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THE KURDS

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The Middle East is wrought with the passions of burgeoning nationalisms, religious fervor, ethnic conflict, and external intervention, as well as the more mundane struggle over land and resources. The aspirations of Pan-Arab unity and Pan-Islam face a subjective reality of a Middle Eastern mosaic of peoples artificially divided into a modern state system, with states jealously guarding their vested interests. National boundaries, although tested by expansionist states pressing historical and sometimes, religious claims, are proving to be resilient, but not always immutable. Similarly, the nationalist aspirations of ethnic and religious minorities within the Middle Eastern states face the vested interests of their host states, which have a propensity to preserve the status quo and a reluctance to relinquish sovereignty or share power. The aspiration of national self-determination that emerged as a prominent milieu goal in the post-colonial world is often championed by the United Nations, and is repeatedly voiced in the Middle East. National self-determination sought by religious and ethnic minorities in the Middle East, however, is undermined by transnational religious movements; is too often the victim of the national interests of both Middle Eastern states and outside powers; and is repeatedly sacrificed to the exigencies of internal security and regional stability.

As the Middle East moves into the 1990s, ethnic and religious nationalists, wedded to national liberation movements, appear destined to repeat their frustrations. They not only struggle among themselves and are repressed by their host states, but are

also manipulated by opportunistic outside parties. The tragic experience of the Kurdish people in the Middle East represents the classic example of the denial of national self-determination following the fragmentation of the Ottoman Empire. The Kurdish experience illustrates the problems faced by a "stateless nation,"[1] by "a people without a country,"[2] artificially divided by state boundaries and otherwise separated by history. The Kurds are the largest national group in the Middle East without a state.

ETHNIC IDENTITY

The Kurdish people, an Indo-European people, are the fourth largest national or ethnic group in the Middle East after the Arabs, Turks, and Iranians, but have no state. Believed to be descendants of the ancient Medes,[3] Kurds today number over 20,000,000[4] and primarily reside in a single parcel of land known as Greater Kurdistan. This Kurdish land is about 500,000-520,000 square kilometers in area and is divided among Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and the Soviet Union. Kurds generally refer to Greater Kurdistan as the "the five parts" or "the five sections," rather than as a single entity or unified whole.[5] Additionally, Kurdish expatriot populations have emerged in Lebanon and in Europe, particularly in Germany and Sweden.

Kurds historically were considered to be non-Arab nomads and were often thought of as being warriors or warlike.[6] However, they were not viewed as a separate ethnic group within the Middle East. Instead, they were simply seen as Moslems. The millet system that developed in the Middle East even before Islam and was adopted by the Ottoman Empire, was based upon religion.

Nomenclature

Today Kurds are commonly know by several names. In Turkey, Kurds are commonly referred to as "Mountain Turks," but there appears to be a growing acknowledgement of the Kurdish identity. Previously, reference to Turkish Kurds in Turkey was potentially punishable by imprisonment. In Iran Kurds are generally seen as an Iranian people, having many cultural characteristics in common with Persians, such as the important Now Ruz celebration. Another name associated with Kurds is "Pesh Merga," which refers to the Kurdish guerrillas or fighters and literally means "those who face death."

Another aspect of the Kurdish identity is the relationship of Kurds to other minority groups found in Kurdistan. For example, some Kurdish areas include Christians, such as Assyrians and Armenians, as well as Jews. It is not uncommon to see these

groups casually included as Kurds in Kurdish population figures. Moreover, the expression, "Kurdish Jews," is frequently used to refer to Jews from Kurdish areas.[7] In Israel, sometimes the use of the word, "Kurds," refers to the Jews from Kurdish areas of Iraq, especially as have settled in Jerusalem. Also, some Kurdish nationalists have variously included Lurs and Bakhtiari as Kurds, even though the Lurs and Bakhtiari might disagree. The secretive Druze community in Lebanon, Syria, and Israel reportedly are sometimes linked with the Kurdish lands.[8]

Historical Developments

Greater Kurdistan is today divided among Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and the Soviet Union. The national (state) boundaries that divide Greater Kurdistan were primarily derived from the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire after World War I. The first division of the Kurdish region, however, dates back to the sixteenth century clash between the Safavid or Persian Empire and the Ottoman Empire. The famous historical battle of Caldiran, August 23, 1514, served to establish probably the first division of the Kurdish lands, as Kurdistan became caught in the throes of more than a century long struggle between the two powerful empires. Mem u Zin, the epic work of the seventeenth century Kurdish poet, Ehmed-i Xani, captures the plight of the Kurdish peoples caught between the Ottomans and the Persians. The epic expresses a longing for a Kurdish king and a Kurdish kingdom, thus anticipating the twentieth century concept of national self-determination by over three hundred years.[9]

The 1639 Ottoman-Persian treaty signaled the establishment of a lasting partition of Kurdistan between the Ottomans (Turks) and the Persians.[10] It was the subsequent twentieth century European division of the Ottoman Empire following World War I that contributed to a much greater fragmentation of the Kurdish region and to the predicament the Kurds find themselves today. While the promise of Kurdish self-determination did appear to a degree in the Treaty of Sevres after World War I, Kurds were initially to be offered only "local autonomy" (article 62) in an area that had been part of the Ottoman Empire, with the possibility of independence after one year only if the majority of the Kurdish population wanted independence and the League Council then recommended independence (article 64).[11] The Treaty of Sevres was never ratified by the Turkish Grand National Assembly, however, and was eventually replaced with the Lausanne Treaty of January 23, 1923, primarily due to the emergent Turkish nationalism and the efforts of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. The Lausanne Treaty entirely omitted the earlier treaty's provi-

sion for an autonomous Kurdistan[12] and dashed Kurdish hopes for self-determination that had been articulated so eloquently three centuries earlier by Ehmed-i Xani.[13] It was the boundaries based upon the Lausanne Treaty that divided the Kurdish people and resulted in separate national experiences for the Kurdish communities in Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and the Soviet Union.

