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THE PRINCIPLE OF NATIONAL SELF-DETERMINATION: A CLOSER LOOK AT
KURDISTAN

by

ROBBYN MICHELLE USHERWOOD

Under the Direction of

Jeremy Crampton

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the principle of national self-determination as it pertained to the Kurdish population of the Middle East after the First World War and the legacy that it has left behind. The end of the war was characterized by a shift from empires to the European state system. This transition necessitated the redrawing of political borders. As victors of the War, Britain, France, Italy, and the United States of America had the power to influence the future of the continent in terms of creating nation-states. While nation-states were created in Europe, a mandate system was implemented in the Middle East. The Great Powers divided the Middle East into British and French spheres of influence. In so doing, the Kurds were left without a state. This research provides a case study for the Kurds at the close of the First World War and examines the obstacles they face today as the struggle for autonomy continues.

INDEX WORDS principle of national self-determination, nation-state, Kurds,
Kurdistan, World War I.

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Georgia State University

2005

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2005

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Chapter 1

Literature Review

Purpose of Study

This thesis will analyze the principle of national self-determination, specifically as it pertained to the Kurdish population in the Middle East at the end of the First World War. The War marked the demise of the Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and Russian Empires and the subsequent rise and creation of nation-states, entities which became the dominant political unit as a result of such principles as self-determination. This principle refers to the idea that a people should determine by whom they should be governed and was popularized by Woodrow Wilson, the twenty-eight President of the United States. After completing research on the subject it becomes abundantly clear that the Great Powers (France, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America) were exclusive in the application of the principle of national self-determination. To demonstrate the exclusivity of its application at the end of the First World War, a discussion of a case study concerning the Kurdish populations of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey will be provided. This thesis discusses the racial bias present amongst those who made the ultimate decision to deny the Kurds independence and even autonomy at the close of World War I. Instead, the Kurds were divided among four states and have continued to experience a form of repression that has diminished their chances of gaining independence in the future. Although the current claim to statehood is strong, obstacles remain. Countries with strong Kurdish minorities are not willing to allow secession to occur, fearing the loss of valuable material and strategic resources and desiring to maintain territorial integrity.

While understanding that the range of this topic is geographically vast, it would be impossible to provide a comprehensive account of all related issues or to even mention every

ethnic group that was affected by the principle of national self-determination. Moreover, such an attempt would limit the ability to discuss at length the relevant case in any depth. Therefore, the focus here will be on the case of the Kurds from the Ottoman Empire and their denial of self-determination by the Great Powers.

In general, the emphasis here rests on the formation of ‘nation-states’ as a result of the collapse of the Ottoman empire and the First World War and the subsequent introduction of the principle of self-determination by President Woodrow Wilson. The principle of national self-determination is a standard by which nations determine their own destinies and according to Wilson this would be the basis for the new world order after the First World War. This time period is significant in that rather than going through a process of state development (through intellectual trends that spark the establishment of political organizations, which could later lead to the creation of nation-states), nation-states that rose as a result of WWI were created suddenly with the idea of national self-determination spreading across a wide range of societies.

The First World War was the catalyst for changes that affected the manner in which the world was organized. The demise of the great Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and Russian Empires gave those involved in the Paris Peace Conference much to debate. People from all over the world gathered to learn their fate, which was ultimately decided by the Great Powers. Boundaries were introduced, which gave birth to new nation-states, organizing people into new units of protection from outside control. Political units having an extensive territory once ruled by a single supreme authority were now divided into smaller units, called states, and either given independence or mandated by the Great Powers. In this way, the war transformed the state system. While the Treaty of Westphalia established the modern state system in 1648 by breaking up the Holy Roman Empire, the First World War went even further with the introduction of the

principle of national self-determination. Suddenly the *idea* of nations determining their own destinies and becoming self-governing states became the norm. Recognizing that not all nations were granted independence and self-government, many states were created at the close of the war. Nonetheless, everyone's fate was decided by the 'civilized' world.

The peace talks that took place immediately after World War I left a legacy behind that has remained with us. First, the League of Nations was left behind, which was the first international organization created to preserve peace and settle disputes. Today, there is a United Nations with over 190 member countries. Secondly, the peace talks resulted in the creation of 'nation-states,' with respect to the principle of national self-determination, from the disintegrated Empires. Today, the principle of self-determination is recognized as an international law in the United Nation's Charter. Thirdly, the outcome of the war was defined by the Great Powers and those who influenced their decisions during the peace process, demonstrating their ever existing power over the 'uncivilized'. The British, French, Italians, and Americans, held the ultimate power which contributed to states whose boundaries were once again threatened by the Second World War. Of course some had more clout than others. For instance, the U.S., who presented themselves as the disinterested party, had a substantial amount of power when it came to making decisions concerning Europe and the Middle East. On the other hand, the Italians' claims were many times disregarded, perhaps due to her initial alliance with Germany and Austro-Hungary. Today, as a result of the decisions made by these powers, states exist with conflicting religious and ethnic groups, whose boundaries were drawn at the Paris Peace Conference. Moreover, World War I ended, exemplifying the importance of territorial issues during World War I and today. The importance of land and territory and the resources and power it provides continues to be a common reason for conflict.

In Chapter two, this research examines the principle of national self-determination as a concept and then explores Woodrow Wilson's relationship with the idea. His participation in the Paris Peace Conference at the end of the First World War is critical. He brought to Paris the ideas of national self-determination and collective security outlined in his famous Fourteen Points. This section also examines to whom the principle of national self-determination applies. The Great Powers had the ultimate authority to create and recognize nation-states or to deny nations of national self-determination. As a consequence of such denial, many populations were placed under mandates, under the supervision of a greater authority as a result of the paternalism present among the Powers.

Chapter three demonstrates such paternalism and the subsequent denial that accompanied this bias by providing a case study of the Kurds. The Kurds provide a prime example of the exclusivity of the Powers. This chapter demonstrates the Kurds' capability of self-government in terms of satisfying the criteria set forth by the Great Powers, despite their ultimate denial. Chapter three will also discuss the events that first gave the Kurds hope for self-determination and later despair as they were denied application.

Chapter four will lead readers into the current situation of the Kurds and their continued effort to gain independence. Reasons for their inability to attain such status will be demonstrated by the historical analyses of events that have taken place since their first denial. Briefly, these reasons include: lack of cohesive leadership, failure to work together under one unified effort, the division among four states that exists as a result of the Great Powers, and the refusal of Kurdish inhabited states to allow secession.

Lastly, Chapter five will examine how the principle of national self-determination has evolved. The principle has undergone several changes over time, which significantly affects the

possibility of nations to appeal to such a right. It becomes evident that the Kurds, for instance, must first be allotted a territory of their own before self-determination becomes a possibility again. A federal government in Iraq will enhance their chances, but will simultaneously cause opposition within the state and across its borders. These issues will be further examined in chapters four and five.

Literature Review

Woodrow Wilson, the twenty-eighth President of the United States of America (1913-1921), was the first U.S. president to travel overseas to take part in political negotiations (Gelfand 1963). He had a vision of a new world order with the principle of national self-determination in high regard. According to Wilson, every people should be free to determine their own polity and way of development. This vision was laid out in his famous Fourteen Points, which outlined his provisions for reconstructing a new Europe following World War I, and would be discussed at length at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. Six out of fourteen of these points related to the principle of self-determination. Although, his Fourteen Points did not specifically spell-out the term, it is implied in his clarification of war aims. As it pertains to this thesis, Point XII call for the autonomous development of the people under Turkish rule (Kurds). Although Wilson's war aims were taken into consideration during the deliberations of the Paris Peace Conference, they were substantially altered when it came to the concluding Treaty of Versailles. Many of his points were regarded by critics as idealistic.

In fact, for the most part recent Wilson critics are much more critical of him than earlier one's, depicting him as an idealist, a moral crusader, and even a racist. Some of these critics include Smith (2003) and Ambrosius (2002). Smith takes readers through the career of Isaiah

Bowman, the director of the American Geographical Society and chief territorial specialist to the American delegation at the Paris Peace Conference. While actually focusing on contemporary globalization as it pertains to the United States, Smith discusses how American-inspired globalization actually stems from World War I and World War II. Similarly, Smith provides readers with a closer look at the threatened condition of the nation-state in terms of being subservient to global state institutions and the subsequent reinvention of the national (U.S.) state at the global scale, displaying the potential loss of a state's sovereignty to international organizations, such as the European Union and the United Nations. In addition, Smith discusses Wilson and his idealism, the Paris Peace Conference and geography's role there. Specifically concerning Wilson, Smith refers to his entrance of the U.S. into the First World War as a "moral crusade" for a new world order (2003, 117). Wilson's moral convictions seem to be a common theme among critics, such as Burton (2003), Heater (1994), and Link (1957).

Smith also mimics Wilson's efforts to appear neutral, when all the while U.S. financiers had lent the allies over two billion dollars, one hundred times the amount lent to Germany (2003). Other authors, such as Heater, are less suspicious of Wilson's intentions, saying that "even when American lives were lost to German submarine warfare, he negotiated and strove not to take sides" (1994, 20). Lastly, Smith points out both Wilson's desire for a liberal war against imperialist Germany and a compromise peace to provide a framework for a new commercial and political world harmony in an attempt to portray him as a man not so insistent on keeping the U.S. out of war (2003). Moreover, most authors agree, Wilson felt he had a moral obligation to spread peace by way of democracy and the subsequent application of the principle of national self-determination.

Concerning Wilson's "moral crusade," Burton attributes the former's commitment to morality to his political and diplomatic outlook (2003). Further, he says that Wilson's scholarly treatment of history exemplifies his moral convictions. Similarly, Heater explains how Wilson's upbringing in a Calvinist form of Christianity "attuned his mind to a staunch belief in democracy" (1994, 23). Link, an expert on the history of Wilson, believes that Wilson placed more importance on ethical standards, such as human rights, than on immediate goals and material interests (i.e. property rights). Link says that Wilson's belief that democracy was the most humane and Christian form of government had a profound influence on his foreign policy. In Wilson's mind, "all people were capable of self-government because all were endowed with inherent character and a capacity for growth" (1957, 14). Link points out that Wilson believed that people learned democracy only by long years of disciplined experience, believing that all people could be trained in the habits of democracy. Heater further asserts that Wilson was not an avid imperialist. Instead, he argues, that Wilson believed the U.S. had a mission in the world, one that was a moral example (1994). By the end of the First World War, Wilson came to believe that it was America's and subsequently his moral duty "to help liberate mature nations from autocratic rule to the status of self-government: In short, to promote self-determination" (Heater 1994, 24).

Burton, like most Wilson critics, not only gives credit to Wilson's moral commitments but also attributes Wilson's scholarship to his political and diplomatic perspective. Burton claims that three historical events had a profound influence on Wilson. First, with the advent of a constitutional government for American states (1787-1789), Wilson hoped that what happened here in the 18th century could happen to 20th century nations, inspiring nationalism. Second, Burton says that Wilson was strongly influenced by the American Civil War, an argument

strongly made by Ambrosius (2002). Wilson remembered this war as a child. It gave him a “respect for peace not only for America but for the world” (Burton 1994, 49). The third historical event which influenced Wilson, according to Burton, was the First World War (1914-1918), which gave him an opportunity to fashion his grand design for a world made safe for democracy. In relation, Link explains how Wilson regarded the U.S. as an exemplar for other nations to follow. He assumed that America was a product of the mixing of all the nationalities of Europe. Wilson believed the U.S. had a role to play in international relations because they themselves succeeded “in organizing diverse sections and a hundred million people into a federal system” (1957, 15).

Link, one of Wilson’s most astute defenders, says that Wilson did not believe immature people could govern themselves (1957). This point is evident in Wilson’s own writings and speeches. Initially, his moral commitments led him to believe in the Calvinist doctrine of equal opportunity, but as he transformed from a Christian optimist to a Christian realist, according to Link, he finally realized that noble intentions and moralisms didn’t suffice for complicated situations (1973). Wilson’s belief that all men are potentially capable of self-government (Heater 1994), must not be clouded by the fact that during this time there was an “innate superiority of the white race,” which was regarded “through Europe and North America as a tenet by no means intellectually indefensible” (Nicholas 1973, 102). It seems that the more recent literature on Wilson describes him as a racist, but at times neglects to describe the very condition of the time. Nicholas, on the other hand, discusses the environment at the time of Wilson’s presidency in terms of racial hierarchies as the norm, again, saying that there was an “innate superiority of the white race” (1973, 102). For instance, Smith (1994) points out Wilson’s sentiments about the U.S.’s duty and moral convictions to teach the Filipinos self-

control and order, exemplifying this obvious sense of superiority over a non-white race.

Furthermore, Smith says that “Wilson could rejoin that America itself had learned from a foreign power the virtue of its ways” (1994, 63).

Ambrosius also seems to recognize Wilson’s relative racist tendencies when he describes him as a pro-Union southerner and admits that he was a racist, even for his time (2002). In reference to Wilson’s sympathies with the Union during the American Civil War, Ambrosius’ comments concerning Wilson’s perspective against secession as it pertained to Europe after the war questioned the very notion of the principle of self-determination. However, this concern is answered when Ambrosius explains that Wilson supported the assimilation of people into single states. He argues that Wilson felt that the historical process of nation-building should include ethnocultural elements, such as race or language, creating a new nationality. Thus, it made sense to him that states, such as Poland and Yugoslavia, be composed of a variety of people. This assimilationist view of nationalism, Ambrosius explains, can be traced back to the American historical tradition (2002). In an earlier book, Ambrosius explains how new immigration in the U.S. at the end of the 19th century instilled fear in Wilson. He was afraid that the immigrants would contaminate the innate character of the American people. However, “he hoped that the U.S. could preserve its essential character by assimilating them into American life” (1991, 10).

The importance placed on the historical development of a nation by Wilson can be interpreted in his speeches and writings. However, most literature concerning the defining factors of a nation-state at the time of the Paris Peace Conference neglect to mention the importance Wilson placed on historical traditions. Instead, language, religion, and ethnicity are described as the defining factors of nationality. For instance, Heater claims that Wilson found language to be the “best test to nationality” (1994, 26). While this may hold true, it is important

to note that Wilson makes several comments regarding the importance he placed on historicism and the subsequent leadership that develops as a result. Similarly, Ambrosius says that in Wilson's view "national identity developed out of the total heritage and experience of a given people over a long period of time" (2002, 129). Furthermore, good leadership may facilitate the process of historical development to assimilate new immigrants to foreign lands. In fact, Wilson was hesitant to recognize governments of new nations "until he was certain they possessed the historical qualities of nationality that he witnessed in the American experience" (Ambrosius 2002, 130).

As briefly mentioned earlier, recent authors are much more vocal and accusatory about Wilson's belief in racial hierarchy. While authors, such as Gelfand (1963), Link (1957 and 1973), and Nicholas (1973) are defenders of Wilson, other more recent authors are more hurried to point out his flaws, especially concerning his racism. For instance, Moynihan strongly criticizes Wilson by portraying him as a hypocrite. He explains that while Wilson took America to war "in the name of self-determination," he "sent a segregated American army to Europe to fight for such freedom." Moynihan adds, "had it not been segregated when he came to the Presidency, he would have seen to the matter before he left" (1993, 69). Ambrosius argues that "racial prejudice continued to reinforce Wilson's belief in the superiority of Western civilization" (1991, 7). He also says that Wilson supported radical organizations, such as the Ku Klux Klan (2002). Several examples are provided by authors, such as Heater (1994) and Smith (1994) that demonstrate Wilson's belief in white supremacy, such as the case of the Filipinos and their initial denial of self-determination due to their need for western assistance before self-governance. Another example of Wilson's belief in racial hierarchy, even among people of white race, is mentioned by MacMillan (2002) who points out that Wilson had no sympathy for

Irish nationalists who aspired for self-determination from England. Instead he contradicted himself and said the Irish problem was a British matter. In congruence with many authors' writings, Wilson's own writings reveal his denial of self-determination to peoples of white and, more commonly, non-white race.

