, restricted to the Turkish side, apparently will be confined to an advisory role and to providing the supplies they already have pre-positioned.[60] Still unclear is whether the Turkish military is prepared to let international relief organisations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross work with the TRCS. For its part, the TRCS is setting up 17 camps in northern Iraq with a capacity to host 500,000 displaced.[61] In light of the often tense and violent relationship between Turks and Kurds, such arrangements inspire concern; a U.S. military liaison presence in the camps could help assuage Kurdish fears.[62] Only if these camps become full will the Turkish authorities consider allowing some Iraqis to cross the border to five camps inside Turkey until they can be repatriated or settled in a third country.[63] Based on past practice, there is reason to fear that, should Turkey allow some asylum-seekers to cross into its country, and in the absence of a strong role for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in the screening process, Turkey will discriminate against Kurds, while extending protection to the Turkomans.[64]

Charles Recknagel, "Turkey: Ankara and KDP Battle Over Shape of Post-Saddam Iraq", Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, 29 August 2002, available at: http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/2002/08/29082002151341.asp.

[57] ICG interview with Faruk Demir, Vice-President of the Center for Advanced Strategy, Ankara, 4 February 2003.

[58] Turkish Foreign Minister Yasar Yakis declared that: "Turkish troops will not enter Iraq to fight. They will enter Iraq only for humanitarian purposes to stop the possible influx of refugees". (DPA, Ankara, 30 January 2003).

[59] Turkey made a similar claim in September 1988 after it accepted an estimated 80,000 Iraqi Kurds fleeing Iraqi chemical attacks during the final stage of the Anfal campaign. These refugees were housed in a number of camps in Turkey; most returned to Northern Iraq when they were able to do so safely in 1991.

[60] ICG telephone conversation with UNHCR official, March 2003; International Blue Crescent Relief and Development Foundation, "Emergency Appeal-Iraq", 18 February 2003.

[61] The record of "safe areas" in conflict situations provides reason for apprehension. In Northern Iraq itself, after Turkey closed its borders to a growing number of Kurdish civilians fleeing Iraqi repression in 1991, and as pictures spread of Kurds being trapped under difficult weather conditions in a mountainous area without shelter, food or basic health, the U.S. mounted operation "Provide Comfort," establishing a "safe area" in which the displaced were to be protected from attacks and receive aid. But while the operation addressed food, shelter and water issues, it left many protection issues unanswered. Incursions by the Iraqi army were followed by sporadic infighting between rival Kurdish factions and further incursion by Turkish troops. See Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, op. cit.; Human Rights Watch, "Iraqi Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Displaced Persons: Current Conditions and Concerns in the Event of War", Briefing paper, February 2003, pp 9-11. The solution of "safe areas" also has been adopted in places such as Rwanda, Burundi and Bosnia-Herzegovina. In virtually all cases, it has failed as residents of safe-havens became targets of attack.

[62] See Council on Foreign Relations Report, "Post-Conflict Transition in Iraq", March 2003.

[63] Human Rights Watch, "Iraqi Refugees", op. cit., pp. 7-8.

[64] B. Frelick, "Barriers to Protection: Turkey's Asylum Regulation", *International Journal of Refugee Law*, v.9, n°1 (1997), pp. 45-63.

III. EYES ON THE PRIZE

The Kurds cannot be blamed for their desire to put a full stop behind the legacy of the twentieth century – an era that was filled by national disasters and recurrent betrayals – and pursue a decisive settlement to the troubled question of their status as a people. Denied statehood after the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, the Kurds became an instrument in the hands of more powerful players and were led along a trail of broken promises and agreements. The latest guarantor of Kurdish rights and security, the United States, has come in for the same criticism – of hardly having Kurdish interests at heart but pursuing its own at the expense of the Kurds on the back of pledges honored mainly in the breach. A senior Kurdish official, the KDP's Sami Abd-al-Rahman, gave voice to the deep sense of anguish over the Kurds' fate when he accused the United States at an Iraqi opposition meeting in early March 2003 of yet another double-cross if it went ahead with plans to permit a Turkish incursion into Northern Iraq: "In my lifetime", he said, "twice the United States government has betrayed us [in 1975 and 1991]. Now, if this goes ahead, it will be a third betrayal in one generation".[65]

Perceived betrayals are the insult added to the wounds of repeated defeats and tragedies, which are recited as a litany of woes by the Kurds but are little known in the outside world. Iraq's 1988 Anfal campaign, in which an estimated 100,000 Kurdish men, women and children were systematically murdered, is known only to regional experts (and even then often distorted in the slowly growing literature on the subject). The chemical strike on Halabja in March 1988 is somewhat better known, but here, too, the historical record has been the subject of controversy,[66] and the extent of the suffering not fully acknowledged. The international community's inability to comprehend the transformative significance of Anfal/Halabja to the Kurds is roughly equivalent to failing to grasp how

the events of 11 September 2001 affected the American psyche.

It is out of such deep emotions and national traumas that identities are forged or reinforced and, sometimes, nations are born. These are certainly the factors that have given rise to the strong sense of entitlement the Kurds have today. If in the chaos of war the Kurds make a sprint for Kirkuk, it will be less out of an opportunistic calculation of probable gain as driven by a profound urge for national survival. It will be the Kurds' way of asserting nationhood as a prerequisite for statehood, for in Kirkuk the Kurdish identity is entwined and without Kirkuk the Kurds are unlikely to obtain the viability of a state. And without a state, they maintain, the tragic history of the twentieth century will merely keep repeating itself.

Statehood, though, is not the only possible scenario emerging from a U.S.-led war on Iraq, and indeed it is perhaps the least realistic one. The Kurds, regardless of their perceived rights, will have to settle for less, possibly far less, given the odds and depending on the choices they make in the run-up to war and the heat of conflict. The four main scenarios are outlined here.

A. STATEHOOD

Most Kurdish officials have been careful not to raise the Kurdish claim to self-determination and statehood in public discourse, a claim that constitutes a hope to many Kurds but a spectre to others, neighbouring Turkey in particular. The only public voices supporting independence can be found in the Kurdish diaspora and, in the case of Iraqi Kurds, a small organisation in Suleimaniyeh, called the Mosul Velayat Council, that advocates peaceful separation of "Mosul Velayat" from Iraq.[67] Apart from this, the entire spectrum of Kurdish political parties in Northern Iraq dismisses talk of the Kurds "going it alone". Both the PUK and the KDP have repeatedly denied accusations they are secretly planning to proclaim an independent Kurdish state and have asserted they wish to play a central role in

---

[65] "Iraq Opposition Groups Show Fissures at a Unity Meeting", Agence France-Presse, 1 March 2003.
[66] See Stephen C. Pelletiere, "A War Crime or an Act of War?", *The New York Times*, 31 January 2003, for a telling example of revisionist history. Pelletiere claims, in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, that it was Iran's use of poison gas that killed the majority of Kurds in Halabja.

[67] Its leader told ICG that, with the help of Western powers, peace "will only come to the region if the state of Mosul is established", and that his scheme "does not affect either Iran or Turkey, and as for Iraq, it will just be another neighbour. ICG interview with Najm al-Surchi, Secretary-General of the Mosul Velayat Council, Suleimaniyeh, 24 August 2002.

the future administration of Iraq. For example, the PUK's Barham Salih, told ICG that, "A new Iraqi government should be broad-based, representative and democratic, and take into account Kurdish aspirations and concerns".[68] Likewise, the KDP's Nechirvan Barzani, declared in Ankara: "Our aim is not to set up an independent government or entity. We would like to resolve the problem within a united and democratic Iraq".[69]

These same leaders, though, have done little to inspire trust, despite those assurances, for at the same time they have held out the possibility of a Kurdish state sometime down the line, if not fashioned by their hands, then perhaps by those of a future generation. One respected Kurdish leader, for example, remarked wistfully that, "there are 22 Arab countries, so perhaps many Kurdish states can emerge in the future as well".[70] And KDP leader Masoud Barzani has stated that, "Kurds, like any other nation, have the natural right for an independent state. But it is *not the right time* for that. *Right now*, this question is not on the table".[71] Such statements may have been intended to reassure Turkey in particular of the Kurds' limited objectives, but it should be no surprise that the inclusion of what could easily be interpreted as a caveat – "not the right time", "right now" – has generated apprehensions that whatever arrangements Kurds may say they will accept, to them these would be a stepping-stone to full independence. The opt-out

clause in the Kurds' draft constitution for their hoped-for federal region does not help: if a federal Iraqi state undertakes to change its own make-up without the Kurds' consent, it says, they retain the right to declare independence.[72]

Turkey in particular has vociferously opposed any Kurdish move toward independence.[73] It is worried not only about the emergence of a Kurdish state in Northern Iraq (possibly first as an autonomous entity or a federal region) but that such a state would have the ambition to expand, targeting Southeastern Turkey with its predominantly Kurdish population and significant water resources.[74] The Kurds have long made claims to an area extending far beyond the regions with the heaviest Kurdish population concentrations, covering large swaths of the territory of Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria. As ICG was able to observe, maps of this "Greater Kurdistan" are the standard form of decoration gracing many a Kurdish

---

[68] ICG interview, Suleimaniyeh, 28 May 2002.

[69] "Iraqi Kurds seek to mend fences with Turkey, but retain claim over Kirkuk", Agence France-Presse, 24 October 2002. Similarly, Muhammad Haji Mahmoud, leader of the Kurdistan Socialist Democratic Party, told ICG that because regional and international actors alike have continuously referred to the Kurds as an Iraqi internal issue, Kurds have accepted the need to solve Iraq's Kurdish question within the framework of the Iraqi state. ICG interview, Suleimaniyeh, 24 August 2002.

[70] ICG interview with Muhammad Haji Mahmoud, Suleimaniyeh, 24 August 2002. Likewise, suggestions that the Kurds will settle for a lesser option only because they are unable to obtain independence at this juncture, or that an independent Kurdistan would somehow be too small to be worth pursuing, do little to assuage others' concerns. One PUK official, for example, told ICG: "An independent Kurdistan would be too small a player to have any influence in the region, and so the Kurds want to be part of a bigger player." ICG interview with Sa'di Ahmad Pira, head of the PUK's Relations Bureau, Suleimaniyeh, 23 August 2002.

[71] Interviewed by Tanya Goudsouzian, "Kurds will not take part in U.S.-led war – Barzani", *Gulf News*, 30 January 2003 (emphasis added).

[72] Article 75 reads: "The structure of the entity and the political system of the Federal Republic of Iraq cannot be changed without the consent of the Kurdistan Regional Assembly. Action contrary to this shall afford the people of the Kurdistan Region the right of self-determination." Kurdistan Regional Government, "Constitution of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region", at: http://www.krg.org/docs/K_Const.asp. This draft constitution is yet to be approved by the Kurdistan National Assembly, and is likely to undergo significant modification during the review process.

[73] Before he became Turkey's Prime Minister in March 2003, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, as leader of the Justice and Development Party, had stated unambiguously that Turkey would never condone the establishment of a Kurdish state in Northern Iraq. Quoted in, "Turkish Party Leader Says Turkey Will Not Condone State in Northern Iraq", RFE/RL *Iraq Report*, vol. 6, N°1 (13 January 2003).

[74] ICG interview with Mustafa Kibaroğlu, Assistant Professor of International Relations at Bilkent University, Ankara, 10 September 2002. Although Kurds in both Turkey and Iraq harbour secessionist sentiments and there are tribal and familial links connecting the two populations, the political representatives of both groups (the outlawed PKK in Turkey, and the KDP and PUK in Iraq) have historically been far apart, engaging at most in temporary alliances of a strictly tactical nature. To emphasise this point, Naci Kutlay, the deputy leader of the (legal) pro-Kurdish HADEP in Turkey, told ICG that his party maintained no contacts with the PUK and KDP representatives in Ankara since, as he put it, in that case there would be "problems for them and problems for us". Similar sentiments were voiced by Necdet Gundem, representative of HAK-PAR, another (legal) pro-Kurdish party. ICG interviews, Ankara, 9 and 10 September 2002. A PUK official likewise indicated his group's formal distance from its Kurdish counterparts in Turkey. ICG interview with Sa'di Ahmad Pira, head of the PUK's Relations Bureau, Suleimaniyeh, 23 August 2002.

government office in Northern Iraq, the KDP and PUK's demurrals about statehood notwithstanding. The United States has stressed it supports the territorial integrity of Iraq, a code word for its opposition to Kurdish secession. Iran, too, has warned against Kurdish moves toward declaring independence.

