

MERIA

U.S. -KURDISH RELATIONS IN POST-INVASION IRAQ

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The Kurds' desire to secure and consolidate the freedoms they enjoyed in the decade prior to the U.S. invasion of Iraq has reshaped U.S.-Kurdish relations in many ways. In order to keep Iraq united with a strong central government, U.S. policy tries to ensure that the Kurds do not seek independence. At the same time, though, The United States has tried to work with the Kurdish Regional Government. The Kurds have equally tried to support the U.S. presence in Iraq as they too benefit from the cooperative relationship.

INTRODUCTION

This article examines the U.S.-Kurdish relationship in the period after the U.S. invasion of Iraq. It includes America's pre-invasion plans and assessments and then evaluates the level of success after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, the difficulties involved, and the changes made in the strategy of both sides.

A major Kurdish priority in post-invasion Iraq has been to secure and consolidate semi-independent status for themselves. In contrast, U.S. policy puts the emphasis on ensuring Iraq's sovereignty and on having a strong central government. This situation potentially puts the two sides in contradictory positions.

The initial phase reflected America's misreading of Iraqi realities amid excessive optimism. It arose, as one American author put it, from "their belief that most people in the world are post-ethnic individualists as Americans believe themselves to be."¹

Prior to the invasion, Paul Wolfowitz described Iraqis as among the most educated and secular people in the Arab world.² Similarly, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld overlooked the deep-seated factionalism, describing the Iraqi problem as that of an "Eastern European country" in which "a repressive dictator has been taking money for palaces and weapons and not putting it into infrastructure."³ Therefore, Wolfowitz suggested, if the United States

were to remove Saddam's regime, Iraqi appreciation and cooperation would be "much greater than that of Eastern Europe," where people had complained "that it took the United States so long to get there."⁴

This misplaced optimism dominated their official policies and statements during the first year of the invasion. Immediately after the fall of Baghdad in April 2003, the United States--under Jay Garner, who led the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA)--depicted itself as a liberator with a limited and humanitarian role. Then, in May of that year, President George W. Bush declared the end of hostilities.⁵ This was followed by Rumsfeld's declaration of the step-by-step plan for decreasing U.S. forces in Iraq to 30,000 troops by September 2003.⁶

Later, Bush went further, declaring "Iraq as a democracy will have great power to inspire the Middle East."⁷ Thus, the initial phase of U.S. policy in Iraq was positive in outlook and expressed the hope for a bright future for the nation. U.S. plans for that period were based on their belief that Iraqi unity would emerge following the dictator's demise. Yet the semi-autonomous status of Kurdistan and the Kurds' desire for separation were perceived to be obstacles that should be removed. Consequently, the United States sought to end this semi-state situation and to ensure the full integration of the north into the new Iraq.

THE U.S. STRATEGY

To overcome this obstacle, many measures were unsuccessfully attempted, including abolishing or at least weakening the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the Kurdish *Peshmerga* in order to implement a provincial administrative system. According to the original U.S. plan, the Turks were to have a major role in the war and in determining Iraq's future. Reportedly, Turkey wanted to send a large military force to establish a security arc that might permit them to enter predominantly Kurdish cities.⁸ The claim has been made that the Turks wanted the *Peshmerga* disarmed, displaced Kurds forbidden from returning to Kirkuk, and an end to the quest for autonomy.⁹ Some writers have claimed that the United States accepted these demands.¹⁰

Prior to the invasion, U.S. policy had little interest in encouraging any sort of federalism. Moreover, to show American support for a united Iraq and to win Turkish support, the Kurds were not brought into the coalition until three weeks before the attack.¹¹

However, in the post-invasion period, the Americans intended to introduce, in Wolfowitz's words, "a degree of federalism to ensure that Iraq remains a single country."¹² This vision was applied in the November 2003 agreement between the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC). The agreement abandoned proposals for ethnic and geographical autonomy in favor of an 18-province federal system.¹³