POLITICAL DEMANDS: DISPARATE NATIONAL GOALS

The state boundaries and separate national development experiences of the Kurds in the five states in which Greater Kurdistan lies have had a significant impact on Kurdish political goals, and have created unsurpassable barriers to Kurdish national unity. The effect of the separate national experiences of the five Kurdish "parts" offers lessons not only for contemporary Kurdish nationalists, but also for other nationalist groups that find themselves artificially divided by state boundaries. The obstacles to Kurdish national unity, as evident in the twentieth century Kurdish experience fall into three interrelated issue areas: problems of communication, problems of common political action, and problems of external influence and manipulation. Problems of communication and problems of common political action relate to the lasting effect of separate Kurdish national experiences within the respective host states which control the Kurdish areas and the ultimate parameters for pressing Kurdish political demands. The related problems of external influence and manipulation impact not only on the efficacy of obtaining national goals, but also on regional stability.

Perhaps one of the key factors affecting Kurdish nationalism and one of the biggest obstacles to Kurdish national unification involves the inability Kurds to communicate easily with Kurds in other areas. A common language is a basic common denominator of any national movement, and no single, recognized spoken or written Kurdish language has emerged, current efforts to systematize the Kurdish language notwithstanding.[14] The problem of communication is significant not only between Kurdish groups in different states, but also between Kurdish groups in different parts of the same state. As one scholar points out, "Of all the major nationalities in the Middle East, only the Kurds have yet to adopt a standard language, commonly accepted and learned by all branches of the nation."[15]

Problems in Communications

In Iran, the Kurdish population is placed at just over 5 million or about 9 percent of the population.[16] Kurdistan in Iran

lies along the Turkish-Iranian border and along the upper part of the Iraqi-Iranian border. Kurdistan in Iran extends well beyond the Kurdistan province. In addition, there is a significant Kurdish population in Khorasan province, dating from the 1600s. Also, numerous Kurds have gravitated to Tehran and other urban centers.

In Iran there are two principal forms of spoken Kurdish—Kurdi and Gorani.[17] Each has numerous dialects. The Kurdish dialects in the northern, central, and southeastern parts of Kurdistan in Iran show varying degrees of commonality, but do present significant communication problems among Iranian Kurds.[18] The Kurdish language, being an Indo-European language, parallels Persian (Farsi), but is distinct from Persian even though it shares many common words and phrases. It also reflects significant Arabic influences. The study of Kurdish, however, has not been permitted in Iranian schools, though it is widely spoken in the Kurdish community.[19] In other words, while Kurdish was spoken in Kurdish homes, Persian was the language Kurdish children learned to read and write. The study of Kurdish was officially banned under the Shah; Kurdish schools were forbidden. Radio stations, however, did broadcast in Kurdish, but ofter to legitimize the Shah's regime. Moreover, the broadcasts asserted that Kurdish was a dialect of Persian.

The Islamic Republic's constitution, as initially approved, provided in article 15 that the official language of Iran is Persian and that all official documents, correspondence, and textbooks must be in Persian.[20] However, the use of local and nationality languages would be allowed in the press and media. The teaching of literature in local languages, along with Persian was also to be permitted.[21] The original Draft Constitution provided in article 21 that "the use of local languages in local schools and press is permitted,"[22] but the Constitution as finally approved restricted the use of local languages to accompany Farsi and expressly stated that textbooks must be in Farsi. The new Constitution appeared to offer bilingual schools, a step away from the strict prohibition of the Kurdish language under the Shah. Nevertheless, practice remained virtually unchanged, as illustrated by the clandestine National Voice of Iran in January 1984. It asserted that the study of "English, Arabic, and other foreign languages was made "compulsory for the peoples of Kurdistan" and that the Islamic Republic had "banned or made impossible education in the mother tongue."[23] As one young Kurdish intellectual explained, "we are allowed to publish in Kurdish, but we are forbidden to publish in Kurdish."

Despite the limitations on the use of Kurdish throughout

the Kurdish areas of Iran, the Sorani dialect has emerged as the predominate dialect used in radio broadcasts and in Kurdish publications.[24] The Kurdish Democratic Party (Iran) does radio broadcasts via the Voiče of Kurdistan in Kurdish (and also in Azeri and Farsi). Komale, or the Communist Party of Iran (CPI) also has broadcast in Kurdish and Farsi over the Voice of the Revolution of Iran. While the Kurdish language is recognized as a national symbol, communication problems persist. Other major Kurdish dialects include Kurmanci in the north and northeast; Sinei, Kermansahi, and Leki in the south; Zaza in the north; and Gorani in the south, among others.[25]

In Iraq the Kurdish population is about 15-20 percent of the population, or possibly as high as about 3.8 million.[26] Kurds are situated in the mountainous northeastern part of Iraq. An "Autonomous Region" was established as a separate administrative entity in Iraq following the March 11, 1970 Agreement and the Autonomy Law of 1974. However, not all Kurdish areas are included in the Autonomous Region. Kirkuk, for example, has a significant Kurdish population.