There is much to argue in favour of the idea of an independent Kurdistan in Northern Iraq. Aside from the obvious fulfilment of Kurds' long-standing nationalist aspirations and their presumed ability to provide better protection for the Kurdish people from regional predators via defined borders, a standing army and inter-state alliances, the fact is that the entity that has emerged in Northern Iraq since 1991 is an independent state in all but name. As Peter Galbraith, a long-time advocate of Kurdish national rights, has argued, "The Kurds have established a real state within a state, with an administration that performs all governmental responsibilities, from education to law enforcement [and] militias [that] number 70,000 to 130,000".[75] This entity, which with a population of over 3 million is larger than at least 50 present UN member states, has functioned without control from Baghdad (even if certain essential services continue to be provided). Through proper water management, it would have access to potable and irrigation water, as well as electrical power. It has tremendous agricultural resources, constituting a veritable bread basket for the region. And if Kirkuk were included in such a state, it would potentially possess great wealth from exploitation of the oil fields.

De facto independence is not turned automatically or easily into formal statehood, though. Even if Turkey did not intervene militarily to prevent it from being declared, a Kurdish state in Northern Iraq would be landlocked, needing good relations with its neighbours to allow for trade and the trans-shipment of goods essential for infrastructure rehabilitation and economic development. It would also need international recognition and guarantees, as well as expertise in marking frontiers, training its security forces and raising a professional class. Formal sovereignty short of these elements – in other words, the trappings of a state without the substance – would make a Kurdish state dangerously dependent on its strongest neighbour, a possible vassal to

Turkey or Iraq. Lastly, a Kurdish state in Northern Iraq would have to accommodate its own minorities, especially the Turkomans and Assyrians/Chaldeans, who themselves have historic claims to the area and relations with whom have been prickly at times.

The creation of an independent Kurdish state in Northern Iraq doubtless would have profound consequences for what would become a truncated Iraq. The loss of territory and its strategic resources would have a serious economic impact, and political instability might ensue from the change in the religious balance as the powerful Sunni minority in Iraq would be cut loose from their Sunni Kurdish component and thus be greatly outnumbered by the Shiites. There is no indication that Iraqi Arabs would accept the Kurds' secession. Although it is not possible to conduct a reliable opinion poll in Baathist Iraq, anecdotal information from inside the country, as well as strong signals from Iraqi opposition groups in exile make clear that this issue is on no one's agenda but the Kurds.[76]

On balance, the oblique references to independent statehood and the ubiquitous maps of an enlarged Kurdistan are belied by the essentially pragmatic temperament of the Kurdish leadership. All things being equal, their desire to reach a fair settlement with a new government in Baghdad supersedes any emotive need to grab what deep down they may consider theirs. However, should Turkey choose to act pre-emptively and seize Mosul and Kirkuk in the first days of the war, the leaders of the KDP and PUK may no longer be able to contain either themselves or their fighters, nor for that matter the tens of thousands of Kurds displaced from their Kirkuk homes in decades past. If that happens, all bets are off: Kurds may fight Turks, or Arab residents of Kirkuk, or – in their unceasing rivalry – each other, or all of these at once.

---

[75] Peter W. Galbraith, "Flashback for the Kurds", *The New York Times*, 19 February 2003.

[76] On perspectives of ordinary Iraqis, see the ICG's Iraq Briefing, "Voices From the Iraqi Street" (Brussels, 4 December 2002). For Iraqi opposition views, see below. A respected (unaffiliated) opposition leader living in exile, Adnan Pachachi, declared that a post-Saddam government "would have to agree with the representatives of the Kurdish people about the system under which the Kurds would live in a united Iraq." Adnan Pachachi, "Iraq's route to a democratic future", *Financial Times*, 2 March 2003.

B.   FEDERALISM

If statehood is not attainable, as the Kurds generally acknowledge it may not be, they realise that their future will be closely intertwined with that of Iraq as a whole. The only way in which this would make sense for them, given past experience, is if they had a significant stake in central government in Baghdad. As the PUK's Barham Salih put it: "As an Iraqi citizen and a Kurdish citizen of Iraq, I will have the right to participate in such a government along with other Iraqi citizens to guarantee an equitable distribution of resources".[77] At the same time, the Kurds would want to draw political and economic powers away from the center to a Kurdish federal region, significantly more than the Kurds were nominally granted under the 1970 Autonomy Agreement (which was never implemented).[78]

Shortly after their emergence as a self-administered entity in Northern Iraq, the Kurds formally declared their desire to become part, in a post-Saddam Iraq, of a federal state in which they would enjoy powers far exceeding those granted in the 1970 Autonomy Agreement.[79] This aspiration became a standard plank of the Kurdish parties' political program as they engaged with the non-Kurdish Iraqi opposition groups, especially the Iraqi National Congress of Ahmad Chalabi, which accepted federalism as the solution to the Kurdish question. The official position of the KDP-controlled Kurdistan Regional Government is that "federalism is the most appropriate system of government for Iraq as it is consistent with the pluralist nature of the Iraqi community and it is a suitable basis for solving the Kurdish problem in Iraq. It affords the Kurdish

people the enjoyment of their legitimate national rights and internal independence within the region of Kurdistan and within the framework of a single Iraqi state and without disrupting the unity of that state".[80]

Such a state, the Kurds argue, can only be democratic: "Federalism and democracy", the Kurdistan Regional Government's draft constitution for Iraq intones, "are inseparable concepts because federalism cannot grow and prosper in the shadow of any dictatorial, authoritarian system".[81] Barham Salih of the PUK has gone further, stressing the importance of the Kurdish post-1991 experience as a model for the future Iraqi state. "The rest of Iraq", he told ICG, "is living in a bubble. It is remarkable what is happening here : We have democracy and the rule of law. We hope we can emulate this in the rest of Iraq".[82]

To the Kurds (according to their draft constitution, which they started circulating in August 2002), a federal Kurdish region would cover those areas in which the Kurds constitute the majority and would therefore have to comprise several districts belonging to governorates that are at present not included in the Kurdish Autonomous Region, and its capital would have to be the city of Kirkuk.[83] The remainder of Iraq, comprising the majority Arab

---

[77] ICG interview, Suleimaniyeh, 28 May 2002.

[78] As Barham Salih put it, "Devolving political and economic power, sharing Iraq's vast potential fairly among its people, will preclude the possibility of another centralized tyranny gripping the Iraqi state and its oil revenues." Barham Salih, "A Kurdish Model for Iraq", *The Washington Post*, 9 December 2002.

[79] In the preamble to the Kurds' draft constitution for their future entity, it is noted that, "By a unanimous vote of the Iraqi Kurdistan National Assembly, the 'Parliament,' the people of the Kurdistan Region were able to practice their right in choosing the form of future constitutional relationship with the Iraqi government and hence decided on federalism as the constitutional basis for the Government of Iraq whereby the Iraqi Kurdistan Region would comprise one of the future regions of the Federal Republic of Iraq." Kurdistan Regional Government, "Constitution of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region", available at: http://www.krg.org/docs/K_Const.asp.

[80] Kurdistan Regional Government, "Constitution of the Federal Republic of Iraqi [sic]", available at: http://www.krg.org/docs/Federal_Const.asp. See also, Nouri Talabany, *The Kurdish View on the Constitutional Future of Iraq* (London, 1999). In the early 1990s Professor Talabany was among a group of legal experts who sat down to draft this constitution.

[81] The text goes on to spell out what it considers to be the basic requirements of democracy including: "Democracy requires democratic freedoms including that of expression, belief, organization, assembly, and others. It assumes that power can be transferred peacefully through the holding of free elections at the ballot box".

[82] ICG interview, Suleimaniyeh, 28 May 2002. See also, Barham Salih, "A Kurdish Model for Iraq", *The Washington Post*, 9 December 2002.

[83] Part I, Article 5 of the draft constitution states: "The city of Kirkuk shall be the capitol [sic] of the Kurdistan region." The districts to be added to the Kurdish federal region have significant Kurdish populations and, in some cases, proven oil deposits. The region desired by the Kurds would include, according to Part I, Article 2 of the draft constitution:, "the Provinces of Kirkuk, Sulaimaniyah and Erbil in their administrative boundaries prior to 1970 and the Province of Duhok along with the districts of Aqra, Sheikhan, Sinjar and the sub-district of Zimar in the Province of Ninevah [Mosul], the district of Khaniqin and Mandali in the Province of Diyala, and the district of Badra in the Province of Al-Wasit."

population, would constitute the country's other federal region. Control over vital resources and the levers of power in their own area would grant the Kurds, for the first time in their history, the protection and, with some judicious management, the economic prosperity they have lacked under successive Iraqi regimes. Likewise, their substantive role in the branches of central government would ensure a more equitable distribution of goods and services than in the past, with the Iraqi state responsible for the defence of national frontiers, economic planning and the conduct of foreign policy. Revenue from the Kirkuk oil fields would, the Kurds say, accrue to the Iraqi state, to be distributed equitably, based on "the relation of the region's population to the total population of Iraq."[84]

Although the Kurds do not see federalism as the optimal solution to their predicament, even this option may not pass popular scrutiny in a post-Saddam Iraq. Indications are that not all Iraqi Arabs are enamoured of the idea of turning Iraq into a federated state. At least one opposition group based in exile, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), whose actual support inside Iraq is difficult to gauge, at one point referred to the federal idea as a "non-starter".[85] However, opposition parties meeting in London in December 2002 (including SCIRI) declared that federalism "represents a suitable formula for governing Iraq…as a basis for solving the Kurdish question" within a unitary Iraq.[86]

Even those Iraqis who might be sympathetic toward the Kurdish call for a federal scheme are unlikely to

endorse the incorporation of Kirkuk, its environs, and other mixed-population areas into the future Kurdish federal region. Iraqi Arab opposition leaders interviewed by the *New York Review of Books* said they told the Kurds that "they don't believe that this is the time to specify where the border between Kurdistan and the other parts of the country should be drawn."[87]

Inside the putative Kurdish federal region, whose population would be the direct beneficiaries of the new arrangement, representatives of the Turkoman minority have given conflicting signals about their own preferences. The pro-Turkish Iraqi Turkmen Front (ITF), denouncing the Kurdish version of federalism, declared that "foreign powers are needed to guarantee our rights in the future. We need an international guarantee for at least 10 years [after the fall of the Baathist regime], perhaps supervised by the UN".[88] Iraqi Turkoman parties operating independently of Turkey, however, have said they fully embrace the idea of federalism. According to Nafi Qassab of the Iraqi Turkmen Brotherhood Association in Arbil, "If a poll is to be held, 99 per cent of the Turkomans would say yes to federalism. This is why we respect the federal status of Iraqi Kurdistan".[89]

The views of the ITF closely reflect those of the government of Turkey, which strenuously opposes Kurdish plans for a federal solution, seeing it as way-station to independence and a bad constitutional example for their own Kurdish minority. One influential Turkish observer stated unambiguously: "We don't want a federal Iraq based on ethnic lines".[90] If the Kurds can set up a federal state, they argue, then so can the Turkomans, who lay claim to the cities of Kirkuk and Mosul.[91] Another former

---

[84] Part V, Article 70 of the Constitution of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region declares that revenues of the Kurdistan Region are made up of: (ii) "The Kurdistan Region's share of natural resources, in particular, oil, and revenue from the sale of its products in and outside the country, as well as grants, aid, foreign loans made to the Federal Republic of Iraq in a proportion based on the relation of the region's population to the total population of Iraq."

[85] Quoted in, Daniel Williams, "Iraqi Exile Groups' Efforts Stalled by Intense Rivalries", *The Washington Post*, 12 November 2002.

[86] "Political Statement of the Iraqi Opposition Conference", London, December 14-17, 2002, available at http://www.krg.org. KDP leader Masoud Barzani has emphasised: "Federalism is not only our slogan. It is the slogan of all Iraqi opposition groups because they have all agreed that the future of Iraq should be a democratic parliamentary government." Interviewed by Tanya Goudsouzian, "Kurds will not take part in U.S.-led war – Barzani", *Gulf News*, 30 January 2003.

[87] Tim Judah, "In Iraqi Kurdistan", *New York Review of Books*, 26 September 2002.

[88] ICG interview with Mostafa Ziya, Iraqi Turkmen Front representative, Ankara. 12 September 2002.

[89] Quoted in, *Kurdistan Dispatch*, 23 December 2001, quoting the daily *Brayati* (Erbil), 15 December 2002. The draft constitution of the Kurdistan federal region offers the Turkoman and Assyrian/Chaldean minorities the right to use their own language, alongside Arabic and Kurdish, as the language of education and culture.

[90] ICG interview with Seyfi Tashan, a former ambassador, and Director of the Turkish Foreign Policy Institute at Bilkent University, Ankara, 5 February 2003.