In one such writing, Wilson explains that he had no idea how many nationalities existed, who came to him day after day requesting self-determination. His own ignorance of issues, such as the number of nationalities in Eastern Europe, is discussed by MacMillan (2002), the great-granddaughter of David Lloyd George (Prime Minister of Great Britain during First World War), who provides an excellent history of the Paris Peace Conference in her book *Paris 1919*. While talking about world leaders, such as Wilson, Clemenceau, Lloyd George and Orlando, she emphasizes and discusses at great length the six months of 1919 when the world gathered to discuss the creation of new countries from the disintegrated empires. Concentrating her major focus on the redrawing of Europe and the Middle East, MacMillan provided the particular policies of the Big Four concerning the border issues of Europe and the Middle East. She also provided a framework for a greater understanding of the creation of new states (such as the former Yugoslavia) and the particular circumstances of each situation (2002).

MacMillan descriptively discusses the carving up of the Middle East and the subsequent implementation of the mandates. She admits that the idea of the strong "protecting" the weak was not a new one (2002, 99). MacMillan questions the very meaning of the word 'mandate,' saying that it sounded benevolent, but asking whether it referred to land grabbing or merely a new departure in international relations. MacMillan clearly explains that the implementation of the mandates spelled the end to old-fashioned imperialism and colonialism (2002) and

introduced a new way for whites to control non-whites by way of the 'civilizing mission' (Adas 2004).

Those who actually made decisions concerning who would attain self-determination and who it would be denied were the Great Powers. In fact, the American delegation specifically based their decisions on a group of people called the Inquiry, a semi-secret group of experts, who MacMillan refers to as the American experts. This group of men included historians, geographers, professors, economists, political scientists, and cartographers. Their expert advice concerning specific regions of Europe, Africa, South America, and the Middle East, was used by Wilson in the negotiations at the Conference. Similarly, Gelfand discusses the Inquiry, their voyage to Paris, and their specific recommendations concerning the Conference (1963). Lastly, Gelfand not only discussed the Inquiry's deliberations concerning state boundaries, but discussed economic problems and international law and included a personnel salary roster and activities of the Inquiry. His work emphasized the importance of the American position concerning boundary issues at the Paris Peace Conference. Further, he reveals the lack of importance placed on minorities within the Ottoman Empire in his provision of reports concerning the Kurds, which compared them to American Indians in their demeanor and appearance (1963). Gelfand questions the relevancy of such generalized remarks, which were to be used at the conference for serious business. He attributes such poor and dubious work to the lack of American experts with special knowledge on the subject of the Middle East (1963).

While many states were created by the Great Powers at the end of the War, others were placed under supervisory status for a pre-determined number of years, until the Powers deemed the people fit for self-government. As this pertains to the Middle East, the region was dissected according to historical, religious, linguistic and ethnic commonalities and, more importantly, the

Allies' interests. However, in some cases the emergence of successor states was a result of nationalism, such as the rise of the Turkish state. According to Roshwald, "national identity attains its fullest expression when a movement that may have begun as a small band of activists has succeeded in mobilizing the masses around one common conception of nationhood" (2001, 2). He calls this expression of national identity, nationalism. Breuilly says nationalism builds upon some sense of cultural identity and calls it a form of politics. He, like Roshwald, ties nationalism to a mass participation in politics. Although, he goes further and says that nationalism has often been the result of enormous disparities in wealth, power and values (i.e. Hitler's Germany). Breuilly also says that one assertion of the nationalist argument is that the nation must be as independent as possible, which usually requires at least the nation's political sovereignty (1982). Roshwald, on the other hand, makes several references to a process, which nationalism goes through. This process entails first and foremost an intellectual trend that eventually reaches the masses (2001). The intellectual trend may emerge from a minority base inside an independent state, which does not have political sovereignty. Why must a nation be independent in order to experience nationalism? Many nationalist movements emerge as a result of repressive measures taken by a group's respective government against that particular group. This group most often is either a minority population or the inferior political group within a state. For example, the Kurds (a minority) of Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Turkey, have participated in nationalist movements, but by no means do they have independence in any of the countries mentioned. Their movements are without doubt nationalist as we shall see in Chapters three and four.

According to Johnston, Gregory, Pratt, and Watts nationalism is "a feeling of belonging to the nation" (2000). The authors also agree that nationalism is a direct relationship between the

territorial and national unit. This follows their definition of nation, which calls for a community of people who are bound to a sense of solidarity and tied by a historical experience to a homeland and culture, distinct from others. Gellner's definition of nationalism coincides with Johnston, Gregory, Pratt, and Watts' definition. He refers to nationalism "as a sentiment, or as a movement, [that] can best be defined in terms of" a political principle which holds that the political and national unit are congruent. "Nationalist sentiment is the feeling of anger aroused by the violation of the principle, or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfillment. A nationalist movement is one actuated by sentiment of this kind" (Gellner 1983, 1). In other words, there is a definite link between ethnicity ("national unit") and the state ("political unit"). This sense of belonging and association to a homeland is certainly relevant to Kurdish nationalistic political parties, such as the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK), Kurdish Democratic Party (Iraq's KDP), and the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI). Each of these groups has participated in nationalistic movements in their respective countries of Turkey, Iraq, and Iran in the sense that they have successfully mobilized the masses. Their ultimate objectives are each for independence, again, not a prerequisite of nationalism. Nationalist movements have been prevalent in this region since the Kurds were denied self-determination by the Treaty of Sevres. The Great Powers divided the land into spheres of influence, disregarding the large Kurdish population.

The Great Powers established mandates in the Middle East instead of granting states their independence after the War. Kelidar, for example, explains that Arab states today are not the result of an "indigenous national liberation movement" (1993, 320). In fact, Arab states are actually the result of a general consensus among the Great Powers. The Allies divided the Middle East into zones of influence, principalities, kingdoms, and republics for their clients and

allies after the war. Kelidar focuses on the creation of Iraq and Syria and the political traditions of Europe and the Middle East, specifically the territorial context within the notions of nation-state and sovereignty according to the European political tradition. She explains that the Muslim world gave way to the European concept of nation-state, but it did not replace the traditional ways with the new. The ‘traditional’ ways rely on the supremacy of the nation of Islam, while the new insists on the requirements of the territorial state (Kelidar 1993). The ‘new’ refers to the influence of the European concept of nation-state. The nation-state in this sense is defined “as a polity of homogeneous people who share the same culture and the same language, and who are governed by some of their own number, who serve their interests” (Navari 1980, 13). Of course, there are few groups in the world that share such homogeneity.

Even today, in a world of nation-states, there are fundamental differences in the composition of a state. According to the European political tradition, nation-states have been defined by territory, government, and people (Johnston, Gregory, Pratt, and Watts 2000). In contrast, the Arab East’s (Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan) emphasis has been on the identification of people, not territory. While the Europeans associate sovereignty with a particular territory, Muslims refer to it as the “exclusive preserve of God” and not a geographically defined territory (Kelidar 1993, 317). Further, the caliphate (jurisdiction of an Islamic polity), Umma (Muslim community of believers), or dar al-Islam (area where Muslims are in the majority) do not connote territory (Kelidar 1993). In other words, Islam rules wherever there are Muslims, which completely transcends the European’s notions of nation-state and sovereignty. Finally, Kelidar explains that the traditional ways and the European concept of nation-state “coexist in an uneasy and certainly precarious, arrangement” (1993, 318). Cleveland acknowledges this uncertain environment and discusses the emulation of European methods of

administration, education, and political organization, which expanded the role of state in the Middle East (2004). Western trained officials in the Middle East, Cleveland continues, reduced the significance of the religious establishment (2004).

The transfer of ideas from Europe was not the only factor that changed the dynamics of the Middle East. Cleveland explains that the selling of European arms and other manufactured products and the provision of loans to the Ottomans led to a loss of their political sovereignty (2004). Most authors agree that the financial demise of the Ottoman Empire eventually led to the loss of territorial control over peripheral provinces and the ultimate demise of the monarchy. Kamrava takes a different approach and argues that the geography of the Middle East contributed to the failure and ultimate demise of the Empire. The Empire was unable to establish authority in areas where river valleys were uncommon, for example, which is “most of the Middle East—where, instead of centralized, hydraulic local states, confederations made up of different rulers emerged” (Kamrava 2005, 13). Kamrava continues, saying that a lack of centralized power and practice of loose control made the Empire vulnerable to state penetration and control (2005).

Evidently a number of factors were involved simultaneously, which led to the ultimate disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. European encroachment of the region only quickened the pace of this process and ultimately led to its dismemberment after the First World War. Inquiry reports said that after long European contact with ‘Oriental’ subjects allowed the former to understand that the two were far apart in political capacity. Thus, Orientals were not entitled to the same political rights (Gunther 1918). This belief, commonly held by the European Powers at the end of the First World War, led the Allies to implement a system of authoritative command over the people of the Middle East, until they were deemed fit for self-government by the Powers.

The implementation of mandates in the Middle East certainly caused a great amount of instability in the region. Suddenly, the European concept of the nation-state had been thrust upon the people of a newly deadened Empire. The inhabitants of the newly instituted mandates (Iraq, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan) found themselves to be nationals of independent entities which they owed no loyalty. Minorities who once had a substantial amount of sovereignty were placed under governments which favored assimilation as a way of homogenizing the state. The Kurds, for example, were placed under the states of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey, all of which practiced assimilation.

Once the Great Powers divided the Middle East into zones of influence, they did not take extra time to deal with the wishes of many minorities. Just as Robert Lansing, Wilson's Secretary of State, foresaw, the principle of self-determination would give false hope to many. He felt that the principle was misleading to certain races, so much so that it would breed discontent, disorder, and rebellion. Finally, he felt that the principle would raise hopes, which could never be realized (Lansing 1921). This was certainly true in the case of the Kurds.

Musgrave explained that the Americans and Allies realized how involved the principle of self-determination was and how many issues were inherent in its implementation. He discussed how the drawing of boundaries around ethnic populations was not possible because they were "inextricably mixed together" (1997, 27). This statement coincides with an Inquiry report done by Magie, who specifically proclaimed that the creation of Kurdistan was impossible due to other minorities living alongside the Kurds (1918). However, in the end, European states, such as Yugoslavia, a multi-ethnic state, were recognized by the Great Powers despite the differences among the inhabitants (Roshwald 2001). Furthermore, Musgrave discussed the Allies approval of the principle when it satisfied their own interests (1997). The creation of Poland, for example,

reflects the interest of the Allies to lesson the strength of the Germans. On the other hand, France, opposed the application of national self-determination when it meant strengthening Germany and approved of it when it formed a dam against Soviet expansion into Europe (Musgrave 1997).

The complexity of the principle of self-determination presents itself in its unequal application after the First World War. Recognizing that there were not many Middle Eastern scholarly specialists, it is evident that reports concerning these people would be limited, especially when compared to the studies done on Europe (MacMillan 2002). Secondly, the Ottoman Empire lost the war and as a result they were not regarded as priority in the proceedings of the Conference. Lastly, the principle of self-determination could not be applied to people who were regarded as inferior to the Europeans and subsequently unprepared to stand on their own feet (Roshwald 2001, Musgrave 1997).

Among the victims of this spoken unequal treatment were the Kurds. Several authors have discussed the Kurds' struggle for attaining self-determination, autonomy, and eventually independence. Most monographic literature concerning the Kurds portrays them as an oppressed people who were robbed of their independence at the close of the First World War. Eskander, for example, gives an excellent history of Britain's relationship with the Kurds as the war was coming to an end (2000). While Eskander demonstrates the Kurds' ability to govern themselves, he reveals how the British authorities sabotaged Kurdish attempts to attain self-determination and then attributes British betrayal to a Kurdish leader, who was put in place by the former (2000). Nisan explains and provides evidence of the solid basis for Kurdish national consciousness, which should have allowed them a state (2002). He blames their inability to

attain such status to strategic disadvantages, such as their geographic position, surrounded by stronger powers along with their incapability to unite (2002).

Nisan attributes the Kurds' inability to unite to tribalism (2000). Others have come to the same conclusions. It is commonly agreed that the Kurds are a fragmented people, making it difficult to create a united nation. Kurdish society has, for centuries, been divided into members of different tribes. A member must first pledge his duty to his tribe and then to his religion. Morris argues that duty to the fellow Kurds has never been a concept held by these people. He also asserts, "the Kurds are their own worst enemies, constantly putting tribal and sectarian interests above those of the Kurdish nation and ever willing to side with foreigners against fellow Kurds" (1992, 74). Chaliand explains that "there has never been, at least up until the mid 20th century, any real national feeling capable of transcending tribal oppositions" (1994, 21). Similarly, Strohmeier also attributes the Kurds' lack of political unity to their tribal organizations (2003). He further explains that tribalism was necessary "to political and economic organization and constituted an essential element of Kurdish society" (2003, 9).

Tribalism is only one element of the Kurds that factored in their inability to gain the full support of the Allies in their efforts to gain self-determination. A major detriment to the Kurds, that could not be reversed, was the innate feeling among the Great Powers that they were "primitive, wild and thus unfit for the modern world" (Strohmeier 2003, xv). Inquiry reports best illustrate this argument and will be further elaborated on in Chapter 2. Generally, the Kurds were described as uncivilized and unready for self-government (Magie 1918, Gunther 1918, Gelfand 1963).

Lastly, the Kurds did not have effective representation at the Paris Peace Conference. They were only allowed one representative, who ultimately failed to gain the attention of the

Great Powers, whose final decision would primarily be based on their own motivations anyhow (McDowall 1996). Serif Pasha, who represented the Kurds at the Paris Peace Conference, cooperated with the Armenians to present a joint memorandum. Pasha included in his presentation a map that conceded to Armenian interests. A later map was sent to the president of the Conference by a leading member of a Kurdish nationalist group. His map opposed that of Pasha's, demonstrating fluctuating views concerning a Kurdish state (Ozoglu 2004). The Great Powers' major interests became concerned with appeasing the Turks and Arabs, thus leaving the Kurds under the power of their stronger neighbors. It first seemed as though autonomous status would be granted to the Kurds by the Treaty of Sevres. Instead, a revolt was raised in Anatolia against the Treaty by Mustafa Kemal. As he rose to power, the Treaty of Sevres was soon replaced with the Treaty of Lausanne, which failed to mention the Kurds. This Treaty redrew the map of the Middle East with respect to Turkey's, Greece's and the Allies' interests (O'Balance 1996).

Other reasons that the Kurds were deprived of self-determination can be attributed to their geographic location, being landlocked between hostile countries and less interest on the part of the Great Powers in the people of the Ottoman Empire as opposed to the treatment of those in Europe. Lastly, the Kurds may be regarded as being more assimilable in Turkey than other minorities, such as the Armenians. For instance, most Kurds are Muslim like the Turks, while the Armenians who were granted independence are predominantly Christian.

While there seemed to be a few reasons for the Great Powers to deny the Kurds self-determination, there were even more reasons to grant it to them. When respecting the criteria set-up by the Inquiry, it is evident that the Kurds had a substantial claim to self-government. As mentioned earlier, these criteria were common ties to history, language, religion, and ethnicity

(Gelfand 1963). According to Inquiry reports, it is clear that the Kurds had a definite historical association that tied them to a clearly identified piece of land (Magie 1918). Secondly, Inquiry reports reveal the large majority of Sunni Kurds, dominating the ethnic group (Magie 1918). Thirdly, a definite sense of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ between Kurds and Ottomans and Kurds and Persians gave way to the clear assumption that a distinct ethnic group existed among the Kurds (McDowall 1996). This ethnic group practiced the same religion, shared traditions, and had a common territory they called home. In the end, whether it is a common history, language, ethnicity, or religion, the Kurds were never given a land to call their own, while people such as the South Slavs, who showed few similarities among their diverse ethnicities, were able to unite to form a state of their own, only fulfilling the linguistic criteria.