The official language of Iraq is Arabic, but Kurdish is also considered to be an official language for the Autonomous Region. Kurds generally speak both Arabic and Kurdish in Iraq. The Kurdish language has flourished in Iraq since the 1958 revolution.[27] In Iraq four main forms of Kurdish exist, but are not mutually intelligible.[28] Kurmanji is spoken in the north above Mosul, but has no literature. Sorani is spoken in the Irbil province, but the closely-related Sulaimani Kurdish has been considered "the language of Kurdish literature and the printed word."[29] Today, Sorani (or Kurdi) has effectively become the official Kurdish language used in government and taught in schools. The fourth dialect, Gorani, is spoken by the southernmost Kurdish tribes, and by some of the more unusual Kurdish groups, including minor Islamic sects, such as the Sarlis, Kakais, and Shebeks.[30]

The Kurdish population in Turkey is difficult to assess because of the past Turkish Government's past aversion to viewing Kurds as a separate ethnic/national group. Conservative estimates place the Kurdish population at about 12% of the total Turkish population, or just over 6.8 million.[31] Other estimates frequently place the Kurdish population in Turkey as high as 18% of the total.[32] Kurds primarily live in eastern Turkey, but the migration of Kurds to urban areas has brought Kurds to all major cities. Since the Turkish Government has a history of considering Kurds as Turks, Kurds have generally been afforded the same rights as Turks, but language has been a significant problem.

Kurds have been forced to use the Turkish language in

schools. Turkish, a Ural-Altaic language, is quite different from the Indo-European Kurdish. Moreover, since November 1928, Turkey has used the Latin or Roman alphabet instead of the Arabic alphabet.[33] The imposition of the Latin alphabet by law served to limit severely the ability of Turkish Kurds to read Kurdish materials published in Iran or Iraq. Similarly, Kurds in Iran have great difficulty reading Kurdish in the Latin script. Kurds in Turkey primarily speak the Kurmanji dialect and use the Hawar (Turcized Latin) characters, but the Zaza dialect is also spoken, such as in Dersim.[34] One Kurdish scholar, Kendal, charged that the Kurdish language became a target in Turkey for those want to destroy the Kurdish national community.[35] Under Kemalism, Turkey not only banned the written use of Kurdish, but also its spoken use, even though only a small percentage of Kurds could speak Turkish. In the Kurdish community, a language that one does not understand, is commonly considered to be "Turkish." In modern Turkey the 1982 Turkish Constitution continues to prohibit the use of Kurdish,[36] but the Turkish Council of Ministers, under the chairmanship of President Turgut Ozal announced that it would abolish Law 2932, enacted in 1983 which bans non-Turkish languages in Turkey. The Council of Ministers made the dramatic move January 26, 1991, and called for the Justice Ministry to prepare a new bill.[37] Such an action might eventually lead to the legalization of the use of Kurdish in Turkey.

In Syria, the Kurdish population represents only about 8%[38] of the total population or about 998,675 out of 12,483,440.[39] The Kurdish communities are primarily found in three areas. First, the largest Kurdish community is in northern Jazira in northeastern Syria near the Turkish and Iraqi border, with smaller concentrations in northwest Jazira and in Kurd Dagh, northwest of Allepo.[40] Although some speak Kurdish, most are "Arabicisized" and are assimilated into the local Arab culture, but not without some tension.[41]

Kurmanji Kurdish is the primary dialect spoken in Syria, and Kurdish communities tend to use Hawar, the Latin alphabet used by the Turks. Kurdish language and cultural activities were the target of radical Baath Arab nationalist pressures in the 1960s. The intensity of the Baath attack on the Syrian Kurds is illustrated by Mahamed Talab Hilal's 1963 "Study of the Province of Jazireh in its National, Social and Political Aspects," described by a leading Kurdish intellectual as "a mere invitation to genocide in the kind of Mein Kampf.[42] The Syrian Government's harsh Arabization of some Kurdish areas in Syria and other anti-Kurdish repressive acts gave way after the 1970s to more a more accommodating policy, especially after Saddam Hussein came

into power in Iraq.

The 1989 official Soviet census places the Kurdish population in the Soviet Union at 153,000, but Soviet Kurds estimate the Kurdish population to be much greater, possibly over 500,000.[43] Kurds historically settled in the Transcaucasus region. An autonomous Kurdish region, "Red Kurdistan, " existed in Soviet Azerbaijan from 1923 through 1929. Kurds were dispersed to Central Asia by Stalin in the 1930s and 1940s. Kurds now are found in Kazakhstan and the Central Asian republics as well as in Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia.

Kurds in the Soviet Union find it difficult to communicate with other Kurds because Stalin dispersed so many of them throughout Central Asia. The linguistic factor also comes into play, especially since the alphabet has complicated comprehension. In the 1920s a Kurdish alphabet that employed Armenian characters was developed in the Kurdish areas of the Soviet Union. After 1929 the Latin alphabet came to be used.[45] In the 1930s the Cyrillic alphabet was adopted and the new emphasis on Russian meant less opportunities in Kurdish schools. The Kurdish autonomous district created in Soviet Azerbaijan ceased to exist in 1930. It was not until the late 1950s that Soviet nationalities policy again fostered the use of local languages, and the Kurdish language reemerged.[46] Kurmanji is the predominant Kurdish dialect in the Soviet Union. However, Kurmanji uses Cyrillic script, which is not readily understood by non-Soviet Kurds.