[91] See, Carole A. O'Leary, "The Kurds of Iraq: Recent History, Future Prospects", *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, vol. 6, N°4, December 2002, p. 22.

official said: "We will never accept a federal Iraq".[92] The official view at the Foreign Ministry is that the Iraqis should decide themselves about their future, but only as equals. In particular, an official expressed concern that the Kurds, due to their strength relative to the other Iraqi opposition groups, may end up dominating a future government in Baghdad and impose a federal solution, which Turkey cannot accept.[93]

What quickly emerges from the federalism debate, though, is that the meaning of federalism is in the eye of the beholder. Kurds see it as a way of protecting their Kurdish minority rights against Arab domination through an ethnically-based arrangement involving a region where Kurds currently constitute the majority population. Those Iraqi Arabs who endorse federalism see it as way of preserving individual rights against the central government, and insist on a division by (yet undefined) geographical/territorial boundaries, possibly the existing eighteen governorates, which would be given enhanced powers and in which no single ethnic group would a priori have a majority.[94] The latter are also concerned that ethnically-based federalism raises the spectre of repression of smaller minorities, such as the Turkomans and Assyrians/Chaldeans [95](although this is a problem that could be avoided if

minority rights are explicitly enshrined in the national or regional constitution, or both, and properly enforced). The Kurdish ambition to have a federal Kurdish region may therefore be a red flag to Iraqi Arabs and others, and a possible early stumbling block in future negotiations, especially if it assumes, without discussion, the incorporation of Kirkuk.[96]

There is no need for antagonism on the type of federalism Iraq needs, however, as the federalism question cloaks the more important debate over the control and distribution of power and resources in any kind of future arrangement. For that reason the Kurds might do better to shift the debate away from naming and defining their coveted entity to the core questions of what elements the Iraqi state should contain to prevent a relapse to the unacceptable arrangements of the past: questions of (de)centralisation, representation, fair access to resources, and guarantees for the protection of fundamental rights. It is true that the content of their draft constitution for a Federal Republic of Iraq seeks to do just that, but this effort has been drowned out by the a priori positing of Kirkuk-centered ethnically-based federalism as the Kurdish cure-all.

Wider international support for a federal or other system in a post-Saddam Iraq is yet to be articulated. President George Bush seems to have endorsed the general idea of federalism, but so far U.S. officials have not fleshed it out, preferring to put the issue off until the regime is removed.[97] As one observer put it:

One senior Western diplomat in Ankara told ICG that Turkey is using the Turkoman card in Northern Iraq as a way of pointing out that federalism as a system of government is unworkable: "The Turkoman question is being used by the Turkish government to put pressure on the Iraqi Kurds. As soon as the Kurds demand cultural and political rights for themselves, the Turks demand the same for the Turkomans. This is one way of saying that a federal Iraq based on ethnicity simply won't work because there are too many minorities to deal with, such as Turkomans, Assyrians, Yezidis, etc." ICG interview, Ankara, 5 February 2003.

[92] ICG interview with Bülent Akarcali, a former cabinet minister, and Chairman of the Turkish Democracy Foundation, Ankara, 3 February 2003.

[93] ICG interview with a senior official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ankara, 4 February 2003.

[94] The Iraqi National Congress's "Democratic Principles Working Group's" report of 14 December 2002 states that: "The future all-Iraqi federation should not be one of competing nationalities but one of different geographically defined territories within which different national groups may form a majority. The point is not to diminish or dilute the Kurdishness of the Kurds or the Arabness of the Arabs; it is to put a premium on the equality of citizenship for all." Available at: http://www.inc.org.uk.

[95] Donald Horowitz sees the potential of repression as one of the drawbacks inherent in federal models: "There are always minorities in every region dominated by some ethnic group

and ethnic federalism, that is one that is configured specifically to empower only a particular minority (either on a cultural basis or alternatively where the territory is so configured as to match perfectly the aspiration of a particular group), always tramples on the rights of…minorities within that region." Gudmundur Alfredsson asserts that ethnically-based solutions are "a response to the discriminatory practices of the past", but that once the democratisation process gets underway, minorities begin to "feel they are participants, and that they are not being discriminated against." At that point, "you will see them slowly beginning to join parties along lines of political opinion, economic interest, just like you see in other countries." Quoted in, Yash Ghai, Mark Lattimer and Yahia Said, "Building Democracy in Iraq", London: Minority Rights Group International, 2003, pp. 13-14.

[96] Turkey reacted with particular vehemence to the article in the draft constitution of the Kurdistan region that stipulates Kirkuk to be its capital. See, Chris Kutschera, "The Kurds' Secret Scenarios", *Middle East Report*, N°225, Winter 2002, p. 21.

[97] In a press conference on 7 March 2003, President Bush declared: "Iraq will provide a place where people can see

A key question for American and European policy makers – as well as for Iraqis and Turkey – is whether federalism is the only viable solution to Iraq's still unresolved Kurdish question that will ensure the territorial integrity of the state. A second question is how the federalism will be structured. And a third is whether federalism, as an organizing structure for governance in pluralistic societies, can best ensure stability in Iraq after regime change – a necessary condition for the development of democracy, human rights and an active civil society.[98]

Even assuming that a Turkish intervention will not scuttle the Kurds' federalist scheme, their vision of federalism is almost certain to be dashed[99] once Iraqi opinion can be polled freely or a nation-wide referendum organised.

C. AUTONOMY

If Kirkuk-centred ethnically-based federalism is not adopted as a solution, the Kurds may be stuck with what they barely had before: a limited degree of autonomy.[100] This would be an extremely bitter pill to swallow, and it is unlikely they would accept it without a major fight; more likely, after a decade of

relative freedom and raised expectations, it would prompt them to revert to active opposition against the central government. (It is necessary to use the term "would", as the Kurds are not willing to contemplate, and only barely agree to discuss, this lesser option, which they find flatly unacceptable.)

The Kurds would find autonomy utterly unacceptable because it has never worked. As one Kurdish official put it, "When we had autonomy, the worst crimes were committed against us".[101] The 1970 Autonomy Agreement was seen as a great victory for the Kurds at the time, extracted as it was from a relatively young Baathist regime that could not afford to be fighting a counter-insurgency while it was still seeking to consolidate its hold on power. One of the arrangement's fundamental flaws was that autonomy froze in place and ratified an unequal relationship between the minority Kurdish and majority Arab components of Iraqi society. Another was that it was signed by the Baathists, who had no interest in democratic rule, and certainly not in the active participation of Kurds in decision-making affecting their own region.

This problem is not limited to the Baathists, though: Iraq has a long history of centralisation and authoritarian rule, including under the monarchy, in which the Kurds played no major part. One of the Kurds' principal complaints about that era today is that the "high degree of centralization and the indifference of decision makers to the presence of the special characteristics of the Kurdish people are among the basic reasons for the Kurds being deprived of their legitimate rights under the successive Iraqi governments".[102]

Though objectionable to the Kurds, autonomy is the one scenario that would almost certainly meet with automatic agreement from any government coming to power in Baghdad, and no neighbouring state could conceivably see it as a significant threat to its interests.[103] The Kurds may not have fond memories of their experience with autonomy, but on paper at least Iraq's Kurds received what purported to be a better deal than their brethren in Turkey, Iran or Syria. (None faced a regime as brutal as Baghdad's,

that the Shia and the Sunni and the Kurds can get along in a federation". Transcript available on the PUK's website at: http://www.puk.org/web/htm/news/knwsline/nws/07mar03.html.

[98] O'Leary, "The Kurds of Iraq", op. cit., p. 23.

[99] Kurdish leaders have indicated they realise that were the federalism idea come to a vote in an Iraqi assembly or nation-wide referendum, it would not pass, and their preferred means of its adoption is therefore either unilaterally (by an exclusively Kurdish vote) or by approval of the Iraqi opposition in exile prior to the start of the transition in Iraq. Quoted in Chris Kutschera, "The Kurds' Secret Scenarios", *Middle East Report*, N°225, Winter 2002, p. 21.

[100] Although the issue is put by Kurds as a choice between "federalism" and "autonomy", there is some potential for confusion in the use of these terms. Any federation involves a distribution of powers between centre and regional entities within a single sovereign entity, entailing varying degrees of autonomy for the regions as compared with the centre. In Kurdish eyes, however, there is a sharp distinction between autonomy, which they associate with the failed autonomy of the 1970s, and federalism, which to them means the active participation of their chosen representatives in the most senior rungs of central power in Baghdad, precisely so as to prevent the relationship between the centre and the region from becoming so heavily skewed toward the centre as to make the constitutional arrangement an empty shell.

[101] ICG interview with Safeen Dizayee, KDP representative in Turkey, Ankara, 4 February 2003.

[102] Kurdistan Regional Government, Preamble, "Constitution of the Federal Republic of Iraq".

[103] ICG interview with David McDowall, a writer on Kurdish affairs, London, 5 September 2002.

however, as the latter's unleashing of the Anfal campaign and chemical weapons showed.) The 1970 Constitution recognised Arabs and Kurds as the two peoples of a bi-national Iraq, and Iraqi Kurds enjoyed significant cultural rights throughout the reign of the Baathist regime. Before 1991, the Kurds themselves repeatedly called for the revival and full implementation of the 1970 Autonomy Agreement – including carrying out a population census and defining the borders of the autonomous zone – whenever they sought to settle their military conflicts with the central government through negotiation. Its key articles included the recognition of Kurdish as the official language in areas with a Kurdish majority, alongside Arabic, as well as full participation of Kurds in the central government, including key posts in the cabinet and the national army.[104]

Developments in the 1970s that culminated in the collapse of the "Barzani Revolution" combined with the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s to undo many of the gains the Kurds arguably had within their reach. Perhaps the good of the original Autonomy Agreement could be combined with the necessary elements that were left out and whose exclusion is the source of its failure – the status of Kirkuk and control over its resources – to produce a viable autonomy that addresses all the Kurds' core concerns.[105]

The cardinal reason why the 1970 Autonomy Agreement was not implemented and subsequent attempts to revive it failed is the long-standing and fundamental disagreement between Baghdad and the Kurds over Kirkuk – the Kurds wishing the city to be the capital of the government of the Kurdish Autonomous Region, and the regime steadfastly refusing to consider this.[106] The more the Kurds staked their claim to Kirkuk, the more the regime sought to replace Kurdish residents of the Kirkuk region with Arabs and remove chunks of territory adjacent to Kirkuk from the Autonomous Region, going so far even as to rename the governorate of Kirkuk as "Ta'mim" – "nationalisation" – in other words, inalienably Iraqi.[107] Denied their chosen capital and beset by fuzzy, unsettled borders dividing the autonomous zone from the rest of Iraq, the Kurds balked – time and again. In 2003 a return to that situation is unfathomable to them. The offer of autonomy without Kirkuk as its capital and with the boundaries undefined would, from the Kurds' perspective, be doomed to instant failure.

D. A RETURN TO THE MOUNTAINS

Last and certainly least, the nightmare scenario: to the Kurds this would be the fatal combination of a new, heavily centralised and repressive regime in Baghdad backed actively by a United States eager to maintain Iraq's territorial integrity, and vastly diminished Kurdish leverage in the aftermath of a successful drive to depose Baathist rule. The Kurds realise that U.S. support over the past decade was aimed more at keeping Saddam Hussein off balance than at advancing Kurdish interests, and so they also fear that a U.S.-led war to unseat the regime would reduce their value. Facing a government in Baghdad impervious to their demands would force the Kurds into active opposition and, possibly, a return to armed rebellion. As the PUK's Barham Salih stated categorically in response to U.S.-Turkish manoeuvring in early 2003: "There is no way the Kurdish people of Iraq would accept reintegration back into a centralized dictatorship".[108] Such a

---

[104] For detail on the 1970 Autonomy Agreement, see Edmund Ghareeb, *The Kurdish Question in Iraq* (New York, 1981), and Martin Short and Anthony McDermott, "The Kurds", London, Minority Rights Group, 1975.

[105] According to Yash Ghai, the "skeletal framework" of the 1970 Autonomy Agreement "contains the critical issues on which agreement would be necessary for any future arrangement: the nature of the autonomy, the rights of minorities within the autonomous area, the powers and finances of the region, institutions of the region and their relationship with the centre, and dispute settlement." In Yash Ghai, Mark Lattimer and Yahia Said, "Building Democracy in Iraq", London, Minority Rights Group International, 2003, p. 36.

[106] After delays in carrying out the census stipulated under the 1970 Autonomy Agreement and facing growing Kurdish resistance, the Iraqi government unilaterally established the Kurdish Autonomous Region in 1974. It comprised only about half of the area demanded by the Kurds, and notably excluded the Kirkuk region.