Over the course of about eighty-five years the Kurds have continuously led nationalist movements, still with the hope of independence. Authors who are sympathetic to the Kurds situation today such as Van Bruinessen (1986), Hassanpour (1994), and Chaliand (1994), provide substantial evidence that reveals the distinctiveness of the Kurds, in terms of having a nation. Hassanpour is sympathetic to the Kurds’ desire of independence and self-determination. However, he realistically argues that their chances are quite slim as a result of their inability to come together as a single organization. He also believes that the environment of despotism and ethnically-based nationhood in the Middle East is incompatible to the Kurds idea of democracy based self-rule (1994). Chaliand also discusses the real tragedy of the Kurds’ inability to attain self-determination. He explains that Turkey, Iran, and Iraq applied policies of assimilation and repression, while confining the minority “to regions with limited resources” (1994, 9). Robins, who takes the side of the Turks, feels that attempts should be made to “find a sustainable political and economic formula capable of ending the alienation of Turkey’s Kurdish south-east”

because, he believes, this region remains an obstacle to the territorial integrity of Turkey (1993, 676).

Robins discusses the obstacles that Kurdish nationalist groups present to their host countries. He says, for instance, that the strongest centrifugal force in Turkey is the disaffection of Kurds in the southeast. Here, he is referring to the PKK (Kurdistan's Workers' Party), who he argues threatens the stability of the whole state. He goes on to say that the creation of a Kurdish state will inevitably weaken the Turkish state (1993). While no author disagrees that the PKK has caused instability in Turkey, Nisan offers an explanation for the need for such an organization. He explains that Turkey's oppression of the Kurds was exemplified by the use of Kurdistan as an "internal colony," where raw materials were extracted and exported out of eastern Turkey (2002, 42). Similarly, Chaliand portrays the Kurdish present day situation as poverty stricken with a lack of opportunities in terms of jobs and education (1994). As a result of such dire circumstances and oppression practiced by the governments of host states, nationalistic groups began to emerge and terrorist attacks against the governments of these states became prevalent (Nisan 2002).

Nationalist movements have had periodic times of success, but overall they have not been able to achieve any lasting advancements. In fact, it seems that many are doubtful of the Kurds chances of ever attaining self-determination, such as Chaliand who describes the Kurds chance of independence as precarious (1994). The most recent opportunity that has presented itself to the Kurds was the invasion of U.S. troops on Iraq in March 2003. The invasion gave Kurds hopes of breaking apart from the Hussein government (Judah 2002).

The Iraqi election on January 30, 2005 is viewed by most as a success for the Kurds. However, Danner is much more pessimistic. He complained that by the end of April 2005, three

months after the election, no government had taken office, no prime minister had been chosen, and no Sunnis voted. In fact, he argued that the real news story “on Election Day was that the Sunnis didn’t vote” (The New York Review of Books, April 28, 2005). His pessimism is countered by several optimists who regard the large number of seats won by the Kurds as a positive and deserved outcome. One article describes the celebration in the streets, as Kurds waved their flags rejoicing that they finally had one of their own people to defend their interests (Aljazeera, June 12, 2005).

While several articles report the Kurds’ cause for celebration, they also mention obstacles that stand in the way of Kurdish autonomy. For instance, the claim of Kirkuk as the capital of the Kurdish regional government has instilled fear among Iraq’s neighbors and poses a threat to the future of the Iraqi state itself. Aqrabi points out the Arabs’ and Turkmen’s similar appeal to the city of Kirkuk (The Australian News, June 13, 2005). Mackey, much more matter-of-factly calls Kirkuk the “make-or-break” issue for the nation (The New York Times, February 9, 2005). She points out the already existent ethnic-sectarian conflicts of the city as well as the possibility of a regional conflict if all parties are not satisfied by the results of the constitution.

A second contentious issue is the style of government Iraq will adopt. A federal state is opposed by many, including the Arabs and Turkmen of Kirkuk. However, this style of government is demanded by the Kurds, a group of secular Shi’ites (vying for an autonomous region in the south), and the Americans, a present occupying force. In fact, Wong points out that the interim constitution the U.S. provided for Iraq calls for the adoption of a federal system to avoid a concentration of power (The New York Times, June 30, 2005).

While most reports appear to remain positive concerning recent Kurdish fortunes, it is impossible to ignore the obstacles standing in the way of their autonomy. The Kurds have again

and again been misled by a dominating power. The promise of self-determination in the early 20th century has never panned out and may never come to fruition. Although the Kurdish leaders of Iraq no longer aspire for independence, it is clear that neighboring Kurds' desire for independence, such as members of the PKK, has not vanished. In fact, the autonomy that Iraqi Kurds presently enjoy has emboldened Kurds in contiguous states, resulting in further demands for freedoms (The New York Times, April 28, 2005, International Herald Tribune, July 4, 2005).

If the constitution outlines provisions calling for a federal system, the Kurds will enjoy even further freedom, as their present autonomy will be enshrined in the constitution. However, neighboring states' Kurdish nationalist groups will undoubtedly strive for the same opportunity in their respective states. This may cause a regional conflict among Kurdish populations.

On the other hand, if the constitution calls for a central government, the Kurds may react as they have previously to defeat, by an all out civil war. Reports do not mention this possibility, but the likelihood of this occurring exists. First of all, while the Kurds have never had so much power in state politics, they still hold less than one third of the vote. In addition, the majority of Shi'ites, who hold more than two thirds of the vote, distrust American-backed goals and argue in favor of a strong central government (nytimes.com. June 30, 2005). Recently, the Kurds have been reassured by a new group of Shi'ites who are similarly in favor of a federal style government. However, this group is small and perhaps not significantly influential.

After nearly a century of aspirations for national self-determination, the Kurds still have not managed to attain such status. Early on, they faced politically motivated world leaders who would have refused them self-determination no matter how convincing their argument was. In the end, the Powers' were much more concerned about their own interests. Decades passed, characterized by the rise of Kurdish nationalist groups in search of self-determination. However,

as the principle became formerly acknowledged in the Atlantic Charter of 1941 and then regarded as a right in a 1960 UN Declaration, it began to refer to territories, not 'people'. Although it is defined using the term 'people' it instead refers to a territory inhabited by a nation. In addition, the principle of territorial integrity comes into play. A territory can be granted self-determination if such an act will not infringe upon the territorial integrity of a state. Thus, there was no way for the Kurds to attain self-determination without threatening the territorial integrity of their sovereign states. Later, provisions were made that made it necessary for the host state to agree to a nation's secessionist movement. Moreover, as the principle has grown, it has become more and more difficult for nations to claim the principle of national self-determination.

Chapter 2

Woodrow Wilson and the Principle of National Self-Determination

The principle of self-determination comes from “the consent of the governed,” which “has for three centuries been repeatedly declared to be sound by political philosophers,” thus it is by no means a new thought, according to Robert Lansing, Woodrow Wilson’s Secretary of State (Lansing 1921, 96). Therefore, when Wilson just used the phrase he was simply restating an old thought. The principle of national self-determination refers to the granting of a population the freedom to determine whom they will be governed by. However, this principle has proven to be exclusive. Although Wilson claimed that “all nations” are entitled to this privilege, it was revealed at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 that Wilson and the Great Powers were exclusive when it came to applying the principle of self-determination. To understand the principle, an explanation of its meaning and origin will be provided. This Chapter will also provide a history of Woodrow Wilson, who is responsible for reintroducing the principle of national self-determination and applying it in his Fourteen Points. Lastly, this Chapter will discuss to whom the principle of self-determination applies and how criteria for self-determination were used in the drawing of maps for the peacemakers.

Concept of Self Determination

Before venturing on a study of the principle of national self-determination, it is necessary to first answer what kind of concept it is. It is a belief, which became a principle of international law, “that a people should have the right and opportunity to determine their own government” (Heater 1994, 3). Nationalist movements have changed dramatically with the introduction of the principle of self-determination, which is only possible in the presence of a democratic ideology

(Cobban 1945). In the modern sense of the word, democracy has been present since the middle of the 18th century. The mere thought of a people determining their own fate can only be conceivable with the presence of democracy, which places importance on people rather than a monarch. The thought of placing people first was a revolutionary concept and without this dramatic change in world politics, the principle of self-determination would have never existed and evolved.

Although the height of the principle of self-determination was during the First World War, one cannot ignore the groups who exemplified or exercised their national consciousness before this time. For instance, the France of Joan of Arc and Shakespearean England exemplified this sense of national identity (Heater 1994). However, the concept of national sovereignty had yet to prevail. The ideas that people are sovereign and that people are to be thought of as the nation were most importantly made known in France in 1789, the beginning of the French Revolution. At this time, the French exercised their national will by way of plebiscitary procedure. This same device was used in the 19th century in Italy and the Balkans. Recognizing that the use of plebiscites was not a perfect exercise of popular will, it continued to be a common device used to unify a people throughout the 19th century and was a step closer to people making a choice as to whom they would be governed (Heater 1994). The doctrine of ‘the consent of the governed’ eventually evolved into the principle of national self-determination and was named and advocated by President Woodrow Wilson.

Demands for independence presented a new problem by the mid-19th century. The question of how to define which nations have the right to self-determination arose among political thinkers. At the time, it was common to assume that only larger nations could expect to

enjoy independence, but as the concept of self-determination became popularized during the First World War, it became a notion which applied to all nations, small and large alike.

Alfred Cobban, “the pioneering historian of national self-determination,” (Ambrosius 2002, 125) defines the principle as “the belief that each nation has a right to constitute an independent state and determine its own government” (Cobban 1945, 4). This principle, advocated by President Woodrow Wilson in his famous Fourteen Points speech to Congress on January 8, 1918, was used as a “criterion for determining the boundaries of states in their efforts to redraw the map of Europe” and the Middle East (Viotti and Kauppi 2001, 426). Although exclusively created for the determination of European boundaries, by the beginning of the Paris Peace Conference the principle became the aspiration of nations from all over the world.

The principle of self-determination excited war-torn Europe and the rest of the world, leading many to presume independence and autonomy they have yet to gain, such as the Kurds and the Palestinians of the Middle East. Needless to say, there are many obstacles involved in the formation of a sovereign state. When the concept of self-determination was presented to the world by Wilson, during the Fourteen Points speech on January 8, 1918, many questioned its meaning and implications; Wilson remained vague. In fact, he admitted that when he first mentioned the concept he had no knowledge that so many nationalities existed, which presented their cause to him day after day. Despite several requests by the American delegation for clarity concerning the principle, Wilson failed to respond (MacMillan 2002).

Even Robert Lansing questioned the meaning of the principle of self-determination. He doubted the validity of the principle and questioned its scale. His main concern was at what unit this principle would be applied; he asks, “When the President talks of ‘self-determination’ what unit has he in mind? Does he mean a race, a territorial area, or a community? Without a definite

unit which is practical, application of this principle is dangerous to peace and stability” (Lansing 1921, 97). The lack of specification in terms of a practical unit, Lansing feared, could cause groups, such as tribes, colonies, or even the United States’ own Native Americans to attempt secession. Peace and stability, he feared, would be compromised if small groups within existing states attempted secession. Furthermore, Lansing felt that it was too idealistic and that it would ultimately be discredited. However, Wilson explained to the American delegates, the Inquiry, aboard the *George Washington* that the nations emerging from war-torn central Europe that they could have whatever form of government they wanted, but they must include in their new states only those who wanted to be there (Gelfand 1963). Although he explicitly referred to Europe, other nations came to the Paris Peace Conference expecting the same opportunity. Again, Wilson talked as if all nations could aspire to self-determination. However, his decisions, along with the Great Powers’, did not universally coincide with this broad view, which exemplified his exclusivity.

Wilson, along with his team of experts, was faced with countless territorial issues and concerns. While reviewing each issue, Wilson expected certain criteria to be fulfilled before granting self-determination. It just so happens that these criteria, which will be discussed later, were not fulfilled as often by non-whites. For instance, he deemed the Filipinos unfit for self-determination as a result of their lack of reliable leadership. The Inquiry, a group of American experts responsible for determining new boundaries for the European continent at the Paris Peace Conference, wrote several reports concerning national boundaries. They were charged with the responsibility of gathering and assembling data while considering historical, sociological, and economic situations. However, their primary approach for deciding how to divide contested land was to first consider the application of self-determination, emphasized by President Wilson.

Before realizing the complexity of nationalism and a peoples sense of identity, Wilson declared to Congress on February 11, 1918:

There shall be no annexations, no contributions, no punitive damages. Peoples are not to be handed about from one sovereignty to another by an international conference or an understanding between rivals and antagonists. National aspirations must be respected; peoples may now be dominated and governed only by their own consent. “Self determination” is now an imperative principle of action which statesmen will henceforth ignore at their peril (Link 1984, 321).

Woodrow Wilson respected the power of nationalism and expected people to come together in agreement. He was the first world leader to try to channel the strength of nationalism “in the direction of democracy and international cooperation, beginning in Central and Eastern Europe but incorporating the rest of the world thereafter” (Ambrosius 2002, 126). Now did Wilson actually believe that the rest of the world would be included? Not until the western powers or the ‘civilized’ people decided that they were ready. Those dominated by imperial powers would strongly disagree that they had the same freedoms as Europeans, which was later proved by the failure of the latter to grant such people national self-determination. Once again, the principle was first created with Europe in mind, but it soon became a standard for which all nations could aspire, that is, as long as they satisfied the criteria.

Woodrow Wilson

President Woodrow Wilson’s scholarly career was dedicated to American history and politics, with a special focus on the development of nationalism and democracy in the United States (Heater 1994). In fact his particular ideology that defined a new role for the United States in world affairs (pre-WWI) was given a name: Wilsonianism. Wilson used his own historical

knowledge as a foundation for international relations. His vision of a New World Order, combining nationalism and internationalism, came from his national experience, which was particularly influenced by the American Civil War. Articulated in his vision were the ideas of national self-determination and collective security, which would be provided by a League of Nations (Ambrosius 2002).

Wilson is remembered today for entering the First World War in 1917, Wilsonianism, and most importantly the Fourteen Points, which called for collective security and national self-determination. To understand Wilson's conception of nation, democracy, sovereignty, and most importantly, the principle of self-determination, one must not ignore the meaning of each term and the definitions of the ideas that lie underneath the broad umbrella of national self-determination, such as nation and state.

The subject of the state has been given the most attention among political geographers and continues to be a key topic for study among them. The importance of the state is due to the fact that it is recognized as the dominant political unit for studying political processes. The terms 'nation,' and 'state' are often mistakenly used interchangeably. A state is an independent country consisting of a specific territory and citizens bound by a sovereign government that demands their loyalty. Characteristics of states include: a (defined) territory, a population, a government, an organized economy, and a transportation and communication circulation system for transporting goods, people, and ideas. These are the characteristics of a state according to political geographers. However, political scientists and those who study international relations consider sovereignty and recognition as requirements for a state as well. Sovereignty may be defined generally as "power over the people of an area unrestrained by laws originating outside the area, or independence completely free of direct external control" (Glassner and Fahrer 2004,

32). Secondly, recognition by a significant portion of the international community as a legitimate state is a requirement of political scientists. This brings up an interesting point. Recognition is indeed necessary if a state wishes to take part in the proceedings of international organizations, such as the World Trade Organization and the United Nations. However, there are exceptions, such as Palestine. Palestine has not been recognized as a state and they are allowed observer status in the United Nations General Assembly, but they may not vote nor participate in the decision making process. Although Palestine has a defined territory, a population, a government, an economy, and a circulation system, they have not been recognized by the international community as a state. Thus, recognition is indeed a requirement of a state.