Problems of Common Political Action

The lack of both a common language and common alphabet represents a significant inhibitor to communication and to the creation of common Kurdish political goals. The inability of Kurds to communicate readily represents a significant barrier to any Kurdish national unification. This lack of effective communication, in turn, has led to Kurdish nationalists developing separately within their respective host states. The goals sought are not goals of Greater Kurdistan or of the Kurdish nation as a whole, but narrower, perceived goals linked to the separate Kurdish experiences and aspirations. Kurdish nationalist goals range from preserving the Kurdish culture and language, to autonomy or self-rule in a larger state, to the establishment of an independent Kurdistan.

The problem of goal selection, as clouded by ideology, religion, vested interests, and degree of assimilation in host states, further complicates the possibility of a common political action not only among Kurdish nationalists in general, but also within Kurdish areas of their respective host states. Moreover, the actions

of the host states can serve to be divisive, as Kurdish groups are played off against one another or co-opted to support the central government of the host state at the expense of Kurdish national goals. National liberation movements are sometimes viewed as having a common goals, but in disagreement on how best to achieve those goals. In the Kurdish case there is no common goal. Greater Kurdistan remains a Kurdistan of five parts.

In Iran Kurds are one minority in a country of minorities. Reza Shah's efforts to enhance national unity by changing the name of Persia to Iran enabled the non-Persian peoples, including Kurds, to see themselves as Iranians. Accordingly, Kurds on the whole have not been excluded from individual opportunities of full participation within Iranian society. Many Kurds have been individually assimilated and have assumed prominent positions in the Iranian government through the years. Nevertheless, Kurdistan in Iran is rural and remote and tends to be separated geographically, culturally, and politically from the Iranian central government.[47]

In Iranian Kurdistan, Kurdish goals have been primarily expressed from a leftist perspective, responding to class differences and, in no small way, to vested interests of tribal leaders who have cooperated closely with the central government over the years. Modern Kurdish political organization in Iran dates from the Kurdish Democratic Party (Iran) founded under the leadership of Qazi Mohammad. The Kurdish nationalist aspirations, though often assessed by the central government as being secessionist or separatist, have been generally limited to self-rule within a democratic Iran. "Democracy in Iran and Autonomy in Kurdistan" has been the ongoing goal of the Kurds in Iran. Even the so-called independent Kurdish Republic of Mahabad[48] had been calling for a form of autonomy within Iran. Qazi Mohammed's Kurdish Democratic Party (Iran) put forth an eight-point program which first and foremost asserted: "the Kurdish people of Iran must manage their own local affairs and be granted autonomy within Iran's frontiers."[49] Qazi Mohammad declared the "State of the Kurdish Republic" on January 22, 1946, but whether he was establishing an "autonomous regional government" or a "fully independent republic" was never resolved because of the fall of his "republic."[50]

The Iranian Kurdish Democratic Party's goal of autonomy continued for decades under the leadership of the late Dr. Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou and was reflected in the slogan, "Autonomy in Kurdistan, democracy in Iran." The Kurdish goal of autonomy or self-rule in Iran has remained consistent over the years despite accusations of separatism. Although the goal of

democracy was not acceptable to the Shah or to Ayatollah Khomeini and the Islamic Republic, Dr. Ghassemlou remained genuine in his efforts to pursue autonomy within Iran. Even when Dr. Ghassemlou was assassinated in July 1989, he was undertaking secret negotiations with the Islamic Republic to repair relations with Tehran.[51]

In addition to the Kurdish Democratic Party (Iran), other Kurdish political organizations, have pushed for democracy and autonomy, the most notable being Komala or its follow-on Communist Party of Iran. Although the Kurdish Democratic Party and Komala did not always agree on policy, cooperation has been significant.[52] Other leftest-oriented organizations, such as, Mojahedin Khalq, People's Fedayeen, and the Tudeh, have included Kurds and have stood together with the Kurdish Democratic Party (Iran) against the forces of Zionism, imperialism, and reaction.

In Kurdistan in Iran, Kurds represent a rural, underdeveloped, dispossessed people, who are struggling to survive. Their perspective, as that of many Third World peoples, is limited to their own isolated experience. Their isolation, together with the weight of their leftist ideology, has severely limited their world view.

In Iraq, Kurds represent a minority associated with a portion of Greater Kurdistan that falls in the northern part of Iraq. The Kurdish experience in Iraq is fundamentally different from that in Iran and offers great contrasts.[53] Many Kurds have been fully integrated into Iraqi society and have reached the highest positions of power.[54] Kurds participate fully in the military (unlike the Arab citizens in Israel). Kurdish language and education is allowed. Iraq's response to its Kurdish community varies considerably, however. Kurdish opposition groups confronting the Iraqi central government, have experienced, inter alia, the horrors of genocide, chemical attacks, destruction of villages, and wholescale population transfers. Kurds were tragic victims of chemical attacks at Halabja on March 16, 1988,[55] and of the so-called "war of extermination" in the fall of 1988.[56] In the past, a ruthless move by the central government has been followed by some form of amnesty, such as for military deserters or Kurdish guerrillas. Iraq's carrot-and-stick approach to the Kurds has enabled some Kurds to be co-opted and others intimidated.