[107] The switch from Kirkuk to Ta'mim occurred in 1972 as part of the nationalisation of the oil companies. This political move was implemented nation-wide, but only in Kirkuk did it entail a name change. The regime thereby sought to project the region as a patriotic asset.

[108] "The humpty dumpty of Iraqi centralized dictatorship cannot be put back together again", said Salih. "This humpty dumpty had a fall, and no matter what, it cannot be resurrected unless we have another tyrant that will grip Iraq and its oil revenues and become a danger again to world

scenario might not arise overnight but come to pass after months or years, as negotiations with the central government over the modalities of Kurdish self-rule run aground and relations deteriorate.

While instability in Northern Iraq would not be a benefit to either the Kurds or the Iraqi government, Turkey and Iran might be able to turn this to their advantage, as they have in the past. It would spoil any hopes the Kurds might have of extending their nationalist dreams beyond the confines of Iraq, and it would give Iraq's neighbours the means to needle the government in Baghdad should the situation so require.

IV. THE SCRAMBLE FOR KIRKUK

To Turkey, Iraqi Kurds and any future Iraqi government, Kirkuk is the pivot on which stability hinges and from which, alternatively, conflict may spin. Kirkuk is the cynosure in Kurdish eyes, the prize they covet most, a treasured possession they feel they lost and must now seek to regain.[109] Among the Turks, too, there are some who consider Kirkuk, and Vilayet Mosul more broadly, to be theirs and yearn to reincorporate it into Turkey. To the Turkish government, though, Kirkuk has a different meaning: its capture by the Kurds would represent an undiluted bid for independence and thus a clear transgression of a Turkish red line. Finally, to any central government of Iraq, the Kirkuk region will continue to be a vital source of income, the loss of which by force would constitute an act of war.

The Kurds may see Kirkuk as their lost heirloom, but theirs is not the only assertion of title. Assyrians and Turkomans lay their own historically-based claims to the city, and owing to a decades-old policy of Arabisation by the regime, there is now a significant Arab population in Kirkuk and environs that has no other home and cannot simply be wished or shooed away. Because of the intensity of the contending claims, much of the literature on Kirkuk, its origins and its population should be approached with a healthy dose of scepticism. To avoid straying into contending mythologies, suffice it to say that Kirkuk is an ancient Mesopotamian city that has been inhabited by various peoples over time, and that persistent miscegenation renders any exclusive claim to ethnic affiliation suspect. Yet in patrilineal communities, ethnic identity is derived from the father's putative ethnic link, not the true mix of blood. A person is known to belong to this community or that – never both – even if he or she is the offspring of a mixed marriage. And so distinct ethnic communities have emerged in Northern Iraq that, even when continuing to inter-marry, vie for control over scarce resources and the legacy of an imagined past.

Having emerged as a trading centre during the period of Assyrian dominance, when it was called Arrapkha, the city's population today is of mixed

---

peace." Quoted in John Hemming, "Kurdish leader warns Washington against return to centralized system", Reuters, in *Daily Star* (Beirut), 10 February 2003.

[109] The late Mullah Mustafa Barzani reportedly declared: "I will never give up Kirkuk, because if I did, people would spit on my grave." Quoted in Kutschera, "The Kurds' Secret Scenarios", op. cit., p. 17.

Turkmen, Arab, Assyrian and Kurdish stock.[110] In the decennial national census of 1987, this population stood at 418,624.[111] Because the census takers recognised only two ethnic nationalities – Arab and Kurdish – a further breakdown of the city's inhabitants is not possible without access to relevant Iraqi documents.[112] There is no question, though, that social engineering on the part of the Baathist regime, and even its predecessors, has significantly shifted the city's make-up over the past decades, with Kurds and other minority groups facing the hardly delectable choice of assimilation (registration as Arab in a procedure known as "nationality correction") versus expulsion, and Arabs brought in from other parts of the country.[113]

The success of the Arabisation campaign can be judged from available census figures. Using mother tongue as an indicator of ethnicity, the official Iraqi 1957 census yielded a Kurdish population in Kirkuk governorate of 49.1 per cent, against 28.7 per cent Arabs, 21.8 per cent Turkomans and 0.4 per cent Assyrians/Chaldeans. Twenty years later, Arabs had soared to 44.4 per cent, while the Kurdish population had declined to 37.5 per cent and Turkomans to 16.3 per cent.[114] Though the censuses cannot entirely be

trusted, they seem to give a broad indicator of the population shift that took place in that period.[115]

After 1977, the last year for which figures on Kirkuk's ethnic composition are available, Arabisation has continued apace through a variety of mechanisms that are usefully laid out by Nouri Talabany. They include: the transfer of low-level civil servants to other governorates; a change in the names of Kurdish neighbourhoods; a prohibition on the sale of Kurdish-owned properties to non-Arabs; the complete prohibition on the purchase of properties by non-Arabs; re-districting; intimidation; deportation; and the massive settlement of Arabs. Policies that originally targeted Kurds later included Turkomans and Assyrians/Chaldeans as well.[116] During the final two years of the Iran-Iraq war, Iraqi forces specifically sought to empty out and destroy Kurdish villages in the Kirkuk region, and most of the Anfal-related killings of men, women and children in the spring of 1988 occurred in that same region.[117] Arabisation continued after 1991. Precise numbers are not available, but the area of the Kurdistan Regional Government has witnessed an influx of an estimated 100,000 Kurds, Turkomans and Assyrians/Chaldeans from Kirkuk.[118]

The successive Iraqi governments' Arabisation drive is directly related to the presence of major oil deposits in the targeted region, of which Kirkuk is

---

[110] The main cities of the Assyrian empire were Ashur (its capital), Nineveh (near today's Mosul) and Urbilum (modern Erbil). Arrapkha (or Arrapchitis) lay near the ancient Nuzi in a region adjacent to Assyria. Dietz O. Edzard, "Mesopotamia, History of", *Encyclopædia Britannica 2003* (Encyclopædia Britannica Premium Service, http://www.britannica.com/eb/article?eu=115355, accessed 6 March 2003). To today's Assyrians, Kirkuk, known as "Karkha d'Baith Slukh", constituted an integral part of the Assyirian empire. See, http://www.assyriansofkirkuk.com/kirkukname.html.
[111] "Kirkuk", *Encyclopædia Britannica* (Encyclopædia Britannica Premium Service, http://www.britannica.com/eb/article?eu=46695, accessed 6 March 2003).
[112] For an analysis of the census, see Human Rights Watch, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide,* op. cit., pp. 56-60. Left without a better choice, Turkmen and Assyrians can be expected to have entered "Arab" in the census.
[113] Alliance Internationale pour la Justice and International Federation for Human Rights, "Iraq: continuous and silent ethnic cleansing – Displaced persons in Iraqi Kurdistan and Iraqi refugees in Iran", Paris, January 2003, p. 18.
[114] The census figures are from Nouri Talabany, "Iraq's Policy of Ethnic Cleansing: Onslaught to change national/demographic characteristics of the Kirkuk Region", London, 1999, available at: http://www.geocities.com/mykirkuk/talabany.htm. There are some small discrepancies in Talabany's paper between the 1957 census figures and his percentages, which we tried to adjust above.

[115] All population figures in Iraq are inherently suspect, informed by highly-charged political considerations. This is true for official census figures, and even more so for estimates of the internally displaced, especially if broken down by ethnicity.
[116] Talabany, op. cit. The Assyrians and Chaldeans are two branches of the Nestorian Christian Church (the Chaldeans being Catholic), who say they are descendants of the ancient Babylonians. They speak Syriac Aramean, but their language is disappearing as the community undergoes further assimilation or emigrates.
[117] See, Human Rights Watch, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide*, op. cit., chapters 5 and 6.
[118] U.S. Committee for Refugees, "Overview of Numbers and Conditions of Iraqi Refugees in the Middle East and Internally Displaced Persons in Iraq", Media Backgrounder, 27 January 2003. Other figures are lower. See, for example, the figure of just under 60,000, provided by UN Habitat, cited in Fawcett and Tanner, "The Internally Displaced People of Iraq", op. cit., p. 16. An official of the Assyrian Democratic Movement, one of the political parties in the territory of the Kurdistan Regional Government, claimed that 30,000 lived in Kirkuk before 1991, but that their current numbers are not known. "Iraq Forcing Assyrians Out of Kirkuk", RFE/RL *Iraq Report*, vol. 5, N°6 (15 February 2002).

the centre but that stretches from Sinjar in the north-western part of Kurdish Northern Iraq to Khanaqin in the southeast. Oil was first discovered in Iraq early in the twentieth century. It led to the creation of British Petroleum (BP) and helps explain the enduring British interest in Iraq following the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Iraq's proven reserves are second only to Saudi Arabia's. The Kirkuk field, discovered in 1927, was brought online in 1934. In 1999, it had an output of about 900,000 barrels per day (bpd). Today, the Kirkuk region has 10 billion barrels in remaining proven oil reserves.[119]

Whatever the merit of Kurdish, Turkoman and Assyrian/Chaldean claims to Kirkuk and environs on the basis of prior inhabitation, oil is a key component of the equation, if only in each competing group's solemn conviction that its rivals are driven largely by greed, not historical legitimacy, while they themselves, of course, are not so motivated.[120] To the Kurds, the Kirkuk question stands front and center. Though perhaps willing to consider renouncing their right to independence, the Kurds remain steadfast in their quest for Kirkuk, which may well be another way of re-asserting their right to independence down the line. The PUK's Barham Salih, while stating that, "We do not believe the political situation of Kirkuk can be resolved by unilateral military action by the Kurds or for that matter any others", has made crystal clear he believed that "every geographic, demographic and historical fact points to Kirkuk being an integral part of the Kurdish Northern Iraq region and that has always been the case". And he warned against any attempt by the United States to deprive the Kurds of Kirkuk, which he said would be akin to freezing in place and thereby sanctioning the

gains made by the Baathist regime through decades of Arabisation.[121]

Salih does not claim that Kirkuk is or should be exclusively Kurdish. Instead, he has said that, "all the peoples of Kirkuk should be allowed to return – Kurds, Turkmen, Assyrians."[122] But there is no question in his mind as to who should govern Kirkuk: the Kurdistan Regional Government in a federated Iraq, whose current assembly is made up of Kurdish deputies in addition to six Assyrians.[123] Supported by Turkey, officials of the Iraqi Turkoman Front have held the contrary view that there are still some 600,000 Turkomans living in Kirkuk (a city of less than a million); that it has been "a Turkoman city for over 1,000 years";[124] and that "it will stay that way".[125]

The PUK and KDP have sought to obtain Kirkuk through negotiation and, failing peaceful means, by force during the past 30 years, and have been thwarted on each occasion. After the 1970 Autonomy Agreement, the Baathist regime stepped up Arab settlement of the Kirkuk region in advance of the promised census, thereby weakening Kurdish claims to Kirkuk and effectively scuttling the accord. During negotiations with the government in 1984, the PUK also held out for control of the city; the

---

[119] "Iraq managing to increase production", Associated Press, cited by *Alexander's Gas & Oil Connections*, vol. 5, issue 3, 21 February 2000: http://www.gasandoil.com/goc/news/tm00841.htm.

[120] The ITF has accused the Kurds of seeking control over Kirkuk and adjoining areas for "the wrong reasons": Whereas the Turkomans, the ITF declares, have a historical claim to the area, the Kurds are in it only for the oil. ICG interview with Mostafa Ziya, ITF representative in Turkey, Ankara, 12 September 2002. The Kurds, in particular the KDP, throw this accusation straight back at the ITF. In the words of Massoud Barzani, "For others, Kirkuk is important because it lies on a sea of oil. For us, Kirkuk is important because it lies on a sea of our blood." Quoted in, "Heir of legendary leader sees little hope for his troops if the US invades", *The Times* (London), 24 November 2002.

[121] Salih declared: "We want peace, we want stability, we want democracy and freedom. But without reversing ethnic cleansing, without restitution, there can be no peace, there can be no freedom and there will be chaos. I cannot…believe American [troops] will become the guardians of ethnic cleansing." Quoted in John Hemming, "Kurdish leader warns Washington against return to centralized system", Reuters, in *Daily Star* (Beirut), 10 February 2003.

[122] Quoted in "Barham Salih on Kirkuk", RFE/RL *Iraq Report*, vol. 5, N°41 (15 December 2002). Earlier he had said about Kirkuk: "We cannot say it is a Kurdish city. Arabs, Turkomans, and Assyrians have lived there for centuries too." Quoted in "Kurdish Leaders Reported to Acquiesce to U.S. Action", RFE/RL *Iraq Report*, vol. 5, N°16 (3 June 2002).