The term 'nation' is often used interchangeably with 'state,' yet it is far different (Glassner and Fahrer 2004). A nation is a group of people, often unified by cultural traits (language, religion, and historical experience) and territory. The Navajo nation exemplifies this definition of a nation. They are a distinguishable group of people with their own unique culture, embracing a complex language and clan system. A nation does not have to have a government, recognition, or a circulation system. The only requirements are that they are "bound together by a sense of solidarity rooted in a historic attachment to a homeland and a common culture" (Johnston, Gregory, Pratt, and Watts 2000, 532)

Wilson's definitions of nation, democracy, and sovereignty were far different than the way geographers and political scientists describe them today. First of all, Wilson's concept of nation was extremely exclusive. More specifically, his concept of the American nation excluded American Indians and African Americans and only included Americans of European ancestry (Ambrosius 2002). Wilson's concept of democracy was also exclusive. He believed democracy was a result of history related to experience (Wilson 1898). Similarly, he thought the United

States provided an excellent example of a democratic nation, which grew as a result of experience and successful leadership.

Wilson's exclusive concepts of nation and democracy reflect his definition of sovereignty. Wilson said that sovereignty "rested not with all citizens but with their political leadership" and that "sovereignty, if it be a definite and separable thing at all, is not unlimited power; is not identical with the powers of the community. It is not the general vitality of the organism, but the specific originative power of certain organs" (Ambrosius 2002, 27). In other words, he believed it was the leaders who were responsible for exercising sovereignty on behalf of the population. Once again, he attributes the success of a democratic nation to good leadership.

Wilson, born and raised in the south, was one of the first southerners to adopt a pro-Union or nationalist view of the American Civil War, a war he referred to as a "final contest between nationalism and sectionalism" (Baker and Dodd 1925, 175). He strongly believed that nations be united and not practice secession. In fact, he saw the U.S. war against Spain (1898) as an exemplification of the U.S. consolidating its national unity, which put an end to sectional divisions that lingered since the American Civil War. As the U.S. achieved national unity at the end of the 19th century, Wilson was ready for world affairs.

The idea of national self-determination existed in Wilson's mind far before he entered the U.S. into the First World War. He makes several references to the idea before the war. For instance, on May 23, 1914, he said "When properly directed, there is no people not fitted for self-government" (Saturday Evening Post 1914, 4). This statement not only ties Wilson to the importance he placed on self-government, democracy, and leadership as necessary elements in nation-building, it exemplifies his belief early on that people need to be directed, to be shown how to govern themselves. In fact, at a much earlier time Wilson said, "I believe that we have

not made enough of leadership.” He continued on “An acute English historical scholar has said that “the Americans of the United States are a nation because they once obeyed a king;” we shall remain a nation only by obeying leaders” (Wilson 1893, 138).

Two years later, Wilson expressed his commitment to the principle of national self-determination at a dinner arranged by the American League in Washington on May 27, 1916, to enforce peace, he said:

We believe these fundamental things. First, that every people has a right to choose the sovereignty under which they shall live. Second, that the small states of the world have a right to enjoy the same respect for their sovereignty and for their territorial integrity that the great and powerful nations expect and insist upon” (Link 1981, 115).

Later, as he joined the war effort, he maintained these same ideals and in an address to the U.S. Senate on January 22, 1917 he stated, “Every people should be left free to determine its own polity, its own way of development, unhindered, unthreatened, unafraid, the little along with the great and powerful” (Baker and Dodd 1926, 414). Although the phrase ‘national self-determination’ did not emerge until the First World War, Wilson was certainly referring to it when he mentioned that every people should be free to determine their own polity and way of development. This notion obviously gained world-wide recognition in the following months which preceded the Paris Peace Conference.

Upon the U.S. entrance into World War I, Wilson did not agree with founding nation-states solely upon ethnic affiliation or ethnonationalism, which refers to “collective identity” and “a claim to territory” (Roshwald 2001, 5). Instead, Wilson placed a much greater emphasis on historicism or the total heritage and experience a people undergoes over a long period of time rather than ethnonationalism, welcoming states like Yugoslavia, an extremely diverse group of

people, into the community of nations. While he believed that modern nations with a collective sense of purpose and homogeneity of race were ready for democratic self-rule, he did not view the inclusion of various nationalities in new states as a violation of self-determination. Instead, he believed that people in each state, like Yugoslavia, should assimilate into a single nation (Ambrosius 1991, 2002). Yet, it remains that even this semi-open view was exclusive when it came to the American nation, only including Americans of European ancestry.

Wilson's emphasis on historicism reflected his view that states should go through a process of development in order to gain experience so that democracy will flourish, as it did in the United States. While recognizing that England was the "oldest home of self-government in the modern world," Wilson felt that the United States was the best example of a successful democratic nation (Baker and Dodd 1925, 407). He explained in an article in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1901 that in England, "the people of countries were not self-directed in affairs: they were governed by crown officials." On the other hand, he felt that the United States "printed the SELF large and government small" (Baker and Dodd 1925, 408-409). Acting as an example for other nations to follow, the United States' task, according to Wilson, was to extend self-government to the Philippines, "if they be fit to receive it" (Baker and Dodd 1925, 410).

Wilson regarded people of non-white, non-European ancestry as inferior. Similarly, he found there to be racial hierarchies among people of European ancestry as well (Sluga 2005). He explained that the undeveloped, those in the childhood of development, needed to be taught order and self-control by example. For instance, when the Filipino's asked for self-determination, Wilson advised that they use the U.S. as their democracy tutor for several years before requesting independence. Then, Wilson explained in 1901, "When they accept the compulsions

of that character and accept those standards, they will be entitled to partnership with us” (Baker and Dodd 1925, 414).

Wilson made certain that those aspiring to self-determination possessed those qualities of the U.S. during the American Civil War that allowed the states to unite and function as a nation-state. Those qualities did not solely rely on a common ethnicity or language. Instead, Wilson was interested in the political leadership of the nation because good leadership might “enable that process of historical development to assimilate new immigrants from foreign lands” (Ambrosius 2002, 129).

Despite Wilson’s argument in favor of self-determination, it seems that the principle falls into the same category as his definitions of democracy and nation, in terms of his exclusivity. While claiming that all nationalities were entitled to self-determination, Wilson believed that a nation required more than a common ethnicity or language. He believed people first needed to develop a community with a distinctive historical consciousness before qualifying as a nation (Ambrosius 2002, Roshwald 2001). This sense of historical consciousness comes when a group has developed a sense of national unity. Wilson did not believe that people could become a nation until the national thought and feeling developed and became prevalent (Heater 1994, Ambrosius 2002). Along with a sense of imagined community and a developed national thought, Wilson recognized the importance of the state and its need for political leadership, which, again, he deemed essential to the development of a nation.

In fact, the importance of leadership greatly affected the outcome of the Kurds of Mesopotamia and Anatolia. They were portrayed in American reports as good soldiers, but poor leaders (Gelfand 1963, 243). Their failure to organize an effective political movement contributed to their ultimate denial of self-determination. The lack of representation at the Paris

Peace Conference prohibited their cause to be heard and was thus dealt with as a mere afterthought (MacMillan 2002). On the other hand, in the case of the South Slavs, although they lacked a common religion and historical tradition, they did have powerful leadership, which ultimately contributed to their international recognition.

In relation to Wilson's exclusive criteria for the application of national self-determination and nationhood, it is evident that he embraced the hierarchy of race. He recognized new nations in Europe, but for the Middle East, he accepted an alternative which created mandates, as exemplified above in the comparison between the Kurds of the Middle East and the South Slavs of Europe. Others, in Wilson's view, had not reached the appropriate stage to become independent states, such as the Kurds. Needless to say, self-determination was heavily dependant upon politics or the Great Powers' own self-interests, such as France and Great Britain's aspirations for control over Syria and Iraq.

The Great Power's views concerning the principle of self-determination were mutually exclusive. For instance, the Italians expected borders to be drawn that would respect her security, disregarding ethnic considerations or the population's wishes. As for the French, they believed in homogeneity of states. In fact, Clemenceau had little tolerance for Wilson's ideals and did not fully support self-determination, although he did not announce that publicly. As for the British, the delegates were prepared to support it, except when it came to its own colonies. Therefore, the principle of self-determination was never fully and holistically implemented (Cobban 1945).

An overlying theme that continues to surface is the power politics that was present during the Paris Peace Conference. When it came to the Middle East, the Allies exuded power by taking it upon themselves to claim and take land without much regard to the people who lived there. Countries such as Turkey from the Ottoman Empire, who had ruled for over 600 years,

succumbed to the power of the Allies and agreed to a mandate in their own country, while watching their former territory be split between the powers (Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. 12, 1947). States who exercised their power by participating in the redrawing of borders after the First World War were Britain, France, Italy, and the United States. Prior to the First World War, the European states had already extended their authority by territorial acquisition over other nations, such as colonies in Africa. Similarly, although the U.S. was an emerging world power, they had also participated in the occupation of foreign lands prior to the war, such as their occupation of Haiti in 1915 (Renda 2001).

U.S. occupation of Haiti represented the paternalism that was ever present in the treatment of the people of the Middle East during the Paris Peace Conference. While Wilson presented himself as the savior of Europe, the man who would release the oppressed, he was taking part in an effort to control the Caribbean nation of Haiti. White, native-born Americans thought of themselves as fathers to the inhabitants of Haiti (Renda 2001). Paternalism was similarly evident in the Instructions for Commissioners from the Paris Peace Conference, as it reads

After careful study they [Wilson, Lloyd George, Clemenceau, Orlando] are satisfied that the best method of giving practical effect to this principle is that the tutelage of such peoples [who inhabited Turkish territories] should be entrusted to advanced nations who, by reason of their resources, their experience or their geographical positions, can best undertake this responsibility, and that this tutelage should be exercised by them as mandatories on behalf of the League of Nations (Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. 12, 1947, 746).

The supposed need for such guardianship over the inhabitants of Turkish territory exemplifies the belief of the Great Powers that Middle Easterners needed to be taken care of, much like young children need supervision. Furthermore, the ultimate division of the old Ottoman Empire

was a direct result of the power held by the Allies and their belief that only European nations were ready for statehood, which is evidenced by the European nations given states and the non-Europeans either forgotten, like the Kurds, or deliberately placed under the mandate system.

To Whom the Principle of Self-Determination Applies

A major obstacle of self-determination is the obvious question over to whom the principle applies, Lansing's question. It certainly does not apply to every group who wishes to attain independence. Such a lenient interpretation would not only result in civil unrest, but it would be a major concern for highly multinational states. The division of many countries would be inevitable, but how to divide them would become the difficult task of the respective countries and the international community, who must try to please everyone to prevent conflict. If such a lenient interpretation applied, groups would fight over precious boundaries, resource-rich land, major cities, and ports.

The principle of national self determination faces many obstacles, having many gaps in its definition. One obstacle that continues to blur the meaning of self-determination is the claim of indigenous or native people to their own land. What makes one indigenous is their long historic claim to an environment. It would seem that those native to the land should have the strongest claim over the area because they have the longest historical claim to it, yet often they are the most underrepresented. In the case of the Middle East, after the First World War, the Allies decided who would occupy and rule the land while often ignoring those who lived there, leaving minorities in a vulnerable position.

In response to whom the principle should apply, Wilson did make a few specifications. When he presented his Fourteen Points speech to Congress in January 1918, he was certainly

thinking in terms of self-determination for certain subject nationalities. For instance, Article XIII called for an independent Polish state to be inhabited by people who were indisputably Polish. At this time, he had not concluded that all people should be entitled to self-determination. A month later, Wilson made a speech to Congress, where he called self-determination a “principle of action which statesmen will henceforth ignore at their peril” (Link 1984, 321). His thoughts on the nationality question had evolved considerably, including all national elements. As Wilson gained knowledge of the nationalities that existed in Europe, his opinions became much more specific concerning the principle of self-determination and to whom it should apply.

For instance, Wilson said the principle should apply to groups who have an organized movement and leadership, in fact denying it to those who he believed did not have those qualities, such as the Filipinos (Baker and Dodd 1925). Similarly, it can be inferred that the Kurds’ lack of organization and internal struggle for leadership contributed to their failure to attain autonomy. This notion was crystallized in American reports which concerned the Kurds, again saying that they make good soldiers, but poor leaders (Gelfand 1963, 243). This generalized description of the Kurds, represents the typical racial bias which persisted during this time. Comments made insinuated the Kurds’ backwardness and need for foreign assistance in order to succeed. The men were described as being lazy, while the women were described as being industrious, comparing them to the American Indians. Furthermore, the reports claimed that the Kurds needed the help of Christian missionaries to be guided in the right direction, exemplifying the American and European belief that Christianity is a necessary component of civilization. For example, a report reads, “Who is to be entrusted with such a noble task and in an atmosphere of religious freedom to guide this Koordish race with the help of Christian missionaries into an

acceptance of Christ and Christianity and its attendant Christian civilization” (Gelfand 1963, 243).

The principle of self-determination, as it was declared by the Great Powers, was to apply to all peoples. “All four are pledged to the principle of self-determination” (Miller 1924, Vol. 20, 362), despite their exclusive application of it. The world thought the Great Powers were prepared to put the principle into practice unequivocally. However, the four did not mean for this to apply to colonial populations (Cobban 1945), once again demonstrating their bias against the non-white, non-Europeans. Instead, prior to the Paris Peace Conference, the Allies were already discussing which former German colonies appealed to them. For instance, France wanted Cameroon and Togoland, while Italy had its eyes on parts of Somalia (MacMillan 2002). While self-determination was regarded by the Allies as a principle to be applied to those who were fit for self-government, many nations were wrongly informed and as a result disappointed by the unequal application. Many reacted in nationalist movements, which created further strife among neighboring states.

Wilson’s new world order called for “some arrangement other than annexation or colonization for those parts of the world not yet ready to govern themselves” (MacMillan 2002, 98). This arrangement was in the form of mandates, which was a form of trusteeship either under the League of Nations or under powers to be mandated by the League. Furthermore, the length was dependent upon the progress made by their ‘protectors,’ once again placing the power in the hands of the Great Powers.

While the populations of the fallen Empires in Europe were regarded as ready to stand up on their own feet after the Great War, it was believed that the people of the Middle East would take longer. As a result, mandates were put into place in this region. One group, however,

which escaped this form of trusteeship, was the Armenians of the old Ottoman Empire (Roshwald 2001). The independence granted to this population may have partly rested upon their faith of Christianity, but definitely was a result of the mistreatment they experienced in the brutal Armenian Massacre of 1915 by the Turks and Kurds (Gelfand 1963). The neighboring Kurds, on the other hand, were promised autonomy by the Great Powers, but the latter reneged on their agreement (McDowall 1996). The unequal treatment of the two minority groups in the Middle East exemplifies the racial bias of the Great Powers. They treated the Armenians, who looked more like the former and shared the same faith, as inferior to the Kurdish people of the same region. Even after admitting in reports that the Armenians were not ready for self-government, they were still granted independence, the same reason the Kurds were denied.

The question of to whom the principle of self-determination should apply became very evident after the Paris Peace Conference ended. The nations who were granted this privilege were European countries who were 'ready' to stand on their own feet, such as the Polish. Others, such as the inhabitants of the former Ottoman Empire, were not as fortunate. Instead, an alternative to self-government was introduced, placing them under the authority of foreign powers, a policy commonly known as imperialism. These imperialistic powers split the old Empire apart into zones of influence and carried on with the 'civilizing mission' (Adas 2004).

How Nation-States Were Determined According to the Principle of Self-Determination

The Inquiry was faced with difficult field work in order to learn more about the inhabitants of contested areas in Europe and the Middle East. It was unknown then exactly how the principle of self-determination would be applied. The experts were faced with the complicated decision of how to separate groups of people who may have lived side-by-side for

hundreds of years. Defining territorial boundaries was done by creating maps with boundary lines associated with topography and cultural characteristics, by taking into consideration historical, linguistic, religious, or ethnic commonalities (Black Book 1919). However, it must be said that although these commonalities were taken into consideration, decisions were still considerably based on the Allies material interests (i.e. oil reserves) and apparent bias, especially as it pertained to the Middle East.