Politically, Kurds were a big loser after World War I when the Treaty of Sevres was replaced by the Treaty of Lausanne, and legal provisions for an independent Kurdistan (after one year) were lost. Only after years of struggle did the Iraqi Kurds eventually reach an agreement with the central government in

Baghdad in March 1970. The Autonomy Law of 1974 that was subsequently negotiated supposedly was less than the Kurdish rebels anticipated, and the Kurdish insurrection was renewed. The Iraqi Kurds, however, fell victim to international political machinations when Iraq signed the 1975 Algiers Accord with Iran and outside aid (from Iran, the United States, and Israel)[57] to the Kurds was abruptly stopped and the border with Iran closed. The Kurds were trapped and defeated. Iran had agreed to prohibit Kurdish transborder activities and had removed the sanctuary for Iraqi Kurds.

Later, the Iranian revolution so weakened the Iranian military's ability to police the border that Kurds again began to take advantage of the situation for cross border activities. Shortly thereafter, the Iran-Iraq War again encouraged the Kurds to seek their goal of "democracy in Iraq and autonomy for the Kurds" while the Iraqi forces were weakened.

During and in the aftermath of the Iran-Iraq War, the Kurdish Democratic Party (Iraq), under Masoud Barzani, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, under Jalal Talabani, entered into numerous national front organizations and shifting alignments with a variety of opposition groups seeking to overthrow the Baath regime in Baghdad.[58] Similarly, following the expulsion of Iraqi forces from Kuwait by the United States-led coalition, another heterogeneous grouping of anti-Saddam Hussein organizations gathered in Lebanon in March 1991. The opposition groups similarly called for democracy in Iraq, but not without significant political differences emerging between the leftist/communist groups and the Islamic groups. The weakened, disorganized state of the Iraqi military suggests that Saddam Hussein (and any post-Saddam Baathist regime) will face a renewed insurgency on the part of the Kurds. Any significant success on the part of the Kurds, could result in new political demands for an independent Kurdistan, contrary to the joint goals of the national front groupings.

Kurds are not a recognized minority in Turkey, but populate much of the Eastern portion of the state, and are found in the urban areas. The degree of assimilation of the Sunni Kurds into Turkish society is debatable. Kurds have the same rights as other Turkish nationals, but lack recognition as an ethnic entity and are denied a right of national self-determination.[59] Kurds working within the Turkish political system reportedly can rise to prominence,[60] but as Helsinki Watch points out, Turkey has also worked to destroy the Kurdish ethnic identity.[61]

Unlike the Kurds in Iraq and Iran who have generally been seeking autonomy, the leading Kurdish party in Turkey, the

Kurdish Workers Party or Partia Karkeren Kurdistan (PKK), openly advocates Kurdish independence. PKK General Secretary Abdallah Ocalan, the recognized head of PKK, in an interview with Die Zeit charged that other Kurdish leaders call for only autonomy to protect their feudal interests while the PKK calls for independence.[62] Ocalan, who founded the PKK in 1978, asserts that the future government and social system of a free Kurdistan will be decided by the Kurdish people. The PKK, however, claims to be Marxist-Leninist.

Other Kurdish political groups in Turkey include, inter alia, the Socialist Party of Turkish Kurdistan (SPTK), the Revolutionary Democrats (DDKD) the Kurdish Vanguard Workers Party (PPKK), and the National Liberation of Kurdistan (KUK).[63] The SPKT has cooperated with various other Kurdish groups, but has been at odds with the PKK. It envisions a workable federation with Turkey which the PKK does not accept. The Revolutionary Democrats, linked with the PPKK, clearly has Marxist leanings. The PPKK and the KUK is known to have cooperated with the SPTK. The KUK also is linked to the KDP (Iraq). The differing Kurdish coalitions aside, the significant difference between the Turkish Kurds, as reflected in the radical PKK, is the call for independence.

In Syria the Kurds are the largest ethnic minority. The Kurdish presence dates back to the Crusades. The Kurdish people, however, have not been formally recognized as a national minority by the Syrian Arab Republic's 1973 Constitution. Unlike Armenians, who have been granted religious and cultural rights, Kurds are generally treated as other Moslems and tend to be integrated into Syrian society. The Kurdish Democratic Pary (Syria) was established in 1957.[64] It did not seek independence or even autonomy for the Kurdish areas of Syria. Instead, it sought more mundane linguistic and cultural rights, economic support, and a move toward democracy.

The relatively small and dispersed Kurdish population in the Soviet Union would not tend to suggest political action. However, in the days of Glasnost and while the Soviet Union is facing an uncertain future, possibly even a breakup into independent republics, Kurdish nationalism has reemerged. In July 1990, the first congress of Soviet Kurds was convened in Moscow. The congress, under the leadership of Karim Nadirov, adopted a resolution calling for the establishment of an autonomous region in Soviet Kurdistan (in Soviet Azerbaijan).