[123] KDP leader Masoud Barzani appears to have gone a step further. In his view, "Kirkuk is a Kurdistani city. This is a geographical and historical fact….It is impossible for us to compromise regarding the Kurdistani identity of Kirkuk." Quoted in "Barzani Reaffirms Kurdish Identity of Kirkuk", RFE/RL *Iraq Report*, vol. 5, N°41 (15 December 2002). Arguably, "Kurdistani" is a geographic, not an ethnic denominator.

[124] ITF official Mustafa Ziya, quoted in *Turkish Daily News*, 13 June 2002.

[125] ITF official Orhan Ketene, quoted in "Turkoman Representatives Speak Out", *Diplomatic Observer*, 1 July 2002, available at: http://www.diplomaticobserver.com/mideast/20020701_04.html.

regime's refusal to cede any measure of control to the Kurds sent the PUK into the arms of Iran. In October 1986, the PUK and a small band of Iranian Republican Guards attacked the Kirkuk oil fields in a daring and symbolically important raid deep into enemy territory, inflicting minor damage before beating a hasty retreat. In March 1991, the Kurds made a lightning pass at Kirkuk, occupying the city and the oil fields for about a week before being driven out by far superior Iraqi forces (that were unrestrained by the Gulf War allies). The following year, negotiations between the Kurdish parties and a weakened government in Baghdad broke down, again over the status of Kirkuk.

The only thing that will stop the Kurds from leaping at the opportunity of a U.S.-led war on Iraq and rushing into the city as the Americans are occupied elsewhere are ironclad public guarantees by all the principal parties concerned – the Kurdish parties, Turkey and the ITF, as well as the United States – that none shall create facts on the ground. It will not be easy to bring this about. There has been enough talk of promises made by one party to another – for example, by the United States to Turkey – to generate suspicions, and insufficient open guarantees to allay them.

One informed Turkish observer, for example, told ICG that the United States and Turkey have an agreement that American and not Turkish troops will take Kirkuk out of a shared interest that the Kurds won't get there first: the Americans have no interest in Kurdish *faits accomplis* in Kirkuk, and realise that permitting Turkish troops to secure the city would be a red flag to the Kurds and might lead to open warfare between Kurdish and Turkish forces. But, he said, Turkey "will be standing close by". It plans to have as many troops deployed as the Americans, and if the latter object, he said (in comments prior to the Parliamentary vote on 1 March that denied the use of bases to transiting U.S. forces) they will "have no choice, because if they don't agree, we won't permit them to go through Turkey."[126]

While this seems a fair reflection of the Turkish position on the deployment and role of its own troops in Northern Iraq, it has not been publicly confirmed. This of course leaves Kurds to wonder what "really" has been discussed and agreed to. They especially mistrust Turkish motives because senior government officials have publicly voiced claims to Mosul and Kirkuk, part of the original Vilayet Mosul of the Ottoman Empire, and have suggested that Turkish troops entering Northern Iraq might seek to disarm the Kurdish militias.[127]

As for the United States, envoy Zalmay Khalilzad told the Iraqi opposition gathered in Northern Iraq at the end of February that, "We would definitely like Turkey to be part of the coalition, but we don't accept any unilateral movement by any country".[128] Turkish troops would, according to U.S. officials, be confined to the border area on a temporary assignment to stop refugee flows.[129] These statements were made before the "no" vote in the Turkish parliament.

The lack of both transparency and ironclad commitments has fueled apprehensions among those who feel left out – the Kurds – and given added ammunition to those among them who calculate that Kurdish interests will be served best by acting unilaterally. This sets the stage for a very dangerous situation in Northern Iraq once war breaks out. KDP leader Masoud Barzani has categorically opposed any external intervention in Iraq other than by the United States.[130] He has also expressed impatience at

---

[126] ICG interview with Seyfi Tashan, a former ambassador, and Director of the Foreign Policy Institute at Bilkent University, Ankara, 5 February 2003. The parliamentary motion, if accepted, would have given the United States the green light to the basing of up to 62,000 troops, 255 warplanes and 65 helicopters. Louis Meixler, "Turkey Rejects U.S. Troop Deployment Plan", Associated Press, 1 March 2003.

[127] Turkey's Foreign Minister Yasar Yakis, for example, asserted Turkey's "legitimate and strategic interests" in Mosul and Kirkuk" and called for equal rights for Turkomans in Iraq. "Turkish Foreign Minister Comments on Iraq, Turkomans, and Oil", RFE/RL *Iraq Report*, vol. 6, N°1, 13 January 2003. Yakis was also quoted as saying Turkish troops might seek to disarm the Kurds. C.J. Chivers, "Kurds Ask U.S. Not to Allow Turkish Military Inside Iraq", *The New York Times*, 26 February 2003.
[128] Judith Miller and C.J. Chivers, "U.S. Envoy Reassures Kurds on Concerns About Turkey", *The New York Times*, 27 February 2003. Khalilzad, the U.S. Special Envoy and Ambassador-at-Large for Free Iraqis, also made reference to a draft memorandum of understanding to be signed by Turkey and the U.S. which, he said, reflected the principles of full coordination of coalition operations and full withdrawal once the job is done. Statement, 26 February 2003, http://www.krg.org/ docs/articles/khalilzad.asp.
[129] Judith Miller, "Ending Conference, Iraqi Dissidents Insist on Self-Government", *The New York Times*, 3 March 2003.
[130] "We are opposed to the entry of the Turkish armed forces onto Iraq's soil as well as any kind of military interference of

the continued presence of a Turkish-led Peace Monitoring Force established to enforce a cease-fire between the KDP and PUK since 1997. The force, commanded by Turkish officers, is mostly made up of Turkoman and Assyrian fighters, and is based at Koysinjaq in the heart of Kurdish Northern Iraq, from where it could act as a brake on Kurdish ambitions.[131]

At the same time, Barzani has been coy about the role of KDP forces in the event of war: "We are not thinking of participating in the war", he said, "because we are focusing on the day after the regime change….We don't intend to move our troops outside of Kurdish-ruled areas".[132] PUK leader Jalal Talabani declared that "the Americans have not asked us to cooperate militarily against Saddam Hussein; we have our own plans".[133] Can the Turks be faulted for suspecting the Kurds are priming their forces for a move on Kirkuk?[134]

A Kurdish military drive on Kirkuk is not the only scenario that would scare Turkey and the Turkomans – or Iraqi Arabs. Suppose U.S. forces succeed in securing Kirkuk: who will stop the tens of thousands of Kurdish deportees from Kirkuk from returning to their erstwhile homes? It is not at all far-fetched to expect that the U.S. will be unwilling to prevent Kurds, but also Turkomans and Assyrians, from retaking what they consider rightfully theirs, thereby displacing the Arab population – both native and

recently settled – in what will inevitably be seen as "reverse ethnic cleansing".[135] During the March 1991 Kurdish uprising, the majority of the city's Arab population reportedly fled, returning only after the Kurds' defeat.[136] In advance of a U.S.-led war on Iraq in 2003, Arab residents of Kirkuk have already been seen leaving the city for Baghdad and other parts of the country.[137] Were the Kurds to establish demographic and political dominance in Kirkuk in a post-Saddam Iraq, they might take advantage of their numerical advantage to vote to join a Kurdish federal region, thereby accomplishing what Kurdish military adventures might not.[138]

---

our neighbouring countries, and in return we extend our hands of friendship and brotherhood toward them", Barzani said. "Barzani Warns Turks About Entering Iraqi Kurdistan", RFE/RL *Iraq Report*, vol. 6, N°9, 7 March 2003. Barzani has equally rejected the entry of Turkish forces under U.S. command. Judith Miller, "Ending Conference, Iraqi Dissidents Insist on Self-Government", *The New York Times*, 3 March 2003.

[131] C.J. Chivers, "Iraqi Kurds Are Wary of a Turkish-Led Force", *The New York Times*, 23 February 2003.

[132] Interviewed by Tanya Goudsouzian, "Kurds will not take part in U.S.-led war – Barzani", *Gulf News*, 30 January 2003.

[133] Quoted in Laurent Lozano, "Iraqi Kurdish militias gearing up to fight Saddam", Agence France-Presse, in *Daily Star* (Beirut), 17 January 2003.

[134] The Turkoman community is divided on Turkish invasion plans. The pro-Turkish ITF has said Turkish troops will be required to prevent the Kurds from taking Mosul and Kirkuk. The Turkoman National Association, by contrast, declared that, "We don't think circumstances are conducive to intervention, as the Turkoman people have no fears living here, and have enjoyed democracy since 1991." Quoted in, "Will the U.S. Have to Choose Between Turkey or the Kurds?" RFE/RL *Iraq Report*, vol. 6, N°8, 27 February 2003.

[135] For a useful overview of the possible return of displaced persons to their former homes, see Fawcett and Tanner, "The Internally Displaced People of Iraq", op. cit., pp. 7, 24-26.

[136] Nouri Talabany, "Iraq's Policy of Ethnic Cleansing: Onslaught to change national/demographic characteristics of the Kirkuk Region", London, 1999, chapter 4.

[137] ICG interview with a Baghdad-based Western diplomat, Amman, 9 March 2003. Likewise, Kurdish residents are said to have started leaving the city in advance of an expected war, fearing for their lives. "Rising flow of fearful Iraqi Kurds leave Kirkuk", Reuters, in *Jordan Times*, 14-15 March 2003.

[138] See O'Leary, "The Kurds of Iraq", op. cit., p. 23.

V. CONCLUSION

The Kurds are entering this uncertain period in their history with a unique mix of emotions: anxiety, but also a strong sense of historical entitlement and a sharp awareness of both existential need and golden opportunity. They approach the coming conflict with some trepidation, not only because of the fear that the regime may unleash, one last time, its chemical arsenal on them, but also, given the gains of the past decade, because they stand to lose so much. As for entitlement, while the Kurds have no exclusive claim to suffering in Baathist Iraq, it is undeniable that they have endured egregious abuse, and it is therefore reasonable to expect that they will do everything in their power in a post-Saddam Iraq to prevent a return to the status quo ante.

Their century-long quest for a greater margin of political freedom as a distinct ethnic group is informed by their realisation that only through an enhanced degree of self-governance can they protect themselves as a minority in the Middle East. And concerning opportunity: as one Kurdish observer put it, the Kirkuk question has been revived by U.S. war plans; for the Kurds this is "a historical chance to gain control" of the city, a lucky break that may not present itself again soon.[139]

It is the cruelty of history in this region that the objectives of the looming showdown are little different from those that defined the chaotic treaty-making and deal-breaking of the early twentieth century. The failure to resolve the core issues of nationalities and borders once the Ottoman Empire crumbled served merely to defer them, but the equation that prevailed then has been altered in the intervening decades by the fact that grievances have accumulated, weapons have become more deadly and oil has been found.

At the threshold of a new era, the Kurds can choose between two ways to protect their interests and secure a better future: they can join forces with the United States, or they can try to go it alone. If they ally themselves with Washington, they might prevail on the Americans to keep a tight control over any Turkish forces as might be required to enter Iraq to patrol the immediate border zone. Likewise, as the

most organized of Iraqi opposition groups, the Kurdish parties could be expected to have a significant stake in a post-Saddam Baghdad, possibly to capture senior positions in government. "Mature" behavior on the ground in the North during the conflict – i.e., not a precipitous lunge at Kirkuk – might earn them points with the new rulers in Baghdad, a possible critical step toward federal status in which Kirkuk might play a significant part (if Turkish concerns are allayed).

There are risks as well: having served the American war effort, the Kurds may lose their utility in a post-Saddam Iraq, and even be considered possible spoilers, unruly and secessionist elements that can only upset stability. The United States, which has provided a measure of protection to the Kurds during the 1990s, will have a far greater interest in the nature and success of a future government in Baghdad than in accommodating the Kurds.[140] Moreover, in the absence of firm commitments, Turkey may seek to sabotage any advantage they might fear the Kurds will gain from an alliance with Washington by pre-emptively moving its forces into the Mosul and Kirkuk regions, creating faits accomplis that would be difficult for the Kurds to reverse without major concessions concerning their future status in Iraq.

Alternatively, lacking confidence in the oral reassurances of the United States, the Kurdish parties may decide to go solo, taking advantage of their familiarity with the terrain and the support of the local population to thrust into Kirkuk, as they have done before, and hope to be able to hold it.[141] They, too, might thus create hard-to-undo facts, an advantageous basis for negotiations with a successor regime over their status.[142] The risks associated with such a move, though, would be far greater than with the first scenario. Even if they don't stretch their

---

[139] Hussein Tahiri, "Kirkuk: History should end controversy", KurdishMedia.com, 5 July 2002, at http://www.kurdmedia. om/eports.asp?id=957.