The strategy was clearly reflected in official U.S. statements.¹⁴ In addition, as Jalal Talabani and Masud Barzani explained: "It was rare for the U.S. government or the CPA to refer to Kurdistan or the Kurdish people."¹⁵ Further, Masud Barzani explained that the head of the CPA, L. Paul Bremer, wanted "to eliminate all references to the KRG from the interim constitution."¹⁶ It is noteworthy, too, that the United States avoided opening a consulate in Kurdistan.¹⁷

To reduce the Kurdish pro-federal influence in Baghdad, Kurds were excluded

from senior positions in the new government. For example, in a letter to Bush, the Kurdish leaders Talabani and Barzani complained that "your special representative had advised us that a Kurd could be neither prime minister nor president of Iraq."¹⁸ Another method to weaken and diminish the KRG was imposing economic constraints on the region. For example, the coalition reportedly "seized oil-for-food revenue specifically earmarked for Kurdistan" and terminated the "Kurdish currency."¹⁹

In addition, the United States sought to disarm the *Peshmerga*. This plan was achieved by classifying the *Peshmerga* as militias.²⁰ However, to avoid appearing as though they were interfering in such matters, the United States arranged for the Iraqi administration to appear to be the ones making the decision. It could also be argued that the transitional constitution, however, did grant many rights to the Kurds, such as the recognition of the Kurdistan Regional Government,²¹ the formation of a federal system for Iraq on the basis of geographic and historic realities,²² the Kurds' right to veto,²³ and a proposal for a solution to the issue of Kirkuk. However, the Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period (TAL) granted little authority to the KRG by giving the central government "exclusive rights" on a wide range of sensitive issues, such as a central monopoly on military force, control over natural resources, broad fiscal powers, and control of the judiciary.²⁴

By granting both military power and oil revenue to the central government, the proposed system had the potential to lead to recentralization and even a return to autocracy.²⁵ As Gary Sick notes, central control over revenue could provide the basis for the emergence of another dictatorship since it "frees the government from dependence on the popular will, and thereby tends to discourage democratic behavior and accountability."²⁶ Moreover, without independent sources of revenue, the provincial governments would remain dependent on the central government for funding. The Kurds were under pressure by Bremer to make

concessions.²⁷ In November 2003, an agreement between Bremer and Talabani was reached to base Iraq's future structure on the country's 18 existing governorates.²⁸

However, any strategy of pressuring the Kurds was restrained by the U.S. need for Kurdish support. Concern over the growing strength of potentially pro-Iranian Shi'a parties led the United States to seek out a counterforce in a strengthened federalist structure.²⁹ The Kurds also had other assets in this maneuvering. The United States' relative isolation in its Iraq policy--facing hostility from many Sunni and some Shi'a Iraqis, Iran, a number of Arab states, and a significant part of Europe--and the onset of an insurgency made Kurdish support, and the power of about 70,000 pro-coalition Peshmerga, more valuable. The relative stability of the north was one of the few advantages for the United States.³⁰ Only a token force of U.S. troops was stationed in the Kurdish area.³¹

Although the Kurds never threatened the Americans militarily, they could have raised the possibility of boycotting the central government and elections, barring representatives of the central government from Kurdistan, and even seceding from Iraq.³² Civil disobedience was also a possibility,³³ as was organizing a separate referendum in Kurdistan.

The United States also had some important leverage of its own in preventing any disagreements with the Kurds from escalating. One of them was the "Turkish card." The United States recognized Turkish concerns, invited Turkey to participate in the U.S.-led coalition, and remained silent about the Turkish threat of cross-border operations. In April 2003, for example, the United States pushed Peshmerga forces from Kirkuk--which they had entered as part of the coalition forces--due to Turkish concerns.³⁴ Secretary of State Colin Powell then allowed Turkey to send military observers to Kirkuk in order to witness the replacement of Kurdish troops by American Special Forces.

Thus, the United States simultaneously appeased its old ally, Turkey, by reducing the Kurdish influence on Kirkuk; secured

authority over the city's fate (a U.S. consulate was opened there but not elsewhere in the north); and adroitly managed to maintain its relations with the Kurds. To succeed, however, U.S. policy also had to limit Turkish influence in the north. In July 2003, U.S. forces apprehended 11 Turkish elite troops who were allegedly preparing to assassinate the Kurdish mayor/governor of Kirkuk and destabilize the de facto Kurdish government.³⁵

In part to make up for this friction with Turkey but also due to the need for increased support for coalition efforts, in September 2003, the United States stepped up attempts to obtain Turkish participation in the coalition. On October 8, 2003, the Turkish parliament accepted a U.S. invitation to send 10,000 troops to Baghdad.³⁶ This idea, however, was rejected by Iraq's own government.