RESOLUTION: OUTLOOK FOR POLITICAL GOALS

In Iran the Kurdish attempt to achieve autonomy or self-

rule was harshly put down by Ayatollah Khomeini's forces. Even though Iranian Kurds under Ghassemlou's leadership attempted to explain publicly that they were not separatists and were not seeking independence, they were identified as separatists or traitors, and brutally defeated. The Kurds found they could not hold cities and could not compete with the technologically superior government forces, especially forces using air power. The Kurdish gains made at the beginning of the Iranian Revolution were quickly reversed. The Iranian Kurds were decimated. In July 1989, when Ghassemlou, representing a greatly weakened KDP (Iran), was trying to negotiate with the post-Khomeini, he was assassinated.[65] Sadiq Sharafkandi, Ghassemlou's successor continues to pursue Kurdish autonomy, but against impossible odds.

Iraq has granted the Kurds an "autonomous region," but its autonomy is insufficient for many Kurdish nationalists. Kurdish nationalist forces have taken up arms against Baghdad repeatedly, but continue to face a technologically superior military forces. The Kurds were able to control portions of Kurdistan in Iraq in 1974-1975 prior to having their external aid cut off politically via the 1975 Algiers Accord. The Kurds again moved to seize and control portions of the Kurdish region during the Iran-Iraq War and in 1991 following the liberation of Kuwait from Iraqi forces.[66] In the past Iraqi Kurds have been able to control large areas of Iraq until the Iraqi forces resorted to sophisticated weaponry, such as air power and even chemical weapons. Kurdish nationalist aspirations in Iraq are doomed to be repeatedly defeated tragically, unless significant outside intervention could shield them from Baghdad. This is politically unlikely. Iraq will therefore provide Iraqi Kurds with a limited autonomy, insufficient for many nationalistic Kurds.

The Kurds in Turkey have no possibility of achieving independence or autonomy in the foreseeable future. The overwhelming power of the Turkish state will insure that the Kurds will be unable to hold cities. Nevertheless, Kurdish unrest might expand in Eastern Turkey and threaten the government's control, especially if Kurds receive greater freedoms in neighboring states. The 1991 move to legalize the Kurdish language in Turkey is not without significant opposition.[67] The possibility that the ban on the Kurdish language might be lifted appears to be the first positive measure for Kurdish nationalism since public order was established after the Sheikh Said movement.[68] Now it remains uncertain.

The more modest political goals of the Kurds in Syria and the Soviet Union appear likely to be realized eventually. The Syrian Kurds appear to have an improved status in Syria, espe-

cially after Saddam Hussein came into power in Iraq, possibly because they can be used as leverage. The Soviet Kurds will have little chance of carving a new autonomous Kurdistan out of Soviet Azerbaijan. The Soviet authorities have set up a commission to improve Kurdish conditions in the Soviet Union. Such a measured effort might well prove successful.

INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

The complexity of the Kurdish question complicates efforts to stabilize the region. The fact that Greater Kurdistan lies within five states, gives neighboring hostile states a ready made community to use against opposing governments. Such a Kurdish constituency or fifth column has been continuously manipulated by various states for their own national ends. Iran and Iraq have each supported Kurdish groups in the other. Iraq also has supported Kurdish groups in Turkey. Syria has reportedly supported Kurdish groups in both Turkey and Iraq.

On several occasions there have been agreements providing for interventions to control ethnic minorities. For example, July 8, 1937, the Sa'dabad Pact linked Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Afghanistan, especially to limit transborder activities of ethnic minorities.[69] Subsequently several agreements on cooperation between Iran, Iraq, and Turkey have been observed. For instance, Iraqi-Turkish agreement was signed in August 1981. In May 1983 and again subsequently, Turkey invaded portions of Iraq to stop Kurdish activities.[70] There remains a real possibility that Turkey might again invade portions of northern Iraq. If the Iraqi Kurds would gain an enhanced autonomy or push for independence, Turkey would probably intervene to prevent its Kurdish population from trying to emulate Iraqi Kurdish successes. Moreover, the submerged Turkish claim to Mosul might also reemerge. Similarly, Iraqi Kurdish success could have a destabilizing impact upon Iranian Kurds and other minorities in Iran. Iran and Syria would both be strongly opposed to any intervention by Turkey into postwar Iraq.

The Kurds appear destined to lose again, unless protection of Kurdish basic human rights could be guaranteed through some international mandate. In such case, an enhanced Kurdish autonomy in Iraq might well be more desirable to that of a possible fragmentation of Iraq with competing international interventions. While Kurdish nationalism has emerged again in Iraq, it appears that the leftist ideology often espoused by Iraqi Kurdish organizations, might well be the greatest barrier to necessary Western support even though the Cold War is effectively over. The Kurds