It may be argued that historical claims of conflicting groups justify the sovereign status of a particular territory. In fact, during the Paris Peace Conference, the Inquiry was given the responsibility of researching historical claims to land, also having to use their own judgment concerning how far back historical reports were to extend. It was ultimately decided that “writers of historical studies to begin their reports no earlier than 1815 except when earlier events proved vital to the understanding and determination of a given problem” (Gelfand 1963, 188). The year 1815 was the year of the Congress of Vienna, where the most significant territorial adjustments prior to the First World War were made. The Inquiry’s Research Committee found treaties and legislative records which dated all the way back from the Middle Ages. However, use of such dated material was frowned upon by the organization. In effect, the disregard of records prior to 1815 may have very well situated people under one government as opposed to another. For example, there was a considerable population of Italians living along the coast of the Balkan Peninsula (Fiume) prior to WWI, which later resulted in a major contestation over who the land belonged to, the Italians or the Yugoslavs (Paterson 2005).

Language was also used as a determining factor in identifying or defining frontiers. In fact, during the Paris Peace Conference many ethnologists believed language to be the best means of establishing identity in a mixed population because this was the simplest way to

differentiate between groups. Language was found to be central to identity, a strong assimilation force, and an homogenizing element of nation-state building (Gelfand 1963).

Religion was central in several cases in the effort to work out national identity, in defining nation-states as well as playing a role in regard to implement the principle of self-determination (David Little 1996). As the Inquiry conducted interviews or questionnaires of people in the remote villages of Europe, they found that people used religion as a major defining factor of who they were as a people. Instead of saying that they were Croatian or Serbian, they would identify themselves as Muslim or Orthodox. Many people had no prior association with a particular state, only an immediate group of people who associated themselves with others of the same religion (MacMillan 2002). When it was easier for the American experts to define a people by religious affiliation, they would do so in their reports. However, this isn't to say that actual boundaries were drawn according to these reports. For instance, the Middle East was most effectively delineated by religious boundaries rather than ethnic boundaries and eventually these reports weren't even taken into consideration when the boundaries were drawn (Gelfand 1963). As a result, Sunnis, Shi'ites, and Kurds were placed together within the borders of Iraq.

Ethnicity, another state defining factor during the Paris Peace Conference, is one of the most difficult terms for social scientists to define. However, in contemporary usage, the term is regarded as both a way in which individuals may define themselves and a type of social stratification "that emerges when people form groups based on their real or perceived origins" (Johnston, Gregory, Pratt, and Watts 2000, 234). Moreover, ethnicity provides a distinction between 'us' versus 'them'. There was an explosion of studies on the subject of ethnicity during the 1980s and 1990s, especially in the fields of anthropology, geography, sociology, and political

science. In the case of anthropology, ethnicity has been a subject of major study since the 1960s and continues to be a major focus for research.

According to Kallen, “the concept of ethnicity refers to any arbitrary classification of human populations utilizing the biogeographical criterion of ancestry in conjunction with such socio-cultural criteria as nationality, language, and religion (1996, 117). This tie between biological descent and ethnicity is a dangerous argument. In fact, the accepted belief among anthropologists is that ethnicity and biology share no common ground. Therefore, “there can thus be no genetic test to perform in order to determine whether or not one is “Caucasian,” “Alpine,” or “Hopi” (Marks 1995, 167). Furthermore, there are similarities between groups who do not appear to be closely related. For instance, dark skin color is found among Pakistanis, Australians, and Central Africans. Therefore, it would be incorrect to tie biology into race or ethnicity. Instead, anthropologists, such as Erikson, say that ethnicity refers to “aspects of relationships between groups which consider themselves and are regarded by others, as being culturally distinctive” (1993, 4).

In reference to the definition of ethnicity above, Wilson did not believe that this commonality among people should be the only factor to rely on when deciding where boundaries would be drawn. Instead, he believed that all factors should be taken into consideration. For example, reports were completed by the Inquiry regarding the division of the Middle East and in these reports it is evident that several factors were taken into consideration. However, the Inquiry’s efforts to settle the future of the Middle East were weak. Gelfand compared it to the colonies of Africa, remarking that efforts were “less comprehensive than the African recommendations” (1963, 258). Similarly, the topic of the Middle East’s settlement among the

Great Powers did not come into discussion until late into the Conference's proceedings (MacMillan 2002), exemplifying the lack of importance placed in this region.

The State Department of the U.S. also produced reports and proposals for the American representatives at the Paris Peace Conference, concerning the Middle East. For instance, the State Department recommended in the King-Crane Commission that territorial adjustments should under no circumstances be based on religious determination, which could separate Christians from Muslims, for example. These reports were more in line with American interests and plans for the region. For example, they took into consideration their own petroleum business and the subsequent oil fields of the Middle East (Foreign Relations of the United States 1947).

William Westermann was the chief Inquiry specialist on the Middle East. He was responsible for all reports concerning this region. His reports were implemented into the Black Book, which was later used by the Powers for recommendations for the Treaty of Versailles. He recognized that the Middle East could not effectively be divided according to ethnic self-determination (Gelfand 1963). He also found that the people of the Middle East had divided along religious cleavages and along linguistic lines secondarily. While people in a particular area shared the same ethnicity, they differed in language or religious affiliation. For example, there were Christian Arabs, Jewish Arabs, and Muslim Arabs. Therefore, religious, linguistic, economic, and topographic factors were considered, without regard to ethnicity.

American Recommendations for the Middle East

The Black Book called for a separate Palestinian state, separate from Syria. This state would be justified by historical and religious grounds. The Black Book states that "the Jewish and Christian churches were born in Palestine" (1919, 79). The importance placed on the origin

of churches demonstrates the significance of religious and historical commonalities. Similarly, in Westermann's reports, the borders of Palestine were recommended to adhere to Zionist aspirations for a national state, again highlighting religious categorization. Westermann and the Inquiry's suggested borders for a Palestinian state included 80,000 Christians as well as Muslims, and of course Jews. However, the majority of the enclosed population would be Arab (Gelfand 1963).

Westermann's reports concerning Arabia explained that desert tribes could decide their own destiny along the lines of a patriarchal tribal government. Mandates were not suggested for Arabia. However, it was suggested that the state needed international supervision (Gelfand 1963), once again exemplifying the paternalism present among the Western Powers.

Topography was taken into consideration when drawing the borders around the tribal state of Arabia. The Black Book recommended that "the desert portion of the Arabian peninsula, exclusive of the agricultural areas of Syria and of the Euphrates and Tigris valleys, be treated as a separate block" (1919, 81) (See Figure 2.1). It was again mentioned in the Black Book that no action be taken in regard to the tribal state; this statement is in reference to the implementation of mandates, which was deemed unnecessary in this situation. Instead, the McMahon-Hussein Correspondance, an agreement between the British and the Ottoman Empire, resulted in the sovereign creation of an Arab state, which became Saudi Arabia. The British betrayed the Arabians and the land that was eventually given to them was regarded as less valuable (Eskander 2000).

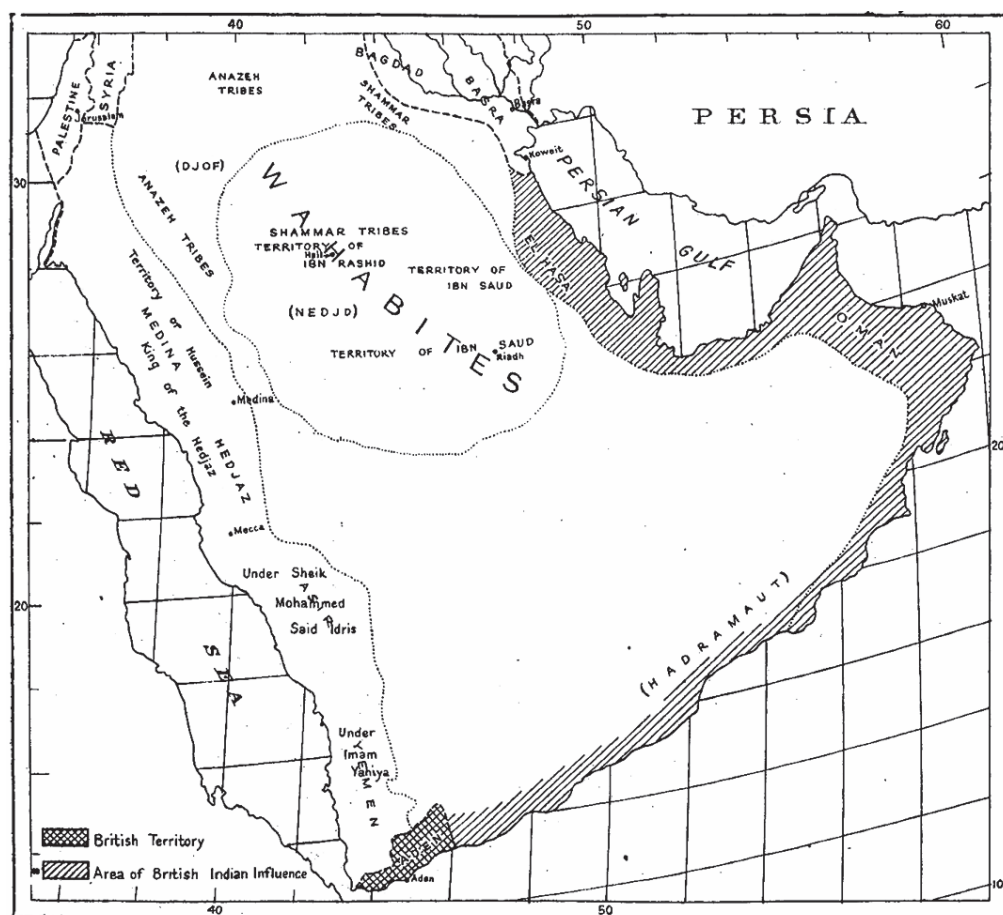


Figure 2.1. Inquiry Recommendations for Arabia. 1919. Black Book: Outline of Tentative Report to Recommendations. January 21, 1919. pp. 80.

Concerning the nation of Armenia, the Inquiry justified giving them a state due to past atrocities committed against them by the Turks and Kurds. They also recommended that the new state be placed under a mandate (Foreign Relations of the United States 1947) and that the boundaries of the new state respect ethnicity and topography (Black Book 1919). The Armenian delegation actually requested the protection of an outside power along with a large piece of land where Russia, Persia, and Turkey met. Strengthening the Armenian cause, they appealed to a sad history of centuries of repression and recent extermination attempts (MacMillan 2002). Therefore, the combination of Allied animosity against the Turks, who they had fought against

for four years, and the subsequent empathy toward the Christian Armenians resulted in the creation of a new state.

In reference to Mesopotamia, the Black Book contains discussions of a distinct linguistic border, saying “there is Arab linguistic unity south of a line drawn from Alexandria to the Persian border. Above this line live Arabs, Turks, Kurds and Assyrians, each group speaking a distinct language” (1919, 74). The obvious defining factor, according to Inquiry reports, for Mesopotamian boundaries was language. However, this would not be the only defining factor by which final boundaries were drawn. Before the end of the War, the British and French had already agreed to tentative boundaries. The decided boundaries were eventually altered, taking into consideration the interests of the European Powers.

At the time of the Paris Peace Conference, the British and French had two qualms with the agreement that they had previously made in the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916. These were the control over the oil-rich Mosul and Palestine. A mandate over Palestine by the British would result in the Balfour Declaration, which provided a Jewish homeland in Palestine. On the other hand, the issue with Mosul was much more complicated. The oil-rich area was not taken into consideration in the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916) (See Figure 2.2). In fact, the British wanted the French to revise the agreement because of the presence of oil. A tentative agreement was made which stated that the British would support French demands in the Ruhr in return for a share of Mosul oil. Later, it was decided and implicated in the Sam Remo Agreement of 1920 that France relinquish control over Mosul to Great Britain in return for 25% of petroleum shares (Armajani 1970). However, American’s interest in oil and Turkish claims over Mosul provided problems. The argument continued and was partially settled at the Lausanne Conference. The council at the Conference favored Great Britain in the question over Mosul, so the Turks

withdrew their claims, but settled to receive a 10% share of royalty payment from Mosul oil.

Later it was settled that the British, French, Dutch, and Americans would each receive 24%

shares. Finally, the British mandate over Iraq was officially applied by the League of Nations in July 1922 (MacMillan 2002).

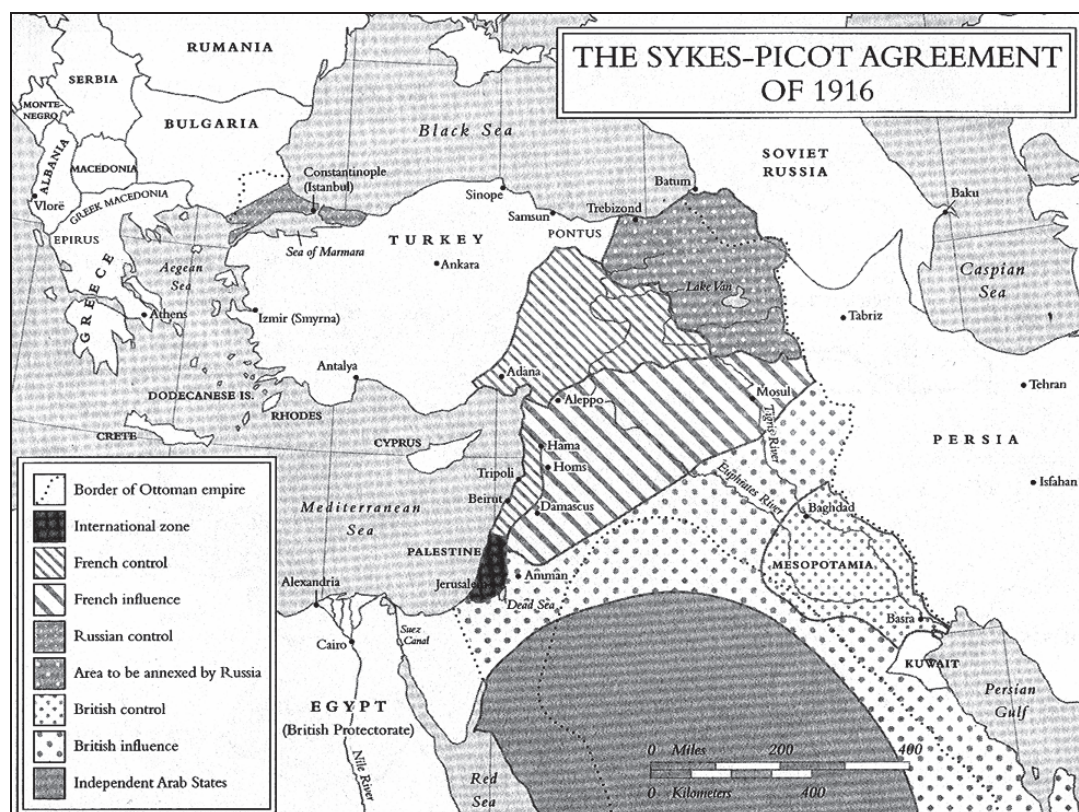


Figure 2.2. The Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916. Source: MacMillan, M. 2002. Paris 1919. New York: Random House.

Syria was described as having the largest European population, having a close relationship with Europe, and having a strong Christian element. It was suggested in the Black Book that Syria be separated from the nomadic Arab area, which would define the Eastern boundary of the mandate (The Black Book 1919). It was also recommended that Syria's borders include the richest grain-growing land. Lastly, it was suggested that the northern boundary would have to be artificial because the Inquiry was unable to draw a boundary according to racial

lines (The Black Book 1919) (See Figure 2.3). In all of these suggestions, no reason was provided why this area should contain the richest grain-growing land. Would Syria be receiving preferential treatment due to her strong Christian and European inhabitation? The British later made a special request for Syria to be ruled by Feisal under the already established French mandate. Feisal was the Arab representative at the Paris Peace Conference and also a close friend of Gertrude Bell's. This was granted in December 1919 (MacMillan 2002).