During 2004, Turkey exercised pressure to limit the federalism of the future Iraqi state and the degree of autonomy given to any Kurdish federalist region, threatening a difficult and bloody future for any such system.³⁷ When in October 2004 the Kurds mounted pressure on the United States and Iraq to implement Article 58 of the TAL, which related to Kirkuk, Turkey spoke of possibly sending troops into northern Iraq,³⁸ warning that its forces could reach Kirkuk within 18 hours.³⁹

The frequent alterations of U.S. policy reflected the complex, changeable nature of the political and religious opposition to the United States in Iraq. This was evidenced by the fact that while most Sunnis rejected participation in elections and in the political process, Shi'a clerics and 42 Shi'a parties called for general elections in June 2003. Supporting this demand, in January 2004, tens of thousands of protesters marched.⁴⁰ On the one hand, the Sunni's rejection, based on their demand for restoring a regime they had dominated, undermined the legitimacy of the whole political process and further reduced security. On the other hand, the Shi'a demand for what was in effect a Shi'a Islamist state--at least in the south--threatened to bring to power anti-American religious groups. In this

context, the Kurds' behavior and their interests were likely a welcome relief.

Thus, the initial phase of a U.S. policy seeking to impose a secular Iraq on the Shi'a and a strong central government on the Kurds jeopardized its own interests. In comparison, many Kurds might have preferred an independent Kurdish state, especially if their situation in a future Iraq looked grim. They thus had to be offered a good deal in order to back a united Iraq and to continue to use their efforts in ways that helped the coalition.

THE ELECTIONS AND CHANGE IN U.S. POLICY

The combination of U.S. policy failures, the January 2005 election results, and relative Kurdish moderation brought a turning point in bilateral relations between the parties. Of special concern was the poor performance of secular Sunnis and Shi'a in the election. Kamil Pachachi, a U.S. favorite, failed to win a single seat; Ghazi Yawer won only five out of 275; and the secular Shi'a Ayad Allawi mustered only 14 percent of the vote. By contrast, the pro-Iranian Shi'a religious bloc, the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA), won more than half the seats.⁴¹

Therefore, the balance between the secular and religious forces was significantly altered in favor of the latter. The elections further consolidated sectarianism and widened the rift between the religious sects. U.S. hopes for a secular, united Iraq under a central national administration were hard-hit.

By contrast, the new balance created a climate favorable to further decentralization, benefiting the Kurds; this was clearly reflected in the permanent constitution. Furthermore, since Kurds comprised the second-largest bloc in parliament and the biggest secular group, U.S. interest in the Kurds increased to an unprecedented level. The Kurds became indispensable to the Americans. They replaced the defeated Shi'a moderates in defending secularism in Iraq, became a check and a balance between Sunnis and Shi'a, acted as an arbitrator between them, and encouraged reconciliation.

Finally, the high number of coalition casualties in the period both before and after the election created an increasingly disturbing and dangerous situation for the United States.⁴² This compelled the United States to reduce the triumphal tenor of its reports and adopt defensive strategies. The transfer of power back to the Iraqis became a welcome alternative with a twofold benefit for the Kurds. First, as partners in powersharing, the Kurds found this new arrangement could work to their advantage. Second, with a quarter of the parliamentary seats, they held the balance of power, since a two-thirds' majority was needed in order to rule.⁴³ The willingness of the Americans to support the Kurds depended on the U.S. position in Iraq.