[140] The Kurds see it differently. Jalal Talabani has warned that there could be "sweeping chaos, disasters, and possible sectarian clashes" in Iraq if the opposition would be excluded from participation in a U.S.-led attack to bring down the regime and its aftermath. "PUK Leader Predicts 'Chaos' if Opposition Is Excluded from Military Operation in Iraq," RFE/RL *Newsline*, vol. 6, N°221, 25 November 2002.
[141] Even if both the KDP and PUK have no intention to march on Kirkuk, if one perceives the other to be making a move in that direction, the logic of inter-party rivalry dictates pre-emption, and in that case both sides may be seen running to Kirkuk, each trying to get there first.
[142] As one Kurdish official said, "If we take Kirkuk, the Americans will listen to us. If not, we will be forgotten." Quoted in Chris Kutschera, "The Kurds' Secret Scenarios", *Middle East Report*, N°225 (Winter 2002), p. 16.

supply lines to the breaking point, the Kurds would almost certainly provoke Turkish intervention – and they could not possibly hope to defeat Turkish forces in battle on open ground – and forfeit any good will they might currently possess with the Americans.[143]

The Kurds have vowed to attack any Turkish troops as might enter Northern Iraq without their consent, turning their homeland into a graveyard for Turkish soldiers.[144] Turkish military moves in the border area in March triggered a mobilisation on the Kurdish side, with Kurdish fighters taking up positions, armed with mortars, rocket launchers and machine guns.[145] But the contest would be lopsisded. Moreover, none of the Kurds' neighbours would come to their aid or even lament their fate. Ultimately, for better or for worse, they are dependent on the United States and they will need to recognise it.

All parties would be better served by reaching agreements that are transparent and ironclad, backed up by the necessary guarantees. While ideally these agreements should have been reached prior to the onset of hostilities and take the form of two Memoranda of Understanding (one between the United States and the government of Turkey, and the other between the United States and Kurdistan Regional Government), at this point this seems highly unlikely.[146] At a minimum, though, the Unites States, Turkey and the Kurdish parties should act in accordance with the following fundamental principles:

❑ An expanded autonomy arrangement, or a federated Iraq, will be the maximum Kurdish demand for their political status in a post-Baathist Iraq.

❑ As part of such an arrangement, which presumes a formal renunciation of the Kurdish aspiration to political independence, Kurdish representatives will play a full and formal role in central government in Baghdad, in addition to whatever positions they may fill in the government of either an autonomous or federal region.

❑ Turkish forces will coordinate their moves with the U.S. and limit themselves to the immediate border area and assume a defensive posture only.Under no circumstances will they enter Kirkuk or Mosul.

❑ Likewise, the Kurdish parties will not make any unilateral military moves, and will stay outside Kirkuk and Mosul.

❑ Kirkuk will be a multi-ethnic city, with claims to property to be settled by an impartial body. It may become the capital of a Kurdish region only as the result of negotiations between the principal stakeholders.

The Kurds have indicated their desire for a memorandum of understanding, but seek assurances that no Turkish forces would enter Iraq and a U.S. commitment to a federal and democratic Iraq.[147] Regardless of the merits of these and others' demands, it is critically important that they be discussed now. The historical record shows that the status of Kirkuk, in particular, is a deal-breaker. For the sake of peace and stability in a future Iraq, a negotiated settlement of the Kirkuk question, and the Kurdish question that envelops it, should be an absolute priority of the U.S. government as it goes to war.[148]

---

[143] Human Rights Watch has warned against widespread human rights abuse in case Turkish forces enter Northern Iraq, based on prior experience. "Turkey and War in Iraq: Avoiding Past Patterns of Violation", Briefing Paper, March 2003, at: http://www.hrw.org/press/2003/03/turkey030503.htm.

[144] Quoted by Charles Recknagel, "Turkey: Ankara and KDP Battle Over Shape of Post-Saddam Iraq", Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, 29 August 2002, available at: http://www.rferl. rg/nca/features/2002/08/29082002151341.asp.

[145] David Rohde, "Kurds in Positions Along Turkish Border", *The New York Times*, 12 March 2003.

[146] In a meeting between Turkey and Iraqi Kurdish leaders in Ankara on 18 March, the Kurds agreed to put their forces under U.S. command, and Turkey reserved the right to undertake unilateral military action in Northern Iraq, according to a U.S. official in Turkey. Talks were continuing on 19 March, as this ICG report went to press. See, Frank Bruni with David Rohde, "Turkey Seeks Troops in Iraq and May Allow U.S. Flights", *The New York Times*, 19 March 2003.

[147] The leaders of the KDP and PUK sent a letter to President Bush on 13 February 2003 calling for a formal Memorandum of Understanding. See Kevin McKiernan, "Urgent Request: Kurdish Rebels Fear Turkish Aggression May Accompany U.S. Troops", ABC News.com, 25 February 2003, available at: http://abcnews.go.com/sections/world/2020/kurdistan 30225.html.

[148] In one of the wisest statements on the subject of Iraq's future and the place of the Kurds, Yash Ghai has said that, "the approach to the ethnic question does not lie simply in dealing with specific claims of individual communities. What Iraq has lacked, and now needs urgently, is a vision of the country and its people. To build on ethnic distinctions that now dominate public consciousness, or which are the product of past manipulations by successive regimes, is to perpetuate divisions that would deny Iraq a proper destiny". In Ghai, Lattimer and Said, "Building Democracy in Iraq", op. cit., p. 37.

APPENDIX A

MAP OF IRAQ
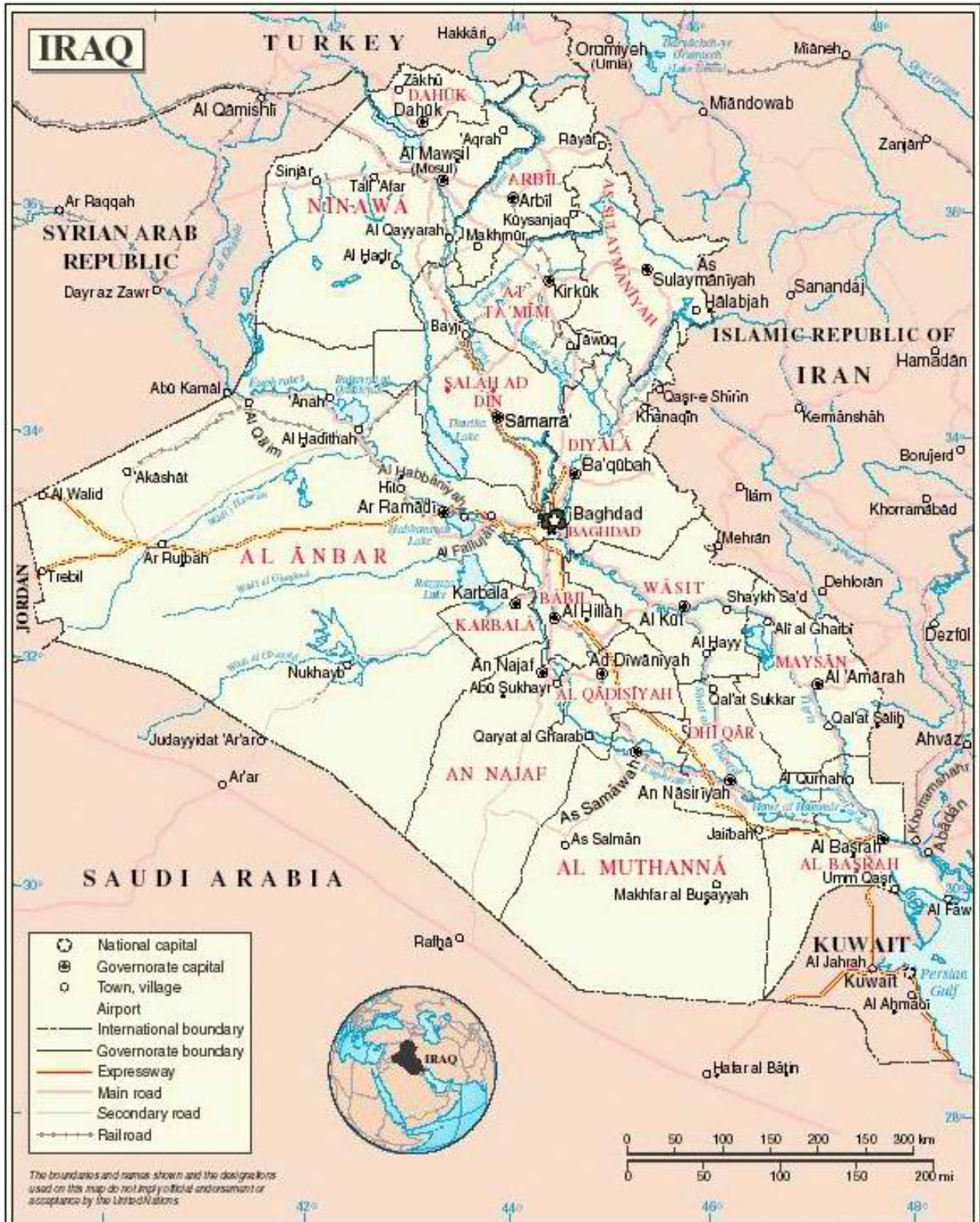
APPENDIX B

MAP OF KURDISH AREAS OF NORTHERN IRAQ

Kurdish Areas of Northern Iraq

APPENDIX C

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

The International Crisis Group (ICG) is an independent, non-profit, multinational organisation, with over 90 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

ICG's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, ICG produces regular analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers.

ICG's reports and briefing papers are distributed widely by email and printed copy to officials in foreign ministries and international organisations and made generally available at the same time via the organisation's Internet site, *www.crisisweb.org*. ICG works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analyses and to generate support for its policy prescriptions.

The ICG Board – which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media – is directly involved in helping to bring ICG reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policy-makers around the world. ICG is chaired by former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari; and its President and Chief Executive since January 2000 has been former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans.

ICG's international headquarters are in Brussels, with advocacy offices in Washington DC, New York and Paris and a media liaison office in London. The organisation currently operates eleven field offices (in Amman, Belgrade, Bogota, Islamabad, Jakarta,

Nairobi, Osh, Pristina, Sarajevo, Sierra Leone and Skopje) with analysts working in over 30 crisis-affected countries and territories across four continents.

In *Africa*, those countries include Burundi, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone-Liberia-Guinea, Somalia, Sudan and Zimbabwe; in *Asia*, Indonesia, Myanmar, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Kashmir; in *Europe*, Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia; in the *Middle East,* the whole region from North Africa to Iran; and in *Latin America*, Colombia.

ICG raises funds from governments, charitable foundations, companies and individual donors. The following governments currently provide funding: Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the Republic of China (Taiwan), Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Foundation and private sector donors include The Atlantic Philanthropies, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Ford Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, William & Flora Hewlett Foundation, The Henry Luce Foundation, Inc., John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, The John Merck Fund, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Open Society Institute, Ploughshares Fund, The Ruben & Elisabeth Rausing Trust, the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, the Sarlo Foundation of the Jewish Community Endowment Fund and the United States Institute of Peace.