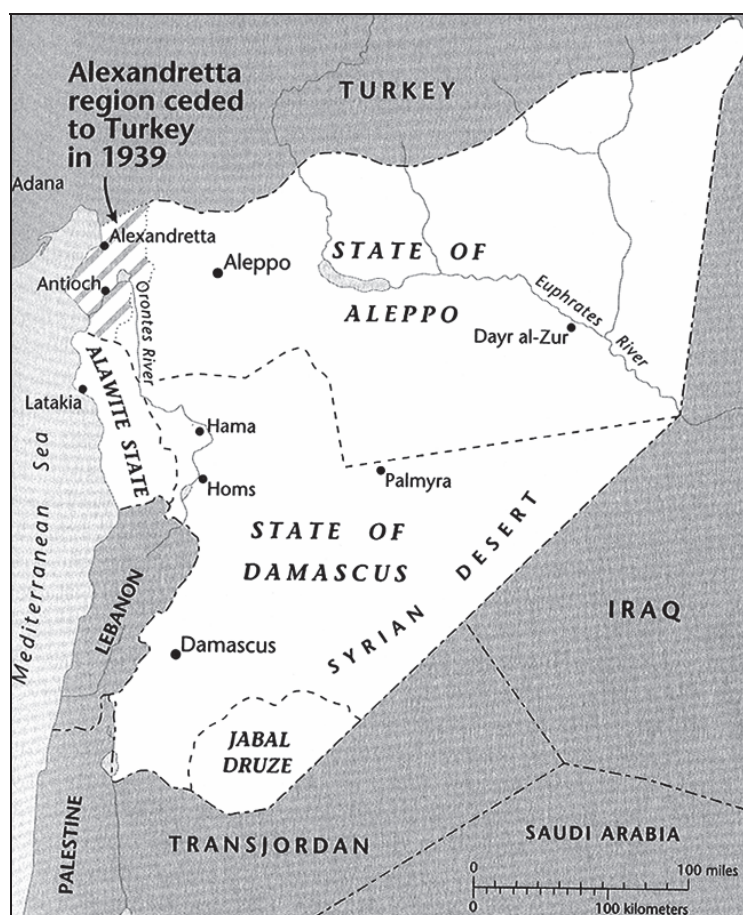


Figure 2.3. The Division of Syria under the French Mandate, 1920-1923. Source: Cleveland, W.L. 2004. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. Oxford: Westview Press. pp. 221.

Also left from recommendations were the obvious strategic buffers put into place. For instance, the state of Iraq created an obvious division between the Shi'i Persians in the East and the Sunni Arabs on the opposite side of the Persian Gulf with a puppet regime established in

Baghdad to maintain the balance of power (Mansfield 1991). The two pillars for the British and Americans in the region for most of the twentieth century became Persia and Arabia, again with Iraq as a buffer. The borders were drawn according to religious differences, linguistic differences, and most importantly, economic interdependencies (i.e. oil).

The Inquiry failed as well as the Instructions for Commissioners from the Paris Peace Conference to include specific recommendations in their final documents concerning the heavy Kurdish populations in the Middle East. Instead, reports briefly mention them, without placing much importance on the topic. It must also be mentioned that criteria such as leadership, a trait Wilson deemed necessary to development, was not mentioned in the final reports either.

To conclude this Chapter, it is evident that the principle of national self-determination was not born on the eve of the Peace Conference. Wilson maintained his belief that all nations with the appropriate experience and development had a right to self-government. However, as time progressed the principle of national self-determination faced several obstacles, which happened to translate in the realms of its application and denial. It became evident at the Paris Peace Conference that the principle of national self-determination was exclusively for those nations who were ready for self-government and clearly the Great Powers did not deem the uncivilized, non-whites as 'ready' for self-government. As far as a criterion for self-determination to rest upon, there was not one particular commonality that tied a people together during the Paris Peace Conference. Instead, there were a number of factors involved simultaneously. Nonetheless, the Great Powers were left with decisions which continue to haunt the region today, such as the ongoing Kurdish struggle.

Chapter 3

The Kurds as a Case Study

This chapter sets out to explain how the principle of national self-determination relates to the case of the Kurds. These people's experience concerning post-war Middle East is an excellent example of the Great Powers' exclusivity and racial bias in terms of the application of self-determination in this region. A discussion of the region's environment will be provided to give readers an understanding of the Powers' decisions, which ultimately led to the denial of self-determination for the Kurds, reinforcing Chapter two's argument that the principle of self-determination did not apply to all nations. This Chapter will also discuss who the Kurds are, their relationship to the Ottoman Empire, their fate at the end of the First World War, and reasons why the Kurds were unable to attain self-determination.

The Kurds

The area where most Kurdish people live has been referred to as Kurdistan since the 13th century, becoming more common during the 16th century. It refers not only to the people, but to the social and political concepts they hold. The term 'Kurdistan' "is used to indicate that area within modern Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey, the majority of whose inhabitants call themselves Kurds" (Fieldhouse, 2002, 33) or the land of the Kurds. The majority of the Kurds live in the mountains and uplands where the borders of Iran, Iraq, and Turkey meet (See Figure 3.1). It is difficult to say what the actual population of the Kurdish people is because host countries tend to undercount for political reasons and Kurdish leaders tend to overcount to "accentuate this neglected minority" (Entessar, 1992, 3).

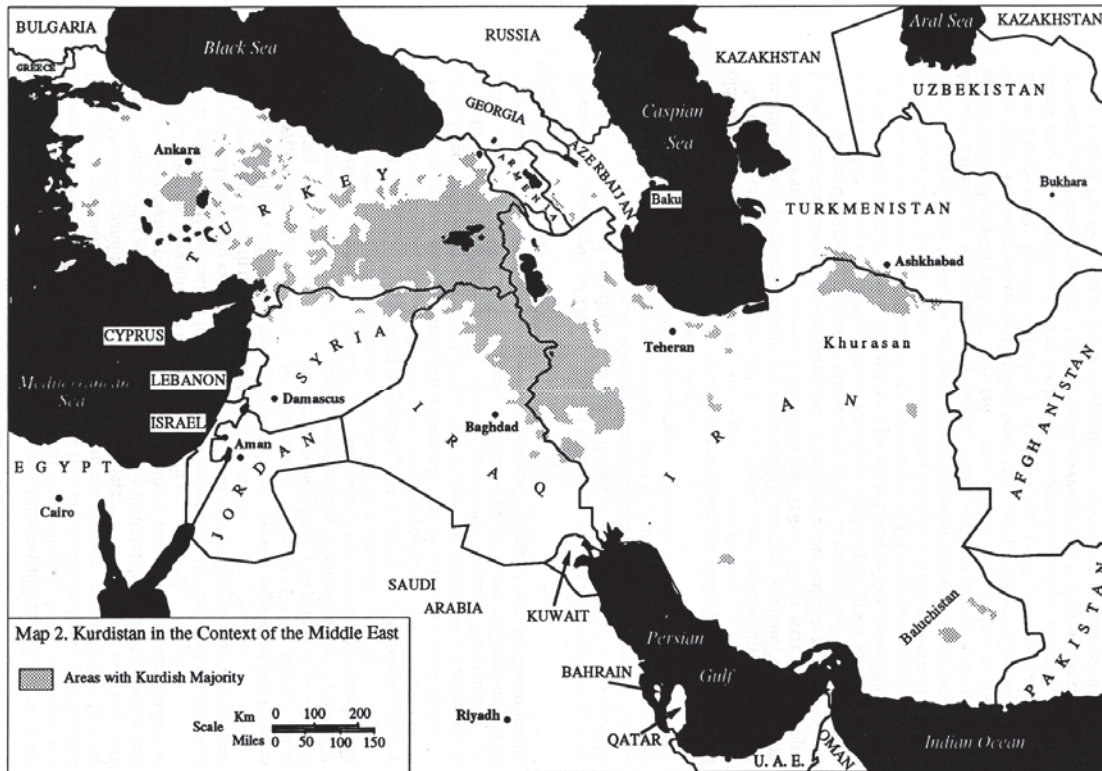


Figure 3.1. “Kurdistan” in the context of the Middle East. Source: Izady, M.R. (1992). *The Kurds*. (Washington: Taylor & Francis International Publishers). 5.

The Kurds existed as an identifiable group for more than two thousand years (Izady, 1992). It must be said first that ethnic identity is an ongoing process. For example, the word “Kurd” never referred to a fixed group of people and “Kurdistan” was never a distinct rigid entity (Ozoglu 2004). As I discuss later in this Chapter, there is almost no evidence, with the exception of a poet, that the Kurds were ever thought of as a united, coherent group of people by outsiders until the end of the 19th century. A sense of national community occurred among the Arabs and Turks, but the Kurds often found themselves competing against states that included them in their new identity, denying the Kurdish ethnicity. Additionally, the Kurdish people felt disadvantaged because they lacked “both a civic culture and an established literature” (McDowall, 2000, 2).

Modern day Kurds trace themselves back to the Medes, an Indo-European tribe that came from central Asia into the Iranian plateau around 614 B.C. The name 'Kurd' was more specifically used to refer to those who inhabited the Zagros mountain ranges of northwestern Iran. The term was mostly used by outsiders after the conquest by the Arabs. The Kurds played an important role in western Asia by providing leaders in the Islamic world, some who led Islamic forces against the Crusaders (Chaliand 1994).

Between the 16th and 19th centuries the Kurds were under autonomous Kurdish principalities authorized by the Ottoman and Persian Empires. In 1639 the Kurds were divided into Ottoman and Persian spheres of influence (Hassanpour 1994). By 1849, "every effort was being made by the Ottoman government to bring Kurdistan into subjection" (Magie 1919, 14). As the autonomous status of the Kurds ended, Turkish governors replaced many of the Kurdish local chieftons, while the Ottomans steadily increased control over the area (Chaliand 1994).

As the Ottomans began to lose control of the periphery of the Empire, a reformist group, the Young Turks, gained recognition and legitimacy over the Empire, making it evident that the political make-up of the Ottoman Empire was rapidly being undermined. The Young Turks created the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP, 1908-1914) and are responsible for a nationalist movement that altered the political and social nature of the Ottoman state, and thus the fate of the Kurds. The Young Turks led a coup d'état in 1908 which brought them to power in Istanbul. In 1909 they replaced Sultan Abdulhamit II with the more compliant Mehmet V. The changes led by the Young Turks can be accredited to Ottoman decline and the failure of earlier reform initiatives. In the CUP's efforts to assimilate non-Muslim Turks, it is argued that they are responsible for committing atrocities in the Armenian massacre of 1915. The deportation of 600,000 to 1,000,000 Armenians, according to one estimate, to the Syrian Desert

and subsequent “genocide” is argued to have been carried out in order to transform the national make-up of the state or to possibly homogenize the Empire (Roshwald 2001). These atrocities were disguised as a resettlement program and were initially stirred by Armenian demands for Ottoman administrative reforms. The evidence gathered concerning the Armenian Massacre revealed or provided proof that Turkey would no longer be permitted to rule over subjects of a different faith (Foreign Relations of the United States 1947, Vol. 12). However, the Turkish government continues to deny such acts of genocide. Instead, they claim that any opposition to the Armenians was a direct result of their collaboration with Russia.

Severe changes in the Empire led the Ottomans to make internal reforms. The loss of Greece, unrest in the Balkans, and the fear of Russian expansion in eastern Anatolia urged the Ottomans to apply direct control over the Empire and more importantly to consolidate its control over the heartland. The new political atmosphere created by the Young Turks allowed the development of a number of Kurdish political groups and consequently there was a rise of Kurdish nationalistic activities (Barkey and Fuller 1998). Under the rule of the Young Turks, the Ottoman Empire changed the semi-autonomous state of the Kurds. Some Kurds say that this event marked the beginning of their national struggle (Kreyenbriek and Sperl 1992, 14). To mark this event, in 1878 Shaykh Ubaydallah called for an autonomous Kurdish entity.

The Ottoman Empire was defeated in World War I, which brought an end to the Young Turks and further credit to Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, who “overthrew the defeated Ottoman Empire, unseated the Islamic Caliphate, and, in 1923, created the modern, secular state of Turkey” (Secor 2004, 355). As Ataturk distanced himself from the legacy of the CUP, he adopted a nationalistic ideal that had its roots in the Ottoman Empire and the Young Turks’ government.

Atatürk, regarded by Turkish citizens as the savior of Turkey, was gaining influence, creating a strong sense of nationalism. He wanted to assimilate those of non-Turkish descent, like the Armenians and Kurds, into Turks and as he rose to power (World War I), he implemented laws which would carry out the Turkification of all non-Turks, such as banning languages other than Turkish. He also ignored the Allies' proposals, like the Treaty of Sèvres, which threatened the state that Atatürk planned (See Figure 3.2). The Treaty would give the Kurds their own independent or autonomous state, Armenia would be granted self-determination, Anatolia would be divided into Greek, Italian, and French spheres of influence, and the Ottoman Empire would be under the control of the Sultan.

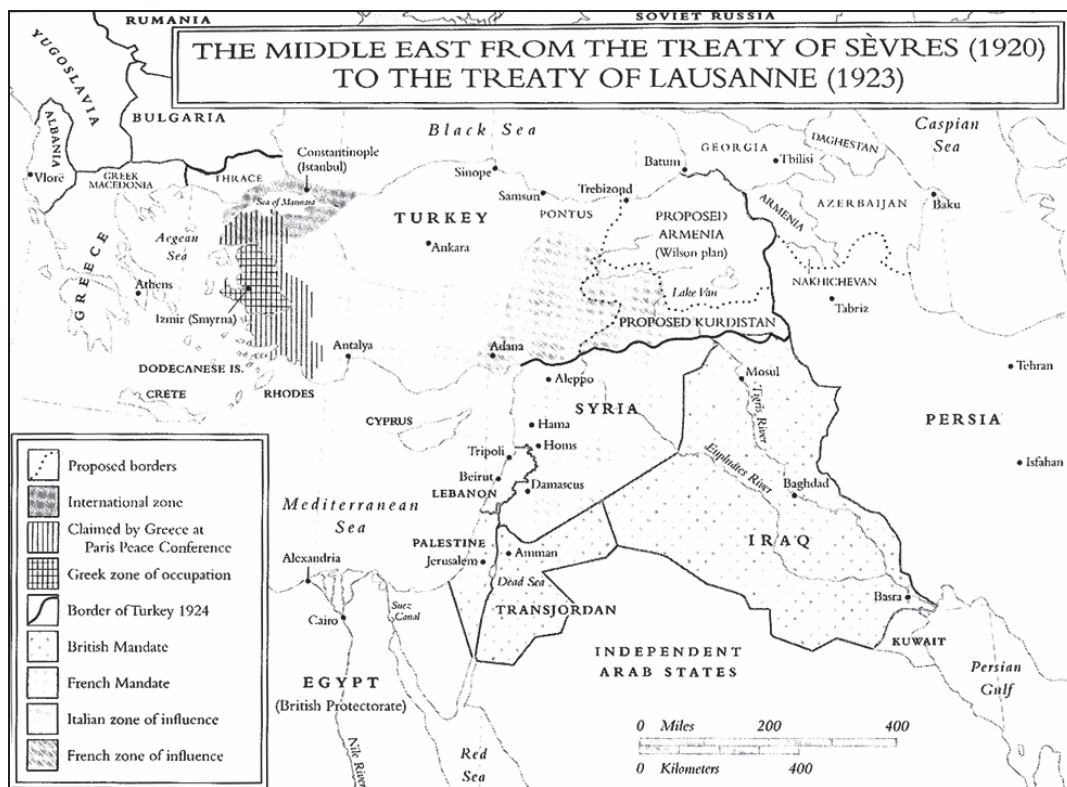


Figure 3.2. Treaty of Sevres. Source: Macmillan, M. 2002. Paris 1919. New York: Random House.