will continue to face a lack of national unity caused by their problems of communication and historical separation, as they pursue their separate national goals. Their political aspirations appear to be impossible dreams, as the Kurds are relegated to the role of "stateless nations" whose interests are repeatedly sacrificed for regional stability and the national interest of a number of host "nationless" states.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Dr. Christine M. Helms focuses upon "the imposition of the European state system" as leading to the creation in the Middle East of "two unwanted pariahs—stateless nations and nationless states." See Christine M. Helms, Arabism and Islam: Stateless Nations and Nationless States, McNair Papers No. 10, (Washington, D.C.: Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, 1990), p. 17.
[2]For the best single work available which captures the modern Kurdish experience see: Gerard Chaliand, ed., People without a Country: The Kurds and Kurdistan (London: Zed Press, 1980).
[3]For the origins and physical characteristics of Kurds, see Great Britain, Naval Intelligence Division, Persia, BR 525 (Restricted) Geographical Handbook Series, September 1945, pp. 323-326.
[4]The Kurdish Program, directed by Dr. Vera Beaudin Saeedpour, places the Kurdish population at 23.3 million. See Scott B.MacDonald, "The Kurds in the 1990s," in Middle East Insight, 7 (January/February 1990), pp. 29-35.
[5]For a discussion of Kurdish territoriality, see Charles G. MacDonald, "The Kurdish Question in the 1980s," in Ethnicity Pluralism and the State in the Middle East, edited by Milton J. Esman and Itamar Rabinovich (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), 233-252.
[6]For discussion of the Kurdish identity, see Ibid.
[7]See Shiftan Epstein, "The Jews of Kurdistan," Ariel (Jerusalem) 51 (1982): 65-78.
[8]The Junblat family links itself to Kurdish roots. However, the practice of Taqiyya must be taken into consideration concerning the Druze.
[9]For an excellent study of Mem u Zin and some of the historical foundations of Kurdish nationalism, see Ferhad Shakely, Kurdish Nationalism in MEM U ZIN of Ehmed-i Xani (Sweden: privately published, 1983.)
[10]For a brief history of the Kurds, as well as a perceptive overview of the modern Kurdish people, see David McDowell, The Kurds,

Minority Rights Group Report No. 23 (London: Minority Rights Group, 1985).
[11]See Ottoman Peace Treaty at Sevres, August 10, 1920, in Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East, edited by J.C. Hurewitz, vol. 2: A Documentary Record, 1914-1956 (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1956), pp. 81-89. See also, Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers 1920, Treaty Series No. 11, Cmdr. 964, pp. 16-32.
[12]For text of Lausanne Treaty, see Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East, vol. 2, pp. 119-127. See also, Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, 1923, Treaty Series No. 16, Cmdr. 1929.
[13]See Shakely, Kurdish Nationalism in MEM U ZIN of Ehmed-i Xani, pp. 27-49.
[14]See discussion in McDowall, The Kurds, p. 7.
[15]For a more comprehensive examination of the heterogeneity of the Kurdish language (s), see Mehrdad Izady, "A Kurdish Lingua Franca?" Kurdish Times 2 (Summer 1988), pp. 12 -2 4 .
[16]United States Government, The World Factbook 1990 (Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, 1990, p. 147.
[17]Nader Entessar suggests three reasons for the "heterogeneity" of Kurdish languages: "rugged mountainous terrain of Kurdistan impedes communication"; absence of strong centralized governments to unify rival Kurdish groups; and the emergence of the sovereign state system further fragmented the Kurds. See Nader Entessar, "The Kurdish Mosaic of Discord, " Third World Quarterly (Special Issue on "Ethnicity in World Politics, " 11 (October 1989), pp. 86-87 .
[18]Great Britain, Naval Intelligence Division, Persia, BR 525 (Restricted), Geographical Handbook Series, September 1945, pp. 324-326.
[19]Eden Naby notes that the prohibitions against the use of Kurdish in schools in Kurdish areas were not always effectively enforced. See Eden Naby, "The Iranian Frontier Nationalities : The Kurds, the Assyrians, the Baluchis, and the Turkmens, " in Soviet-Asian Ethnic Frontiers, ed. by W.O. McCagg and Brian Silver (New York: Pergamon, 1979).
[20]See Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Daily Report Supplement, FBIS-MEA 79, Vol. 5, No. 236, Sup 34, December 6, 1979.
[21]See Constitution of the Islaimc Republic of Iran, translated by Hamid Algar (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1980), pp. 34-35.
[22]For an English text of the draft constitution, see "Documents: Draft Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran," translated by Hamid Algar, RIPEH, 3 Fall 1979, pp. 20-51.
[23] See National Voice of Iran (Clandestine), January 31, 1984— Daily Report, VIII, February 3, 1984.

[24]Technically Sorani is a single dialect, but it is often used to refer to all southern dialects. For a comprehensive examination of Kurdish dialects, see Martin Van Bruinessen, Agha Shaikh, and the State: On the Social and Political Organization of Kurdistan, Utrecht University, (London: Luzac, 1978), pp. 23-29.
[25]Ibid.
[26]See World Factbook 1990, p. 149.
[27]Ibid., p.30.
[28]See Great Britain, Naval Intelligence Division, and the Persian Gulf, BR 524 (Restricted), Geographical Handbook Series, September 1944, pp. 324-326.
[29]Ibid.
[30]Ibid. See also, McDowall, The Kurds, p. 7.
[31]See World Factbook 1990, p. 315.
[32]Scott B. MacDonald cites Kurdish Program (Kurdish Library) figures iin his "The Kurds in the 1990s," p. 29.
[33]See McDowall, The Kurds, p. 7.
[34]See Great Britain, Naval Intelligence Division, Turkey, BR 507, Geographical Handbook Series, April 1942, pp. 350-351.
[35]See Kendal, "Kurdistan in Turkey," in People Without a Country, p. 83.
[36]For discussion see Michael M. Gunter, "The Kurdish Problem in Turkey," Middle East Journal, 42 (Summer 1988), pp. 398-400.
[37]See Foreign Brodcast Information Service, Daily Report, FBIS-WEU-91-018, January 28, 1991, pp. 51-52.
[38]McDowall places the Kurdish component of Syria at 8 percent. See McDowall, The Kurds, p. 7. Mustaf Nazdar suggests the Kurdish population ranges from 10 to 11 percent. See Mustafa Nazdar, "The Kurds in Syria," People without a Country, pp. 211-213.
[39]World Factbook 1990, p. 302.
[40]McDowall, The Kurds, pp. 25-26.
[41]Ibid.
[42]See Ismet Cheriff Vanly, The Syrian Mein Kampf against the Kurds, (Amsterdam: 1968).
[43]See Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-90-145, July 27, 1990, pp. 87-88.
[44]See Marina Shakina, "Password Autonomy'," in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Daily Report, FBIS-SOV-90-168, pp. 39-40.
[45]See Kendal, "The Kurds in the Soviet Union," in People without a Country, pp. 224-226.
[46]Kendal notes that 238 works were published in Kurdish in the Soviet Union prior to 1960, while 12 titles were allowed to be published in Kurdish in Turkey. Kendal, "The Kurds in the Soviet