March 2003

APPENDIX D

ICG REPORTS AND BRIEFING PAPERS*

AFRICA

ALGERIA**

The Algerian Crisis: Not Over Yet, Africa Report N°24, 20 October 2000 (also available in French)

The Civil Concord: A Peace Initiative Wasted, Africa Report N°31, 9 July 2001 (also available in French)

Algeria's Economy: A Vicious Circle of Oil and Violence, Africa Report N°36, 26 October 2001 (also available in French)

ANGOLA

Dealing with Savimbi's Ghost: The Security and Humanitarian Challenges in Angola, Africa Report N°58, 26 February 2003

BURUNDI

The Mandela Effect: Evaluation and Perspectives of the Peace Process in Burundi, Africa Report N°21, 18 April 2000 (also available in French)

Unblocking Burundi's Peace Process: Political Parties, Political Prisoners, and Freedom of the Press, Africa Briefing, 22 June 2000

Burundi: The Issues at Stake. Political Parties, Freedom of the Press and Political Prisoners, Africa Report N°23, 12 July 2000 (also available in French)

Burundi Peace Process: Tough Challenges Ahead, Africa Briefing, 27 August 2000

Burundi: Neither War, nor Peace, Africa Report N°25, 1 December 2000 (also available in French)

Burundi: Breaking the Deadlock, The Urgent Need for a New Negotiating Framework, Africa Report N°29, 14 May 2001 (also available in French)

Burundi: 100 Days to put the Peace Process back on Track, Africa Report N°33, 14 August 2001 (also available in French)

Burundi: After Six Months of Transition: Continuing the War or Winning the Peace, Africa Report N°46, 24 May 2002 (also available in French)

The Burundi Rebellion and the Ceasefire Negotiations, Africa Briefing, 6 August 2002

A Framework For Responsible Aid To Burundi, Africa Report N°57, 21 February 2003

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Scramble for the Congo: Anatomy of an Ugly War, Africa Report N°26, 20 December 2000 (also available in French)

From Kabila to Kabila: Prospects for Peace in the Congo, Africa Report N°27, 16 March 2001

Disarmament in the Congo: Investing in Conflict Prevention, Africa Briefing, 12 June 2001

The Inter-Congolese Dialogue: Political Negotiation or Game of Bluff? Africa Report N°37, 16 November 2001 (also available in French)

Disarmament in the Congo: Jump-Starting DDRRR to Prevent Further War, Africa Report N°38, 14 December 2001

Storm Clouds Over Sun City: The Urgent Need To Recast The Congolese Peace Process, Africa Report N°38, 14 May 2002 (also available in French)

The Kivus: The Forgotten Crucible of the Congo Conflict, Africa Report N°56, 24 January 2003

RWANDA

Uganda and Rwanda: Friends or Enemies? Africa Report N°15, 4 May 2000

International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda: Justice Delayed, Africa Report N°30, 7 June 2001 (also available in French)

"Consensual Democracy" in Post Genocide Rwanda: Evaluating the March 2001 District Elections, Africa Report N°34, 9 October 2001

Rwanda/Uganda: a Dangerous War of Nerves, Africa Briefing, 21 December 2001

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda: The Countdown, Africa Report N°50, 1 August 2002 (also available in French)

Rwanda At The End of the Transition: A Necessary Political Liberalisation, Africa Report N°53, 13 November 2002 (also available in French)

SOMALIA

Somalia: Countering Terrorism in a Failed State, Africa Report N°45, 23 May 2002

Salvaging Somalia's Chance For Peace, Africa Briefing, 9 December 2002

Negotiating a Blueprint for Peace in Somalia, Africa Report N°59, 6 March 2003

SUDAN

God, Oil & Country: Changing the Logic of War in Sudan, Africa Report N°39, 28 January 2002

Capturing the Moment: Sudan's Peace Process in the Balance, Africa Report N°42, 3 April 2002

Dialogue or Destruction? Organising for Peace as the War in Sudan Escalates, Africa Report N°48, 27 June 2002

Sudan's Best Chance For Peace: How Not To Lose It, Africa Report N°51, 17 September 2002

Ending Starvation as a Weapon of War in Sudan, Africa Report N°54, 14 November 2002

---

* Released since January 2000.
** The Algeria project was transferred to the Middle East Program in January 2002.

Power and Wealth Sharing: Make or Break Time in Sudan's Peace Process, Africa Report N°55, 18 December 2002

Sudan's Oilfields Burn Again: Brinkmanship Endangers The Peace Process, Africa Briefing, 10 February 2003

WEST AFRICA

Sierra Leone: Time for a New Military and Political Strategy, Africa Report N°28, 11 April 2001

Sierra Leone: Managing Uncertainty, Africa Report N°35, 24 October 2001

Sierra Leone: Ripe For Elections? Africa Briefing, 19 December 2001

Liberia: The Key to Ending Regional Instability, Africa Report N°43, 24 April 2002

Sierra Leone After Elections: Politics as Usual? Africa Report N°49, 12 July 2002

Liberia: Unravelling, Africa Briefing, 19 August 2002

Sierra Leone's Truth and Reconciliation Commission: A Fresh Start?, Africa Briefing, 20 December 2002

ZIMBABWE

Zimbabwe: At the Crossroads, Africa Report N°22, 10 July 2000

Zimbabwe: Three Months after the Elections, Africa Briefing, 25 September 2000

Zimbabwe in Crisis: Finding a way Forward, Africa Report N°32, 13 July 2001

Zimbabwe: Time for International Action, Africa Briefing, 12 October 2001

Zimbabwe's Election: The Stakes for Southern Africa, Africa Briefing, 11 January 2002

All Bark and No Bite: The International Response to Zimbabwe's Crisis, Africa Report N°40, 25 January 2002

Zimbabwe at the Crossroads: Transition or Conflict? Africa Report N°41, 22 March 2002

Zimbabwe: What Next? Africa Report N° 47, 14 June 2002

Zimbabwe: The Politics of National Liberation and International Division, Africa Report N°52, 17 October 2002

Zimbabwe: Danger and Opportunity, Africa Report N°60, 10 March 2003

ASIA

CAMBODIA

Cambodia: The Elusive Peace Dividend, Asia Report N°8, 11 August 2000

CENTRAL ASIA

Central Asia: Crisis Conditions in Three States, Asia Report N°7, 7 August 2000 (also available in Russian)

Recent Violence in Central Asia: Causes and Consequences, Central Asia Briefing, 18 October 2000

Islamist Mobilisation and Regional Security, Asia Report N°14, 1 March 2001 (also available in Russian)

Incubators of Conflict: Central Asia's Localised Poverty and Social Unrest, Asia Report N°16, 8 June 2001 (also available in Russian)

Central Asia: Fault Lines in the New Security Map, Asia Report N°20, 4 July 2001 (also available in Russian)

Uzbekistan at Ten – Repression and Instability, Asia Report N°21, 21 August 2001 (also available in Russian)

Kyrgyzstan at Ten: Trouble in the "Island of Democracy", Asia Report N°22, 28 August 2001 (also available in Russian)

Central Asian Perspectives on the 11 September and the Afghan Crisis, Central Asia Briefing, 28 September 2001 (also available in French and Russian)

Central Asia: Drugs and Conflict, Asia Report N°25, 26 November 2001 (also available in Russian)

Afghanistan and Central Asia: Priorities for Reconstruction and Development, Asia Report N°26, 27 November 2001 (also available in Russian)

Tajikistan: An Uncertain Peace, Asia Report N°30, 24 December 2001 (also available in Russian)

The IMU and the Hizb-ut-Tahrir: Implications of the Afghanistan Campaign, Central Asia Briefing, 30 January 2002 (also available in Russian)

Central Asia: Border Disputes and Conflict Potential, Asia Report N°33, 4 April 2002 (also available in Russian)

Central Asia: Water and Conflict, Asia Report N°34, 30 May 2002 (also available in Russian)

Kyrgyzstan's Political Crisis: An Exit Strategy, Asia Report N°37, 20 August 2002 (also available in Russian)

The OSCE in Central Asia: A New Strategy, Asia Report N°38, 11 September 2002

Central Asia: The Politics of Police Reform, Asia Report N°42, 10 December 2002

Cracks in the Marble: Turkmenistan's Failing Dictatorship, Asia Report N°44, 17 January 2003

Uzbekistan's Reform Program: Illusion or Reality?, Asia Report N°46, 18 February 2003

INDONESIA

Indonesia's Crisis: Chronic but not Acute, Asia Report N°6, 31 May 2000

Indonesia's Maluku Crisis: The Issues, Indonesia Briefing, 19 July 2000

Indonesia: Keeping the Military Under Control, Asia Report N°9, 5 September 2000 (also available in Indonesian)

Aceh: Escalating Tension, Indonesia Briefing, 7 December 2000

Indonesia: Overcoming Murder and Chaos in Maluku, Asia Report N°10, 19 December 2000

Indonesia: Impunity Versus Accountability for Gross Human Rights Violations, Asia Report N°12, 2 February 2001

Indonesia: National Police Reform, Asia Report N°13, 20 February 2001 (also available in Indonesian)

Indonesia's Presidential Crisis, Indonesia Briefing, 21 February 2001

Bad Debt: The Politics of Financial Reform in Indonesia, Asia Report N°15, 13 March 2001

Indonesia's Presidential Crisis: The Second Round, Indonesia Briefing, 21 May 2001

Aceh: Why Military Force Won't Bring Lasting Peace, Asia Report N°17, 12 June 2001 (also available in Indonesian)

Aceh: Can Autonomy Stem the Conflict? Asia Report N°18, 27 June 2001

Communal Violence in Indonesia: Lessons from Kalimantan, Asia Report N°19, 27 June 2001 (also available in Indonesian)

Indonesian-U.S. Military Ties, Indonesia Briefing, 18 July 2001

The Megawati Presidency, Indonesia Briefing, 10 September 2001

Indonesia: Ending Repression in Irian Jaya, Asia Report N°23, 20 September 2001

Indonesia: Violence and Radical Muslims, Indonesia Briefing, 10 October 2001

Indonesia: Next Steps in Military Reform, Asia Report N°24, 11 October 2001

Indonesia: Natural Resources and Law Enforcement, Asia Report N°29, 20 December 2001 (also available in Indonesian)

Indonesia: The Search for Peace in Maluku, Asia Report N°31, 8 February 2002

Aceh: Slim Chance for Peace, Indonesia Briefing, 27 March 2002

Indonesia: The Implications of the Timor Trials, Indonesia Briefing, 8 May 2002

Resuming U.S.-Indonesia Military Ties, Indonesia Briefing, 21 May 2002

Al-Qaeda in Southeast Asia: The case of the "Ngruki Network" in Indonesia, Indonesia Briefing, 8 August 2002

Indonesia: Resources And Conflict In Papua, Asia Report N°39, 13 September 2002

Tensions on Flores: Local Symptoms of National Problems, Indonesia Briefing, 10 October 2002

Impact of the Bali Bombings, Indonesia Briefing, 24 October 2002

Indonesia Backgrounder: How The Jemaah Islamiyah Terrorist Network Operates, Asia Report N°43, 11 December 2002

Aceh: A Fragile Peace, Asia Report N°47, 27 February 2003

MYANMAR

Burma/Myanmar: How Strong is the Military Regime? Asia Report N°11, 21 December 2000

Myanmar: The Role of Civil Society, Asia Report N°27, 6 December 2001

Myanmar: The Military Regime's View of the World, Asia Report N°28, 7 December 2001

Myanmar: The Politics of Humanitarian Aid, Asia Report N°32, 2 April 2002

Myanmar: The HIV/AIDS Crisis, Myanmar Briefing, 2 April 2002

Myanmar: The Future of the Armed Forces, Asia Briefing, 27 September 2002

AFGHANISTAN/SOUTH ASIA

Afghanistan and Central Asia: Priorities for Reconstruction and Development, Asia Report N°26, 27 November 2001

Pakistan: The Dangers of Conventional Wisdom, Pakistan Briefing, 12 March 2002

Securing Afghanistan: The Need for More International Action, Afghanistan Briefing, 15 March 2002

The Loya Jirga: One Small Step Forward? Afghanistan & Pakistan Briefing, 16 May 2002

Kashmir: Confrontation and Miscalculation, Asia Report N°35, 11 July 2002

Pakistan: Madrasas, Extremism and the Military, Asia Report N°36, 29 July 2002

The Afghan Transitional Administration: Prospects and Perils, Afghanistan Briefing, 30 July 2002

Pakistan: Transition to Democracy?, Asia Report N°40, 3 October 2002

Kashmir: The View From Srinagar, Asia Report N°41, 21 November 2002

Afghanistan: Judicial Reform and Transitional Justice, Asia Report N°45, 28 January 2003

Afghanistan: Women and Reconstruction, Asia Report N°48. 14 March 2003

BALKANS

ALBANIA

Albania: State of the Nation, Balkans Report N°87, 1 March 2000

Albania's Local Elections, A test of Stability and Democracy, Balkans Briefing, 25 August 2000

Albania: The State of the Nation 2001, Balkans Report Nº111, 25 May 2001

Albania's Parliamentary Elections 2001, Balkans Briefing, 23 August 2001

Albania: State of the Nation 2003, Balkans Report N°140, 11 March 2003

BOSNIA

Denied Justice: Individuals Lost in a Legal Maze, Balkans Report N°86, 23 February 2000

European Vs. Bosnian Human Rights Standards, Handbook Overview, 14 April 2000

Reunifying Mostar: Opportunities for Progress, Balkans Report N°90, 19 April 2000

Bosnia's Municipal Elections 2000: Winners and Losers, Balkans Report N°91, 28 April 2000

Bosnia's Refugee Logjam Breaks: Is the International Community Ready? Balkans Report N°95, 31 May 2000

War Criminals in Bosnia's Republika Srpska, Balkans Report N°103, 2 November 2000

Bosnia's November Elections: Dayton Stumbles, Balkans Report N°104, 18 December 2000

Turning Strife to Advantage: A Blueprint to Integrate the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Balkans Report N°106, 15 March 2001