Within this new context, the Americans conceded on a number of issues that had been rejected during the earlier phase. These included Talabani's election as president (a reversal of U.S. policy); federalism with a weaker central government; a clearer resolution for Kirkuk; and recognition of the Peshmerga as the guards of Kurdistan.⁴⁴

Once marginalized by American administrators, the Kurds were now courted for their support. U.S. officials began visiting Kurdistan. For example, in May 2005 Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice made Kurdistan the first stop of her first visit to Iraq. As Michael Rubin notes, "By going first to Barzani's headquarters rather than to Baghdad, she bolstered the Kurdish leader's position in the eyes of his constituents and among the other Iraqi political leaders negotiating in the nation's capital."⁴⁵ Then, in November 2005, Masud Barzani was officially received in the White House as president of the KRG and was assured the United States would accord the Kurds "special status" in Iraq.⁴⁶ Therefore, it can be seen that the initial U.S. strategy, which sought to weaken the Kurds and overcome their separatism, was replaced by another policy based on supporting the Kurdish position in Baghdad, weakening the pro-Iranian Islamists, and avoiding the menace of civil war.

This series of developments suggests that the pro-Kurdish element in U.S. policy was

not inevitable, but rather arose from failures and disappointments with other forces. The Shi'a strategy also pushed, albeit unintentionally, toward this result. The competition for power with the Sunnis, the fear of civil war, increasing Iranian influence, and the weakening of secularism all made the Kurds seem more attractive allies for the United States.

In addition, some influential Shi'a parties called for a special Shi'a region comprising nine provinces in the south. This attitude greatly strengthened the case for doing something similar in the north. The Shi'a were also willing to trade a relatively more secularist Iraq in exchange for Kurdish backing, a deal that also made Kurdish and U.S. interests run parallel and gave America another reason to appreciate the value of Kurdish leverage within the new Iraq.

Along similar lines, Iran's policy gave advantages to the Kurds as well. With growing Shi'a-Iranian links and the radicalization of Iran's government--under Mahmud Ahmadinejad and the drive for nuclear weapons--U.S. policy wanted stronger forces in Iraq that were not so tied to Tehran.

The emergence of the Sadr faction among the Shi'a intensified this situation. In the December 2005 elections, the Sadrists emerged as the strongest partner inside the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA), with a bloc of 32 seats. Also under Muqtada al-Sadr's control was the Mehdi army, which doubled in size between 2004 and 2006.⁴⁷ Sadr sent two strong messages to the Americans: One demanded a timetable for U.S. withdrawal, and the other was his willingness to defend Iran if it were attacked by the United States.⁴⁸

During the first stage, the response was to try to use the Kurdish card to overcome the problems posed by both the Shi'a and by the Shi'a-Sunni conflict. After the December election, for example, the Americans urged the Kurds to embrace the Sunnis and remain involved in negotiations in order to help form a secular government with Sunni Arabs and secular Shi'a under the leadership of Allawi.⁴⁹ As a result, a temporary rival coalition of

Kurds, Allawi, and Sunnis was formed that called on the UIA to withdraw from Jafari.

However, Iran's influence in Iraq is not confined to the Shi'a, and it is relevant to note that there were instances of cooperation (albeit inconstant) between Iraqi Kurdistan and Iran before the U.S. occupation or the emergence of the region of Iraqi Kurdistan in 1991. Iran has been, as one analyst put it, a "longstanding benefactor and player in Iraqi Kurdish politics when the KDP and PUK administered Kurdistan under the No Fly Zone."⁵⁰

Evidence of the Kurdish desire to gain support from Iran and maintain good relations with Tehran is the fact that since 1991 (when Iraqi Kurds assumed control of the region), the KRG has banned incursions into Iran from the armed camps of the Iranian Kurdistan opposition parties that have been based within the borders of Iraqi Kurdistan.⁵¹ Moreover, since the U.S. invasion of Iraq, an economic dimension has been added to the relationship. According to Kurdish officials, the annual trade between the two is estimated to be about \$800 million. There are Iranian consulates in both Arbil (the capital of the Kurdistan region) and Sulaymani (the second largest city in the KRG). Unlike other neighboring countries, where the KRG has no formal representation, the KRG has official representation in Tehran, and this can be construed as recognition of the KRG by the Iranian government.

In its effort to reduce Iranian influence in Iraq, the United States has sought to undermine Kurdish-Iranian relations. For example, in January 2007, U.S. forces, accompanied by military helicopters, stormed the Iranian consulate in the Kurdish city of Arbil, arresting five Iranian employees. Then, on September 20, 2007, the U.S. army arrested an Iranian trade delegation on suspicion of smuggling weapons into Iraq for use against U.S. soldiers. This action has damaged Iranian-Kurdish relations.