Eventually, following World War I and the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the Kurdish people found themselves without a state of their own and divided by the political borders of stronger nation-states. Since that time, the Kurds have undergone various forms of repression. As these people were put into the hands of direct control by the governments of four countries, they lost the opportunity to fulfill their aspirations of emerging as a state.

Ottoman Empire and European Encroachment

In the decades preceding the First World War, European powers began to threaten the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, which steadily lost power while France and Britain continued to grow economically and militarily. By the mid 19th century, Europe's economic status was much greater than that of the Ottoman Empire's. Britain and France were already moving into the second stage of the Industrial Revolution, leaving the Ottoman Empire behind (Roshwald 2001). The Ottoman's financial status was becoming unstable due to the loss of government monopolies, eliminating the principal source of state revenues. Therefore, the Ottoman's loss of territories, such as Greece and Egypt and the bankruptcy of the Empire created an even greater dependence on the West (Wallach 1996).

Meanwhile the Empire continued to experience rapid change. Europeans stepped in to help the Christian communities in the Empire by calling for a reformation of the millet system, allowing further autonomy and granting territorial self-rule to individual millets. The millet system was an arrangement by which Ottoman subjects were governed within their religious community, or millet. During the nineteenth century, the gradual loss of power over the millets resulted in the loss of control over Balkan territories, such as Serbia and Bulgaria (Roshwald 2001, 30). Their loss over the Balkans and their nominal authority over North Africa, which was

ignored by European imperial powers, only solidified the fact that they were losing control over the remnants of the Empire. Moreover, the European Powers of Britain and France had already begun a process of occupation and influence in the region, which would later impact the dismemberment of the Empire.

The beginning of the 20th century Britain and France overtly emerged in the politics and diplomacy of the Middle East. The gradual demise of the Ottoman Empire allowed the European Powers to enhance their own interests in the region. The motivations of Britain and France were based on commercial interests. Britain's primary concern was for the safety and security of her colony India from possible encroachments by Russia and France. Similarly, England was motivated to "keep Mesopotamia in her hands" to protect India against Turco-German attacks and to prevent the reorganization of Turkey and Persia (Gunther 1918). Subsequently, Britain was concerned with the protection of the Suez Canal, which provided the shortest route to India. Also, in reference to the importance Britain placed on India, the former was concerned with the latter's neighbors, such as Iran. As a result, Britain made sure that Iran cooperated with British interests (Cleveland 2004). Lastly, Britain was concerned with maintaining free access to the newly discovered oil along the Persian Gulf. In regard to all of Britain's interests concerning the Middle East, she embarked on a few initiatives to ensure the safety of her interests. Some of these include the Hussein-McMahon Correspondence (1915-1916) and the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 (Kamrava 2005).

Prior to these initiatives, Britain planned to use the Ottoman Empire as a bulwark against Russian expansionism, but as Turkey entered the war with Germany and Austro-Hungary, Britain reconsidered their efforts to preserve the territorial integrity of the Middle East. As a result, the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 was made by France, Britain, and Russia to partition

the Empire according to interests (McDowall 1996). Specifically, Mosul would have created a piece of French territory between the British zone and that of Russia. However, as Russia withdrew from the War as a result of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, there was no longer a need to divide Mosul. Consequently, as the war between Turkey and Britain (Mudros Armistice) ended, France accepted British control over Mosul. At the close of the War, Britain gained control over Mesopotamia and Palestine, while France took the mandate over Greater Syria.

The French had two primary motivations. First, they were concerned with other European Powers' influence of the Middle East (i.e. Britain and Germany) and thus sought their competition. For instance, the French reacted to Germany's construction of the Baghdad Railway (1905) by attempting to build a railway from Syria to Baghdad. Secondly, the French were interested in the protection of the region's Christian population, which was concentrated in the Levant (See Figure 3.3).



Figure 3.3. Yellow area is considered to be the Levant.

Source: www.Imp.ucla.edu/profiles/profl02.htm. Accessed June 25, 2005.

The presence of the French in the Levant “motivated by its desire to protect the region’s Christian population” resulted in “some fifty thousand Syrian students” attending French schools before the First World War (Kamrava 2005, 38).

The natural project of imperialism was evident far before the First World War. For instance, European Powers occupied part of North Africa, referred to as the Maghreb (Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia). Algeria went to the French in 1830 and Tunisia in 1881. Morocco was divided into four administrative zones, one which was given to France as a protectorate. Egypt (not considered to be part of the Maghreb) was lost to the British in 1882. Similarly, Tripoli was seized by the Italians in 1914 (See Figure 3.4).



Figure 3.4. Maghreb region of North Africa (Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia).
Source: www.ac-rouen.fr/.../4ex/colonisation/accueil.htm. Accessed : June 25, 2005.

Although much of the region was occupied by some form of European occupation, Sultan Abdul Hamid (1842-1918) still controlled the Arab heartland from Mecca and Medina to Baghdad, Jerusalem, Damascus, and Aleppo. Similarly, Turkey still had control over the Arabian

Peninsula minus the British colony of Aden (Yemen) and their subsequent occupation of Persian Gulf waters (Mansfield 2004 and Kamrava 2005).

Kurdish Fate at the End of the First World War

A people who shared so much in terms of a common culture and identity were treated unequally when it came to the drawing of maps and the realignment of political boundaries. A substantial amount of evidence was provided by the Great Powers that substantiated the Kurdish claim to national self-determination by the time of the First World War. A common culture accompanied by a national consciousness existed, as well as evidence that the people were capable of governing themselves.

The Inquiry was able to draw definite boundaries around the homeland of the Kurds, exemplifying recognition of Kurdistan as a separate entity with a distinct culture (Magie 1919). The defining factor of Kurds, according to Izady, “has been their way of life, economically, as well as culturally and sociologically, which has kept them apart, independent of other ethnic groups surrounding them” (1992, 18). Similarly, reports traced the Kurds to the mountains east of Assyria “since the earliest times known to history” (Magie 1919, 12). In fact the Kurds are “one of the oldest communities in Middle Eastern history” (Nisan 2002, 33).

Just as it was apparent to outsiders that there existed a Kurdish community tied to a specific territory, political awareness and national consciousness among the Kurds also existed and can be traced back to the first history of Kurdistan, written in the late 16th century. Later, in the late 17th century, a popular Kurdish ballad by Ahmad-e Khani, the most important piece of literature demonstrating Kurdish political awareness was written. This ballad expressed Kurdish subjugation and depravity and referred to the people as orphans, without a King to unite them

under a unified Kingdom (Hassanpour 1994). This ballad demonstrates the acknowledgement of the Kurds, at such an early stage of their national development, that there was much dissension among them. By the mid-19th century another poet Haji Qadiri Koyi emerged and advocated the use of the Kurdish language and urged the publication of Kurdish magazines and newspapers. He declared that Kurds were a distinct people with a distinct language, homeland and way of life. Finally, he advocated national liberation (Hassanpour 1994).

Kurdish self-awareness was especially enhanced by their tribally structured life which allowed for the preservation of tightly knit groups (Nisan 2002). However, Kurdish consciousness and nationalism reached a climax at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century (Ozoglu 2004). While national consciousness was evident among Kurdish poets, it also revealed itself in the establishment of nationalistic groups, which were on the rise during the Young Turk period. Similarly, Atatürk's methods of distancing himself from the Kurds created a stronger sense of national distinctiveness between the Turks and Kurds (O'Ballance 1996). Unfortunately for the Kurds, ideas such as Koyi's and other Kurdish nationalists barely translated into the realms of Kurdish political parties until the 1940s. This is not to say that the Kurds did not express their wishes for national liberation before this time.

In fact, an opportunity for self-government presented itself to the Kurds immediately after the war. Britain and other world powers, such as the U.S. promised the Kurds a state of their own in the Treaty of Sevres in 1920 (Gurbey 2000). With only their self-interests at heart, the British abandoned their efforts to aid the Kurds and left them to be divided among contiguous states. At first, the British supported the placement of Sheikh Mahmud as the leader of an autonomous southern Kurdistan. Mahmud was a landed aristocrat and the head of the Qadiri Sufi Order. He was the most influential Kurd during and after the War (Eskander 2000). He

maintained a close relationship with the British during the War and as result, the latter became confident that the Kurds could govern themselves as Mahmud organized a Kurdish government. Initially, the British provided indirect rule and even appointed Mahmud as governor of the autonomous region. However, a change in British authority over southern Kurdistan resulted in the replacement of Kurdish officials with Indians, Arabs, and Persians in an effort to eliminate Kurdish presence in the administration. The new British authority was extremely suspicious and threatened by the Kurds and clearly more interested in imperialistic endeavors (Eskander 2000). Only a year later, the British found it more beneficial to include the oil-rich city of Kirkuk under the mandate on Iraq and to maintain good relations with Turkey, and as a result betrayed their promise to the Kurds (Judah 2002, Nisan 2000) (See Figure 3.5).

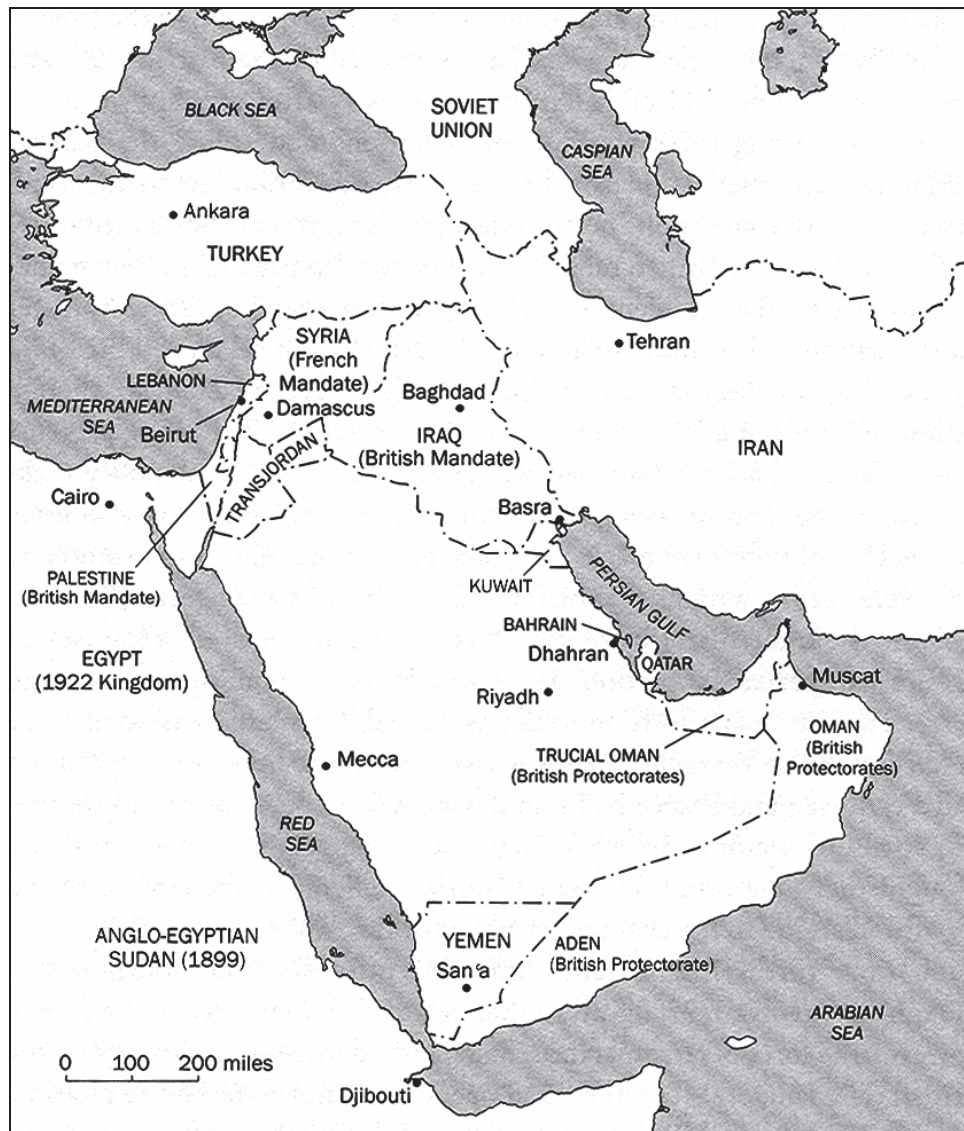


Figure 3.5. British and French Mandates after World War I. Source: Kamrava, M. 2005. *The Modern Middle East*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 44.

The British were also concerned with their relationship with the Turks and Arabs. They feared that an independent Kurdish district would eventually cause Kurds from other areas to aspire to the same independence, which would threaten the territorial integrity of surrounding states. Furthermore, the potential irredentist claims of the Kurds proved to be too large a risk for the British.

Despite the betrayal of the British, the Treaty of Sevres still promised the recognition of Kurdish independence. However, the fruition of a diplomatic promise was far from possible. In fact, a major detriment to Kurdish aspirations occurred when the Allies disregarded the Kurds and signed the Treaty of Lausanne with Turkey, under the authority of Ataturk (See Figure 3.6). This Treaty made no mention to the Kurds, only satisfying the territorial integrity of the Turkish state. The Kurds were now left without a state, split among four stronger states.

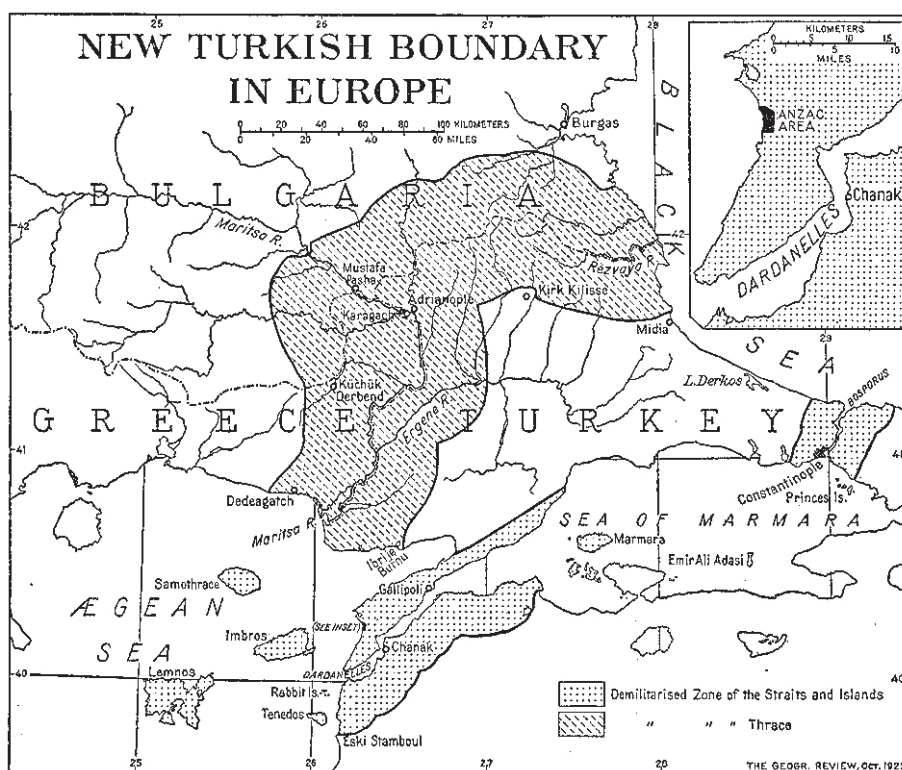


Figure 3.6. Boundary of Turkey in Europe as determined by the Treaty of Lausanne. Source: Bowman, I. (1928). *The New World: Problems in Political Geography*. (New York: World Book Company). 500.