Union, " p. 226.
[47]For a discussion of the Kurdish identity in the Islamic Republic of Iran, see Charles G. MacDonald, "The Kurdish Challenge and Revolutionary Iran, "Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, 8 (Fall/Winter 1989), pp. 53-54.
[48]See Archie Roosevelt, Jr., "The Kurdish Republic of Mahabad," in People without a Country, 135-152.
[49]See Ghassemlou, "Kurdistan in Iran, p. 118.
[50]Ibid., p. 119. See also, William Eagleton, Jr., The Kurdish Republic of 1946 (London: Oxford University Press, 1963); and Charles G. MacDonald, "The Kurdish Question in the 1980s," pp. 240-241.
[51]For an examination of Ayatollah Khomeini's earlier move to delegitimize and crush the Kurds, see MacDonald, "The Kurdish Challenge and Revolutionary Iran, " pp. 56-60.
[52]For example, when Ghassemlou aligned the Kurdish Democratic Party with Mas'ud Rajavi 's National Resistence Council (NRC), Komala refused to be linked to the NRC, asserting that the NRC goals were "not the social revolution we want. " See Le Monde, 21-22 February 1983, in Daily Report, 8, 2 March 1982.
[53]See Edmund Ghareeb, The Kurdish Question in Iraq (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1981).
[54]Reportedly Lieutenant General Husayn Rashid, a Kurd, was appointed the new military chief of staff by Saddam Hussein in fall 1990. See Laurie Mylroie, "Saddam's Disappearing Lieutenants, " Wall Street Journal, November 13, 1990, p. A-22.
[55]See the special issue of the Information and Liaison Bulletin of Institut Kurde de Paris, "Halabja: A Martyr Town" (Paris: Institut Kurde, no date).
[56]See The Winds of Death, a special issue of Information and Liaison Bulletin of Institut Kurde de Paris, No. 42, September 1988.
[57]For discussions of the Pike Report revelations, see the Village Voice, February 23, 1976. Also, see discussion in Stephen C. Pelletier, The Kurds: An Unstable Element in the Gulf (Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1984), pp. 163-171.
[58]For a discussion of three such coalitions—the Democratic National and Patriotic Front (DNPF), the Democratic National Front (DNF), and the Iraqi Front of Revolutionary, Islamic, and National Forces—see Charles G. MacDonald, "The Impact of the Gulf War on the Iraqi and Iranian Kurds," Middle East Contemporary Survey, vol. 8: 1982-83, pp. 264-267.
[59]See "State of Flux: Human Rights in Turkey," Helsinki Watch Report reprinted (in part) in Kurdish Times, 2 (December 1987), pp. 1-62.

[60]Michael M. Gunter identifies a number of prominent Turkish nationals with Kurdish links. See Michael M. Gunter, The Kurds in Turkey: A Political Dilemma (Boulder, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview, 1990), pp. 7-9.
[61]See "State of Flux: Human Rights in Turkey," pp. 9-19.
[62]See the 22 February 1991 Die Zeit report, "The Last Fight of the Kurds," in Daily Re~ort, FBIS-WEU-91-042, 4 March 19911 pp. 57-58.
[63]For a background on the PKK and other Kurdish Parties in Turkey, see Gunter, The Kurds in Turkey, pp. 57-64.
[64]See Mustafa Nazdar, "The Kurds in Syria," People Without a Country, pp. 211-219.
[65]The Iranians blame the Iraqis and the Iraqis blame the Iranians.
[66]See William E. Schmidt, "Rebel Kurds Claim Control of Iraq Area," New York Times, March 15, 1991, p. A-7.
[67]See Clyde Haberman, "A Turkish Gesture to Kurds Falters," New York Times, March 12, 1991, p. A-4.
[68]For historical background, see Robert Olson, The Emerqence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion 1880-1925 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989).
[69]For text, see J. C. Hurewitz, Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East: A Documentary Record 1914-56 (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1956), Vol. II, pp. 90-91.
[70]For sample report of Turkish invasion, see New York Times, May 28, 1983 and May 31, 1983. See also, Sam Cohen, "Turkey's Mysterious Strike into Iraq Underlies Ongoing Effort to Uproot Kurdish Nationalism," Christian Science Monitor, July 14, 1983.