As an act of protest against the U.S. detention of the Iranian official, Iran temporarily closed the main border crossing to the KRG. In the words of Hoshyar Zebari, Iraq's foreign minister, "Iran is punishing the Kurdish region for the U.S. detention of an

Iranian citizen.” The closure of the border has had serious repercussions for the economy of the KRG, causing it to lose millions of dollars worth of trade each day. Moreover, many Kurds have speculated that Iran lets Ansar al-Islam operate across the border to project its influence and leverage in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).⁵²

Another significant incident that contributed to a rift between the KRG and Iran was the shelling by the Iranian army of villages in Iraqi Kurdistan in August 2007, which lasted several weeks.⁵³ The attack was condemned by Zebari,⁵⁴ the KRG,⁵⁵ and the Kurdistan Regional Parliament. The KRG held a special meeting on August 28, 2007, and called on the Iraqi government, the UN, and the U.S.-led coalition forces to pressure Iran to stop the assault.⁵⁶ Iran confirmed the shelling in an official statement by General Yahya Rahim Safavi.

The U.S. response was paradoxical, for despite U.S. allegations of Iranian interference in Iraqi affairs, the Bush administration remained silent on the issue. The arrests of the Iranian “diplomats” in Kurdistan, the Iranian bombardment, the closing of the border by the Iranian government, U.S. silence on these events, and the failure of the U.S. occupying forces to take responsibility for defending the Kurds are evidence of the U.S. strategy to create a gap between the Kurds and the Iranians.

The differences between the Kurds and the United States also result from their respective conflicts of interest in the region. On the one hand, the KRG has the policy of keeping a balance between its relations with both Iran and the United States. On the other hand, the United States has a strategy of maintaining close links with its NATO ally, Turkey. However, since there is tension between Iran and the United States, and Turkey is fiercely hostile to the Kurdish cause, this is a serious obstacle to U.S.-Kurdish relations.

Another measure that the United States adopted was a policy of “recentralization.” On the one hand, Sunni participation together with the emergence of the pro-centralist Shi’a constituted powerful forces within the UIA

and gave the United States new hope that a strong central government could be achieved. This policy was both an acknowledgement of Sunni participation and an effort to avoid civil war. As then U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad⁵⁷ stressed to the Sunnis, the United States would support efforts to address their legitimate concerns.⁵⁸ Khalilzad also urged the Iraqi leaders to “strike agreements that will win greater Sunni Arab support.”⁵⁹ One of the most significant Sunni demands was for a strong central government. Therefore, in line with Sunni concerns, Khalilzad explained that his goal was to “start the process of forming a national unity government.”⁶⁰ Rice asked for continued central control, and she urged the security forces to give their allegiance to the central government.⁶¹

This new policy also failed to solve the Iraqi dilemma. The U.S. strategy of seeking the formation of a strong secular central government was replaced by that of preventing and containing civil war. The prospect of full-scale civil war between Shi’a and Sunnis was strong in the autumn of 2005. The number of sectarian casualties during this period reached an alarming level. A significant step towards sectarian civil war took place when the Shi’a al-Askari shrine in Samarra was blown up on February 22, 2006.

Within a period of a few days, hundreds of Sunnis were killed, and dozens of Sunni mosques were damaged in retaliation. Furthermore, Sunni involvement in the political process and the emergence of the pro-centralist Shi’a as strong forces in parliament brought contradictory results. Through their entrance into the political process, parliament, and government institutions, sectarianism was legalized and institutionalized. Furthermore, instead of securing Iraqi citizens from the threat of sectarian violence, the security forces and institutions themselves perpetrated acts of violence; they were part of the problem. Examples include the secret prison of the Internal Ministry (which detained Sunnis) and the Shi’a death squads. Furthermore, many Sunni policemen were involved in killing based on identity.