No Early Exit: NATO's Continuing Challenge in Bosnia, Balkans Report N°110, 22 May 2001

Bosnia's Precarious Economy: Still Not Open For Business; Balkans Report N°115, 7 August 2001 (also available in Bosnian)

The Wages of Sin: Confronting Bosnia's Republika Srpska, Balkans Report N°118, 8 October 2001 (also available in Bosnian)

Bosnia: Reshaping the International Machinery, Balkans Report N°121, 29 November 2001 (also available in Bosnian)

Courting Disaster: The Misrule of Law in Bosnia & Herzegovina, Balkans Report N°127, 26 March 2002 (also available in Bosnian)

Implementing Equality: The "Constituent Peoples" Decision in Bosnia & Herzegovina, Balkans Report N°128, 16 April 2002 (also available in Bosnian)

Policing the Police in Bosnia: A Further Reform Agenda, Balkans Report N°130, 10 May 2002 (also available in Bosnian)

Bosnia's Alliance for (Smallish) Change, Balkans Report N°132, 2 August 2002 (also available in Bosnian)

The Continuing Challenge Of Refugee Return In Bosnia & Herzegovina, Balkans Report N°137, 13 December 2002 (also available in Bosnian)

CROATIA

Facing Up to War Crimes, Balkans Briefing, 16 October 2001

A Half-Hearted Welcome: Refugee Return to Croatia, Balkans Report N°138, 13 December 2002 (also available in Serbo-Croat)

KOSOVO

Kosovo Albanians in Serbian Prisons: Kosovo's Unfinished Business, Balkans Report N°85, 26 January 2000

What Happened to the KLA? Balkans Report N°88, 3 March 2000

Kosovo's Linchpin: Overcoming Division in Mitrovica, Balkans Report N°96, 31 May 2000

Reality Demands: Documenting Violations of International Humanitarian Law in Kosovo 1999, Balkans Report, 27 June 2000

Elections in Kosovo: Moving Toward Democracy? Balkans Report N°97, 7 July 2000

Kosovo Report Card, Balkans Report N°100, 28 August 2000

Reaction in Kosovo to Kostunica's Victory, Balkans Briefing, 10 October 2000

Religion in Kosovo, Balkans Report N°105, 31 January 2001

Kosovo: Landmark Election, Balkans Report N°120, 21 November 2001 (also available in Albanian and Serbo-Croat)

Kosovo: A Strategy for Economic Development, Balkans Report N°123, 19 December 2001 (also available in Serbo-Croat)

A Kosovo Roadmap: I. Addressing Final Status, Balkans Report N°124, 28 February 2002 (also available in Albanian and Serbo-Croat)

A Kosovo Roadmap: II. Internal Benchmarks, Balkans Report N°125, 1 March 2002 (also available in Albanian and Serbo-Croat)

UNMIK's Kosovo Albatross: Tackling Division in Mitrovica, Balkans Report N°131, 3 June 2002 (also available in Albanian and Serbo-Croat)

Finding the Balance: The Scales of Justice in Kosovo, Balkans Report N°134, 12 September 2002 (also available in Albanian)

Return to Uncertainty: Kosovo's Internally Displaced and The Return Process, Balkans Report N°139, 13 December 2002 (also available in Albanian and Serbo-Croat)

MACEDONIA

Macedonia's Ethnic Albanians: Bridging the Gulf, Balkans Report N°98, 2 August 2000

Macedonia Government Expects Setback in Local Elections, Balkans Briefing, 4 September 2000

The Macedonian Question: Reform or Rebellion, Balkans Report N°109, 5 April 2001

Macedonia: The Last Chance for Peace, Balkans Report N°113, 20 June 2001

Macedonia: Still Sliding, Balkans Briefing, 27 July 2001

Macedonia: War on Hold, Balkans Briefing, 15 August 2001

Macedonia: Filling the Security Vacuum, Balkans Briefing, 8 September 2001

Macedonia's Name: Why the Dispute Matters and How to Resolve It, Balkans Report N°122, 10 December 2001 (also available in Serbo-Croat)

Macedonia's Public Secret: How Corruption Drags The Country Down, Balkans Report N°133, 14 August 2002 (also available in Macedonian)

Moving Macedonia Toward Self-Sufficiency: A New Security Approach for NATO and the EU, Balkans Report N°135, 15 November 2002 (also available in Macedonian)

MONTENEGRO

Montenegro: In the Shadow of the Volcano, Balkans Report N°89, 21 March 2000

Montenegro's Socialist People's Party: A Loyal Opposition? Balkans Report N°92, 28 April 2000

Montenegro's Local Elections: Testing the National Temperature, Background Briefing, 26 May 2000

Montenegro: Which way Next? Balkans Briefing, 30 November 2000

Montenegro: Settling for Independence? Balkans Report N°107, 28 March 2001

Montenegro: Time to Decide, a Pre-Election Briefing, Balkans Briefing, 18 April 2001

Montenegro: Resolving the Independence Deadlock, Balkans Report N°114, 1 August 2001

Still Buying Time: Montenegro, Serbia and the European Union, Balkans Report N°129, 7 May 2002 (also available in Serbian)

SERBIA

Serbia's Embattled Opposition, Balkans Report N°94, 30 May 2000

Serbia's Grain Trade: Milosevic's Hidden Cash Crop, Balkans Report N°93, 5 June 2000

Serbia: The Milosevic Regime on the Eve of the September Elections, Balkans Report N°99, 17 August 2000

Current Legal Status of the Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and of Serbia and Montenegro, Balkans Report N°101, 19 September 2000

Yugoslavia's Presidential Election: The Serbian People's Moment of Truth, Balkans Report N°102, 19 September 2000

Sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Balkans Briefing, 10 October 2000

Serbia on the Eve of the December Elections, Balkans Briefing, 20 December 2000

A Fair Exchange: Aid to Yugoslavia for Regional Stability, Balkans Report N°112, 15 June 2001

Peace in Presevo: Quick Fix or Long-Term Solution? Balkans Report N°116, 10 August 2001

Serbia's Transition: Reforms Under Siege, Balkans Report N°117, 21 September 2001 (also available in Serbo-Croat)

Belgrade's Lagging Reform: Cause for International Concern, Balkans Report N°126, 7 March 2002 (also available in Serbo-Croat)

Serbia: Military Intervention Threatens Democratic Reform, Balkans Briefing, 28 March 2002 (also available in Serbo-Croat)

Fighting To Control Yugoslavia's Military, Balkans Briefing, 12 July 2002 (also available in Serbo-Croat)

Arming Saddam: The Yugoslav Connection, Balkans Report N°136, 3 December 2002

Serbia After Djindjic, Balkans Report N°141, 18 March 2003

REGIONAL REPORTS

After Milosevic: A Practical Agenda for Lasting Balkans Peace, Balkans Report N°108, 26 April 2001

Milosevic in The Hague: What it Means for Yugoslavia and the Region, Balkans Briefing, 6 July 2001

Bin Laden and the Balkans: The Politics of Anti-Terrorism, Balkans Report N°119, 9 November 2001

LATIN AMERICA

Colombia's Elusive Quest for Peace, Latin America Report N°1, 26 March 2002 (also available in Spanish)

The 10 March 2002 Parliamentary Elections in Colombia, Latin America Briefing, 17 April 2002 (also available in Spanish)

The Stakes in the Presidential Election in Colombia, Latin America Briefing, 22 May 2002

Colombia: The Prospects for Peace with the ELN, Latin America Report N°2, 4 October 2002 (also available in Spanish)

Colombia: Will Uribe's Honeymoon Last?, Latin America Briefing, 19 December 2002 (also available in Spanish)

MIDDLE EAST

A Time to Lead: The International Community and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, Middle East Report N°1, 10 April 2002

Middle East Endgame I: Getting to a Comprehensive Arab-Israeli Peace Settlement, Middle East Report N°2, 16 July 2002 (also available in Arabic)

Middle East Endgame II: How a Comprehensive Israeli-Palestinian Settlement Would Look, Middle East Report N°3; 16 July 2002 (also available in Arabic)

Middle East Endgame III: Israel, Syria and Lebanon – How Comprehensive Peace Settlements Would Look, Middle East Report N°4, 16 July 2002 (also available in Arabic)

Iran: The Struggle for the Revolution´s Soul, Middle East Report N°5, 5 August 2002

Iraq Backgrounder: What Lies Beneath, Middle East Report N°6, 1 October 2002

The Meanings of Palestinian Reform, Middle East Briefing, 12 November 2002

Old Games, New Rules: Conflict on the Israel-Lebanon Border, Middle East Report N°7, 18 November 2002

Voices From The Iraqi Street, Middle East Briefing, 4 December 2002

Yemen: Indigenous Violence and International Terror in a Fragile State, Middle East Report N°8, 8 January 2003

Radical Islam In Iraqi Kurdistan: The Mouse That Roared?, Middle East Briefing, 7 February 2003

Red Alert In Jordan: Recurrent Unrest In Maan, Middle East Briefing, 19 February 2003

Iraq Policy Briefing: Is There An Alternative To War?, Middle East Report N°9, 24 February 2003

ALGERIA[*]

Diminishing Returns: Algeria's 2002 Legislative Elections, Middle East Briefing, 24 June 2002

ISSUES REPORTS

HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS as a Security Issue, Issues Report N°1, 19 June 2001

Myanmar: The HIV/AIDS Crisis, Myanmar Briefing, 2 April 2002

EU

The European Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO): Crisis Response in the Grey Lane, Issues Briefing, 26 June 2001

EU Crisis Response Capability: Institutions and Processes for Conflict Prevention and Management, Issues Report N°2, 26 June 2001

EU Crisis Response Capabilities: An Update, Issues Briefing, 29 April 2002

---

[*] The Algeria project was transferred from the Africa Program in January 2002.

APPENDIX E

ICG BOARD MEMBERS

Martti Ahtisaari, Chairman
Former President of Finland

Maria Livanos Cattaui, Vice-Chairman
Secretary-General, International Chamber of Commerce

Stephen Solarz, Vice-Chairman
Former U.S. Congressman

Gareth Evans, President & CEO
Former Foreign Minister of Australia

S. Daniel Abraham
Chairman, Center for Middle East Peace and Economic Cooperation, U.S.

Morton Abramowitz
Former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State and Ambassador to Turkey

Kenneth Adelman
Former U.S. Ambassador and Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency

Richard Allen
Former U.S. National Security Adviser to the President

Saud Nasir Al-Sabah
Former Kuwaiti Ambassador to the UK and U.S.; former Minister of Information and Oil

Louise Arbour
Supreme Court Justice, Canada; Former Chief Prosecutor, International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia

Oscar Arias Sanchez
Former President of Costa Rica; Nobel Peace Prize, 1987

Ersin Arioglu
Chairman, Yapi Merkezi Group, Turkey

Emma Bonino
Member of European Parliament; former European Commissioner

Zbigniew Brzezinski
Former U.S. National Security Adviser to the President

Cheryl Carolus
Former South African High Commissioner to the UK; former Secretary General of the ANC

Victor Chu
Chairman, First Eastern Investment Group, Hong Kong

Wesley Clark
Former NATO Supreme Allied Commander, Europe

Uffe Ellemann-Jensen
Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Denmark

Mark Eyskens
Former Prime Minister of Belgium

Marika Fahlen
Former Swedish Ambassador for Humanitarian Affairs; Director of Social Mobilization and Strategic Information, UNAIDS

Yoichi Funabashi
Chief Diplomatic Correspondent & Columnist, The Asahi Shimbun, Japan

Bronislaw Geremek
Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Poland

I.K.Gujral
Former Prime Minister of India

HRH El Hassan bin Talal
Chairman, Arab Thought Forum; President, Club of Rome

Carla Hills
Former U.S. Secretary of Housing; former U.S. Trade Representative

Asma Jahangir
UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions; Advocate Supreme Court, former Chair Human Rights Commission of Pakistan

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
Senior Adviser, Modern Africa Fund Managers; former Liberian Minister of Finance and Director of UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa

Mikhail Khodorkovsky
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, YUKOS Oil Company, Russia

Elliott F. Kulick
Chairman, Pegasus International, U.S.

Joanne Leedom-Ackerman
Novelist and journalist, U.S.

Todung Mulya Lubis
Human rights lawyer and author, Indonesia

Barbara McDougall
Former Secretary of State for External Affairs, Canada

Mo Mowlam
Former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, UK

Ayo Obe
President, Civil Liberties Organisation, Nigeria

Christine Ockrent
Journalist and author, France

Friedbert Pflüger
Foreign Policy Spokesman of the CDU/CSU Parliamentary Group in the German Bundestag

Surin Pitsuwan
Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Thailand