CONCLUSION

The conflict in Iraq is particularly intransigent because of the convoluted tangle of competing ethnic, religious, cultural, historical, and political features of that society. It is a deeply divided nation with a legacy of internecine and interstate conflicts, factional strife, systematic repression, social alienation, and ethnic and religious fanaticism. Currently, it is a post-authoritarian state with little or no experience of electoral democracy. Iraq's problem is a direct consequence of the accumulated effects of centuries of internal conflict.

An important contributing element in the internal divisions within Iraq is ethnic nationalism. For many decades, Kurdish ethnic nationalism has been expressed in the form of secessionist and irredentist movements, but this has brought them into conflict with Sunni pan-Arab nationalism and territorialism.⁶² Another key ingredient in the civil conflict has been the clash of identities, and as Carole O'Leary has noted, many Iraqis "view their own communal identities in primordial or essentializing terms." For example, there is a lack of feeling of belonging to Iraq and the absence (or weakness) of a sense of Iraqi national identity among the Kurds.⁶³

Instead, as O'Leary observes, there is an emerging form of a "Kurdistani-ness" form of identity.⁶⁴ In other words, Iraqi society is dominated by seemingly irreconcilable groups with opposing notions of their own identity. The Kurdish identity seems incompatible with an Iraqi national identity; pan-Arabism clashes with Iraqi nationalist ideals; and Shi'a and Sunni versions of Islam have long been hostile to each other. Due to the depth of feeling that underpins this clash of identities, O'Leary classifies Iraq as a "non-nation state."⁶⁵ She points out that "the identity and comparison patterns in a 'non-nation state' produce patterns of political conflict different from those found in nation states."⁶⁶ In fact, for O'Leary "the failure to construct an Iraqi national identity that includes all Iraqis is a key factor in understanding Iraq's

institutionalized culture of violence, its inability to initiate political reform, and its aggressiveness toward its neighbours."⁶⁷

Moreover, 80 years of conflict between these contradictions has created exclusive interests for each group. There is a unique balance between the former rulers, the Sunnis, and the subjugated Shi'a and Kurds. The Kurds want local self-rule or even independence. The Sunnis' main interest is to recover their grip on power while keeping the country's territorial integrity intact. Shi'a form about 60 percent of Iraq's population, and their main interest has been to exercise their right as the majority to run the country.⁶⁸ Hence, the key interests of Iraq's ethnic/sectarian groups are diametrically opposed and seemingly irreconcilable.

These opposite interests have resulted in the creation of exclusive visions for each group over many things. The role of Islam is one example. Most Shi'a and Sunnis insist on an Islamic identity for Iraq, but Ibrahim al-Marashi notes that the Kurds believe that "an Islamicized state will merely attempt to subsume the Kurdish identity under the banner of Islam."⁶⁹ Foreign policy is another area of disagreement. Though both Shi'a and Sunnis express their hostility to Israel, it is often reported that the Kurds feel less so and even make agreements with Israelis.⁷⁰ The Shi'a view Iran as a friend and as powerful coreligionists. Sunnis, on the other hand, consider Iran as an enemy that threatens Iraq's Arab identity.⁷¹

These are all real issues and problems, not merely misunderstandings or due to the personal quirks of individual leaders. No wonder, then, that Iraq is such a difficult issue to manage. However, the Kurdish focus on self-rule, which opts out of the struggle for power over the country as a whole, is in this mix the relatively easiest goal to attain.

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most recent publication is "An Independent Kurdish State: Achievable or Merely a Kurdish Dream?," *The Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (2007), pp. 267-305.

NOTES

¹ Gareth Stansfield, "Divide and Heal," *Prospect Magazine*, No. 122 (May 2006).

² Melissa Block, "Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz Interview with National Public Radio: Interview with Melissa Block, U.S. Department of Defense," Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), February 19, 2003, http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2003/t02202003_t0219npr.html, (accessed July 29, 2006).

³ Thelma LeBrecht and Bob Burns LeBrecht, "Secretary Rumsfeld Interview with the Associated Press: Interview with Thelma AP Radio, and Bob Burns, AP Wire, Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld," April 24, 2003, <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2003/tr20030424-secdef0125.html> (accessed July 29, 2006).

⁴ Block, "Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz."

⁵ The White House Office of the Press Secretary, "President Bush Announces Major Combat Operations in Iraq Have Ended: Remarks by the President from the USS Abraham Lincoln at Sea off the Coast of San Diego," May 1, 2003, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/05/20030501-15.html> (accessed July 2, 2006).

⁶ Barbara Boxer, "Boxer Asks Rumsfeld for American Troop Reduction in Iraq," Press Release, November 3, 2005, <http://boxer.senate.gov/news/releases/record.cfm?id=248206&&> (accessed July 29, 2006).

⁷ The White House Office of the Press Secretary, "President Bush Addresses United Nations General Assembly, September 2003," <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/09/20030923-4.html> (accessed April 29, 2006).

⁸ Owen Matthews, Sami Kohen, and John Barry, "Risking a Civil War," *Newsweek* Vol. 141, No. 8 (2003), p. 9.

⁹ Hussein Tahiri, "Kurds: Victims of American National Interests," *Kurdish Media*, <http://www.kurdmedia.com/articles.asp?id=8940> (accessed March 18, 2006).

¹⁰ Ibid; Matthews, Kohen, and Barry, "Risking a Civil War;" Peter W. Galbraith, *The End of Iraq: How American Incompetence Created a War Without End* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006), p. 93; Michael M. Gunter, "Kurdish Future in a Post-Saddam Iraq," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 23, No. 1, pp. 9-24. According to Tahiri, "Zalmay Khalilzad, President Bush's special envoy to the Iraqi opposition, went to Ankara this month [February 2003] and told top Kurdish leaders to accept a large deployment of Turkish troops--supposedly for humanitarian relief--to enter northern Iraq after any American invasion. He also told the Kurds that they would have to give up plans for self-government, adding that hundreds of thousands of people driven from their homes by Saddam Hussein would not be able to return to them. *Kurdishmedia.com* reported that the United States and Turkey have agreed that the Turkish troops in Southern Kurdistan will be under the Turkish command. The Kurds have a force of over 100,000 Peshmergas, but the USA preferred not to use them in case Turkey might be offended or feel left out." (See Tahiri, "Kurds.") Furthermore, two weeks before Turkey's rejection of the U.S. plan, Deputy Secretary of Defense Wolfowitz declared that Turkey could do a lot for itself if they will fully cooperate with United States (See Block, "Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz Interview with National Public Radio.")

¹¹ Just one month before the Turkish rejection, in his interview with Goudsouzian, Masud Barzani explained that "America's plans do not include the Kurdish-controlled areas in northern Iraq, nor do they include using Kurdish forces," and "the US asked us not to participate in any attack against the Iraqi forces." (See Tanya Goudsouzian, "Barzani:

Kurds Will Not Take Part in U.S.-Led War,” Kurdistan Regional Government, January 29, 2006,

<http://old.krg.org/docs/articles/mbarzani-interview-gulfnews-jan03.asp> (accessed April 19, 2006).

¹² Block, “Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz.”

¹³ Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), “The November 15 Agreement: Timeline to a Sovereign, Democratic, and a Secure Iraq,” <http://www.iraqcoalition.org/government/AgreementNov15.pdf> (accessed September 9, 2006).

¹⁴ “Can Kurds and Arabs be Reunited?” *Economist*, Vol. 368 (2003), No. 8342, pp. 44-45.

¹⁵ Jalal Talabani and Masud Barzani, “His Excellency President George W. Bush,” Kurdistan Regional Government, June 1, 2004, <http://old.krg.org/letter-from-barzani-talabani-to-bush-jun04.asp> (accessed April 19, 2006).

¹⁶ Galbraith, *The End of Iraq*, p. 165.

¹⁷ Julia Duin, “Kurds Build Own Identity,” *Washington Times*, August 18, 2004, p. 15.

¹⁸ Talabani and Barzani, “His Excellency.”

¹⁹ After 1991, when the Kurds established their semi-independent region, they used a different currency from that of Baghdad. It is also an Iraqi currency but is known as the Swiss Dinar. See “Can Kurds and Arabs be Reunited?”

²⁰ Talabani and Barzani, “His Excellency;” L. Paul Bremer, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), p. 268.

²¹ Article 53 (A), The Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period-TAL stipulates that “the Kurdistan Regional Government is recognized as the official government of the territories that were administered by that government on 19 March 2003 in the governorates of Dohuk, Arbil, Sulaimaniya, Kirkuk, Diyala and Neneveh. The term ‘Kurdistan Regional Government’ shall refer to the Kurdistan National Assembly, the Kurdistan Council of Ministers,

and the regional judicial authority in the Kurdistan region.”

²² Article 4 of the Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period-TAL (2004) stipulates that “the system of government in Iraq shall be republican, federal, democratic, and pluralistic, and powers shall be shared between the federal government and the regional governments, governorates, municipalities, and local administrations. The federal system shall be based upon geographic and historical realities and the separation of powers, and not upon origin, race, ethnicity, nationality, or confession.” Also, Article 53 (C) stipulates that “any group of no more than three governorates outside the Kurdistan region, with the exception of Baghdad and Kirkuk, shall have the right to form regions from amongst themselves. The mechanisms for forming such regions may be proposed by the Iraqi Interim Government, and shall be presented and considered by the elected National Assembly for enactment into law. In addition to being approved by the National Assembly, any legislation proposing the formation of a particular region must be approved in a referendum of the people of the relevant governorates.”

²³ According to Article 61 (C) of the Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional period-TAL, “the general referendum will be successful and the draft constitution ratified if a majority of the voters in Iraq approve and if two-thirds of the voters in three or more governorates do not reject it.” While Kurds form a majority in at least three Kurdistan provinces, this article was seen as a Kurdish veto.

²⁴ CPA, “Executive Summary,” http://www.cpa-iraq.org/government/TAL_exsum.html (accessed July 7, 2006).

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²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Peter W. Galbraith, "The Mess," *The New York Review of Books*, Vol. 53, No. 4 (2006).

²⁸ Jalal Talabani was the head of the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) at that time.

²⁹ Bremer, *My Year in Iraq*, p. 306; Galbraith, *The End of Iraq*, p. 145; Brendan O'Leary and John McGarry, "Constitutional Building and Federal Options in Iraq: The Kurdish Challenge," International Center for Human Rights and Democratic Development, January 1, 2005,

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³¹ Michael J. Totten, "The Kurds Go Their Own Way," *Reason*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (2006).

³² Talabani and Barzani, "His Excellency."

³³ Nawshirwan Mustafa, "No for Throwing Flowers to Americans," *Kurdistani Nwe*, No. 3264, p 1.

³⁴ Gunter, "The Continuing Crisis," p. 120.

³⁵ Michael M. Gunter, "The Kurds in Iraq: Why Kurdish Statehood is Unlikely," *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (2004), p. 109; Robert Olson, "Turkey and Kurdistan-Iraq," *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (2004), p. 115; Katherine Ridolfo, "Al-Sadr Reasserts Himself: This Time Against Coreligionists," *RFE/RL Iraq Report*, Vol. 8, No. 29 (2005), <http://www.rferl.org/reports/iraq-report/2005/08/29-260805.asp> (accessed June 24 2006).

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³⁷ Christopher Brewin, "Turkey; Democratic Legitimacy," in Alex Danchev and John MacMillan (eds.), *The Iraq War and Democratic Politics* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 103.

³⁸ Katherine Ridolfo, "Turkey Makes Plans for Iraq," *RFE/RL Iraq Report*, Vol. 7, No. 41 (2004), p. 41,

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⁴⁰ Toby Dodge, "Iraqi Transitions: From Regime Change to State Collapse," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 26, Nos. 4-5 (2005), p. 716.

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⁴³ See Articles 36 and 38 of the Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period; Articles 70 and 76 of the Iraqi Constitution.

⁴⁴ See Article 121 of the Iraqi Constitution.

⁴⁵ Michael Rubin, "The Arafat Model," *National Review*, Vol. 57, No. 16 (2005).

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⁵⁰ Lydia Khalil, "The Hidden Hand of Iran in the Resurgence of Ansar al-Islam," *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 5, No. 11 (2007), http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/uploads/TM_005_011.pdf.

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⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Rafaat, "An Independent Kurdish State," p. 277.

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