Kurdish Case for Self-Determination

While the Great Powers at the Paris Peace Conference supported the principle of self-determination, the Kurds were deprived of this privilege and quickly forgotten by those who assured them their autonomy. Furthermore, criteria for self-determination certainly were and

continue to be met in more than one way. On the other hand, peoples such as the South Slavs, were unable to meet these same criteria, but were able to create a multi-ethnic state of their own, recognized by the Great Powers during the Paris Peace Conference. Needless to say, there was a definite difference in the way the Great Powers handled the people of Europe and those of the Middle East. Generally, the Powers placed the people of the former Ottoman Empire under mandates, while granting self-determination to the people of Europe. There existed a common belief that people of non-white race were incapable of self-government. Even when it was proved after the War by the British that the Kurds, could stand on their own feet, they were still denied the right to self-determination.

In Chapter 2 a discussion of the criteria for self-determination was provided. These criteria were a common language, history, religion, and/or ethnicity. The occurrence of a people sharing one or more of these commonalities facilitates the nation-state building effort. The Inquiry was faced with difficult field work in order to learn more about residents of contested areas in Europe and the Middle East. It was unknown then how the principle would be interpreted. They were faced with the complicated decision of how to separate groups of people who may have lived side-by-side for hundreds of years. This was done by creating boundary lines associated with cultural characteristics. Perhaps they would recognize historic, linguistic, religious, or ethnic commonalities. In fact, the Black Book, created by the American delegation, outlines the American's policy concerning these boundary issues.

However, the Black Book does not provide any recommendations for the Kurdish population. It briefly discusses Turkish border recommendations as well as their policies for Iraq and Syria. The words 'Kurds,' and 'Kurdistan' are mentioned once each in the context of a future Mesopotamian state in the Black Book, although no recommendations concerning the

minority population is discussed. There is, on the other hand, a detailed explanation of American policy concerning the future of Armenians. I argue that the inadequacy of reports concerning the Kurdish population when compared to attention paid to Armenians is due to the Powers' favoritism toward the Christian Armenians and the ill treatment of them during the Armenian Massacre of 1915.

During the Paris Peace Conference, the Inquiry was given the responsibility of researching historical claims to land. There were official reports done by the Inquiry concerning the Kurds, not included in the Black Book, but they sounded more like loose generalizations (Gelfand 1963). The reports were able to trace the Kurds back to the ancient Medes, which provided plenty of evidence that tied them to the mountainous region in the Middle East, far before 1815. Similarly, the reports were able to tie them to a specific region in the Middle East that was distinct to them particularly. The reports specifically described how the Kurds lost and regained land again and again over the course of close to two thousand years (Magie 1919). Unfortunately for the Kurds, these historical ties did not give much weight to their cause. Instead, the region that was commonly referred to as Kurdistan, in an apparent recognition of its existence, was split among other more powerful and populous cultures.

Language was also used as a determining factor in nation-state building or for simply defining frontiers. During the Paris Peace Conference many ethnologists believed language to be the best means of establishing identity in a mixed population. A state with a common language may be regarded as a solid union of people identifiable by that particular language. Furthermore, the sense of 'us' versus 'them' is often felt when one travels from one area to the next while the language changes with the introduction of natural boundaries and this was certainly evident

among the area referred to as Kurdistan. Mountains often separated Kurds of different tribes who spoke different dialects of their language.

There were a few different dialects of the Kurdish language, all belonging to the Iranian group of the Indo-European language family (Ghareeb 1981). However, reports done for the Inquiry mention only two Kurdish dialects. Reports explained that the two languages, Kurmanji and Sorani, were spoken in the North and the South (Magie 1919). Although the reports never mentioned that this would hinder their union, it was evident that language was regarded as a major unifying force and the existence of more than one language could not have helped their chances of gaining independence.

As the Inquiry conducted interviews or questionnaires of people in remote villages of Eastern Europe, they found that people used religion as a major defining factor of who they were as a people (MacMillan 2002). Before the First World War, many people had no prior association with a particular state. They only identified with an immediate group of people who associated themselves with others of the same religion. As discussed in Chapter two, religion can facilitate the gathering of people with similar sentiments. An organization of people is more likely to participate in a collective political movement due to their similar beliefs. On the contrary, when people within a state differ in religious beliefs, conflict often occurs.

As for the Kurds, religion is certainly a unifying factor. It is estimated that 75 percent are Sunnis who follow the Shafia school of jurisprudence. Others follow a non-orthodox form of Shi'ism known as Alevi (disciple of Ali), some are orthodox Shi'ites, and some are Yazidis, which carries a variety of old and newer practices of religion. Most of the Shi'ite Kurds are from Iran, where Shi'i is the state religion. However, for the most part, Kurdish people are Sunni Muslims, which happens to unite them and facilitates in the building of the Kurdish nation

(Kroyenbroek and Sperl 1992), but once again did not aid in the establishment of a national Kurdish state at the close of the war.

While a common religion was not enough to create a nation-state, among a people who exemplified national elements, the Great Powers wished to establish an Iraqi state from the provinces of Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra. The three were vastly different and did not share a history or a religion. While Mosul had closer ties with Turkey and Syria, Basra looked toward India and the Gulf and Baghdad had links to Persia. Uniting the three provinces was like “hoping to have Bosnian Muslims, Croats, and Serbs make one country” (MacMillan 2002). The population was a patchwork of people. As far as religion goes, half were Shi’i, a quarter Sunni, and the rest were Jews and Christians. Not only did the people differ in their religious affiliation, they were also of different ethnicities. Half were Arab and the rest were Kurds, Persians or Assyrians. The creation of such a state proves that the creation of another state characterized by such a variety of people was possible, that is if it benefited the European imperialists.

As mentioned in Chapter two, ethnicity is a social construction that provides a distinction between ‘us’ versus ‘them.’ Ethnicity is a product of several factors, such as similar language, similar religion, geopolitical events, residential segregation, and occupational segmentation (Johnston, Gregory, Pratt, and Watts 2000). As for the Kurds, there was a definite sense of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ in the Middle East. Reports easily distinguished them by their place of inhabitation and cultural characteristics, such as religious practices and language (Magie 1918).

Although the Kurds shared a dream of self-determination, shared a common religion, and shared a feeling of ‘us’ versus ‘them,’ they failed in their drives toward self-government. Even after proving to the British that they were capable of self-government with Mahmud as their leader, they were still denied this opportunity. It is abundantly evident, after observing the

evidence, that the Kurds' misfortune was a result of the selfish interests and paternalistic nature of the Great Powers.

The desire for self-determination among Kurds is recognized by the Great Powers and translated in language provided by reports given to the Inquiry. One report explained that the Kurds "are tired of disorder, more than tired of the Turk; and have discovered that raiding really does not pay in the long run..... So unable to establish any sort of government other than tribal themselves, they are disposed to welcome almost any change, or the intervention of almost any foreigner" (Magie 1919, 108-109). This report clearly displayed the frustration of the Kurds in their efforts to make changes in the direction of self-government. It also demonstrated among the Allies that the Kurds were not friendly with the Turks. More importantly, the report recognized their need for intervention by the Allies of any kind. Lastly, it demonstrated that the Powers were uncertain that the Kurds could govern themselves, which is later provided as a reason to deny them self-determination.

To make matters worse, the Kurds were allowed only one representative, Sherif Pasha, at the Paris Peace Conference. While other nations were represented by delegations, the British authorities prevented the formation of a Kurdish delegation to join Pasha in Paris (Eskander 2000). Pasha represented the Society for the Advancement of Kurdistan (SAK) at the Conference. His only recognized contribution was in the form of a note given to the Paris Peace Conference on March 22, 1919 which drew the boundaries of Turkish Kurdistan.

Similarly, the Turks, who presented before the Council of Four informally, won a large part of the territory where a Kurdistan would have been created under the Treaty of Sevres. However, it must be said that the Turks, like the Kurds, were not awarded the chance to have a formal delegation at the Conference either. Similarly, their acquisition of the territory mentioned

is a result of their aggressive military means and nationalistic uprising under Ataturk; it had much less to do with the Great Powers rewarding the Turks with land.

The rest of Kurdistan was split among Iran, Syria and Mesopotamia. The latter two were created by the Great Powers by dividing land according to the interests of Great Britain and France. Choices made concerning Turkey did not rest upon their presentation at the Conference. In fact, like Germany, the Turks were not invited to the Conference. The Kurds were equally dismissed. In fact, Pasha had to collaborate with the Armenian delegation, just to get heard (Eskander 2000). Initially, the British “toyed with the idea of a separate administration for the Kurdish areas, recognizing that the Kurds did not like being under Arab rule” (MacMillan 2002). Again, in the end they decided to do nothing, but protect their own interests.

Needless to say, the Kurds received minimal attention in terms of reports and studies conducted on the region for purposes of state creation. What reports there were seemed to be trivial in content. For example, a report by Arthur I. Andrews compared the “Koords” to American Indians. He explained that the women were industrious and the men lazy. He said that the people had tawny skin, high cheek bones, broad mouths, black straight hair and that most of them were mentally slow. Furthermore, “As in so many of the Inquiry’s reports dealing with non-Christian peoples, a profound Christian bias is displayed” (Gelfand 1963, 242). Andrews went on to say that the Kurds lacked cooperation and leadership and without the help of Christian missionaries they would not be equipped to become a progressive race of Western Asia. This unequal treatment of the Kurds exemplifies the paternalism ever present among those with the power to decide the future of the Middle East, the West. Not only did the Powers exude prejudice in terms of race, but also religion, regarding Christianity as the dominant faith. In fact, one Inquiry report refers to Islam as a “simplified version of Christianity” (Gunther 1918, 21).

In reference to reports that were demeaning to the Kurds, David Magie, an American researcher for the Inquiry (Anatolia News Agency, May 16, 2004), referred to the Kurds as “untamed tribes” and continued by saying that Kurdistan could not be a separate independent state. He went on to say that Armenians, Nestorians, and Kurds were too inextricably mixed together to make this possible. He finally said that “any attempt to make official boundaries for small countries in such a region would but encourage the feud and the raid” (Magie 1918, 111). Magie’s reference to “untamed tribes” follows the conclusion that the Great Powers regarded Middle Eastern peoples as uncivilized. However, it does not follow that the Great Powers would not take part in implementing national boundaries that included a variety of peoples on one side of the border. In other words, the Great Powers were able to recognize states such as Yugoslavia despite their multi-ethnic make-up, but a multi-ethnic Kurdish state could not be given the same opportunity. This unequal treatment of a people who proved to be capable and fit for self-government reflects the Great Powers’ adherence to racial hierarchy. First they carved up the Middle East and placed the new states under mandates, reflecting their lack of faith in the mandatories’ capability of self-government. Secondly, the Powers revealed their racial bias toward the Kurds by not even giving them the same chances as their more powerful neighbors.

The choice to leave the Kurds under the power of other governments was also a result of the former being regarded as more assimilable in the Turkish state. In fact, once the Turkish state was agreed upon according to the Treaty of Lausanne (1923), the Kurds were as good as forgotten, referred to by the Turks as ‘Mountain Turks,’ which disregarded their separate existence (Entessar 1992). On the other hand, the Armenians in Turkey, who were Christian and therefore less assimilable were allowed self-determination. Similarly, the government of Syria recognized minorities, like the Armenians, allowing them to organize as a community and

participate in cultural activities, while denying these same rights to the Muslim Kurds (Chaliand 1994).

While some states had the resources to emerge as political entities before the Paris Peace Conference, the Kurds were merely subjects of a fallen empire, with a reputation for having untrustworthy, competitive leaders, fragmented people, and the inability to come together and organize. The fact is the Kurds had much more in common than some states that were successful in creating a state, according to the criteria studied by the American delegation. They shared a common homeland, history, religion, and ethnicity. However, the racial bias among the Great Powers, the reigning self-interests of the European Powers, and the Kurds inability to form strong united political organizations to challenge the Great Powers resulted in their failure to attain nation-state status. Lastly, it was necessary for a state to portray the ability to self determine before being granted independence, a factor Wilson held with high regard. Unfortunately, even though the Kurds proved to the British of this capability, the latter portrayed the leader of the Kurdish as a tyrant, providing an excuse to depose him as the governor of southern Kurdistan. Therefore, even today the Kurds continue to be left under the rule of other states.

Chapter 4

Evolution of the Kurdish Situation since World War I

Because the Treaty of Sevres remained “a dead letter”, the Kurds were left without a state to call their own (Strohmeier 2003, 73). Instead, they were divided among four states, who each opposed granting the Kurds autonomy for fear of a threat to their territorial integrity. Their denial of self-determination would not deter the Kurds from further efforts. In fact, as a result of such promising chances of gaining autonomy or even independence, the Kurds’ national self-consciousness had grown strong. These nationalist feelings eventually gave birth to Kurdish political organizations and movements over the next several decades. This chapter will discuss the movements’ successes and failures after the First World War as well as discussing the current situation of the Kurds and present chances of gaining self-determination.

The compartmentalizing of space into political units, states, has been the common method of studying world political processes; however this method is progressively becoming less useful. The ways in which states relate to one another and the emergence of a global society has made the state-centered method of studying issues, such as terrorism and the interconnectedness of our economies, less capable (Agnew 1998). New units have emerged as a result of globalization; there are levels above the state and below the state. In the case of Kurdish nationalist movements, the transnational approach will be most suitable for this discussion. A transnational approach will respect the Kurdish unit as a whole in terms of their territorial homeland, recognizing that the Kurdish population transcends state boundaries. To follow the nation-state approach would grant submission to its superiority and assume that it is the only political level that exists. For clarification, state names will be mentioned to provide an understanding of geographic location, but the information will not be categorized around the

state unit. Instead, information will be provided with respect to chronology and the Kurdish unit as a whole.

The Kurds after World War I

The Kurds are one of the largest non-state nations in the world. The Kurdish nation has a distinct culture and society and is faced with living in “ethnically-based nationalist regimes” (Hassanpour 1994, 3). These include the Turkish, Arab, and Persian regimes, which to this day have little or no tolerance of national autonomous expression. The Kurds in the region commonly referred to as Kurdistan, overlapping the nation-states of Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and to a lesser extent Syria, live in the most underdeveloped areas in their respective countries. Poor conditions do not provide them with sufficient work or educational opportunities (Eskander 2000), but does provide an environment that aids in the strengthening of Kurdish nationalist groups. Inhabitants of Kurdistan face assimilation pressures, repression, and Kurdish resistance, which affect the outcome and process of Kurdish struggles. For instance, measures taken to assimilate the Kurds furthers the language barrier that already exists among the Kurds, as some host countries prohibited the use of Kurdish dialects. Another obstacle facing the Kurds is that they are internally complex, differing in politics, ideology, social class, and clan.

After World War I, repression came “fast and furious” in Turkey and was characterized by the mass deportation and the resettlement of 500,000 Kurds from 1925-1928 (Nisan 2000). Meanwhile, as a result of the Kurds’ denial of self-determination at the close of WWI and Reza Shah’s subsequent repression of Kurdish tribes and tribal leadership in Iran, Ismail Agha Simko, a famous Kurdish leader, led an insurrectionist movement against the Persian military (Olson 1998). As a result, Simko was captured and killed by the Iranian military in 1930 (Nissan 2000).

His murder was carried out to appease British foreign policy. A strong “Kurdish nationalist movement in Iran would have directly impacted British policies in Iraq” (Olson 1998, 6). British forces protected their interests by using the Royal Air Force to attack Kurdish villages in British-controlled Iraq to counter Kurdish rebellions, led by Mustafa Barzani, “the most famous Kurdish leader of the twentieth century” (Gunter 1999). During the inter-war period the governments of Turkey, Iran, and British-controlled Iraq “had national security agreements that they would not encourage Kurdish nationalism in each other’s countries” (Olson 1998, 6).

In the following years several Kurdish nationalist groups emerged, some obviously with more impact than others. A resurgence of Kurdish nationalism in Iran was brought about by the weakening of their central government over outlying provinces as a result of World War II. In 1942, a group of Kurds formed the Committee for the Resurrection of Kurdistan (Komala) to plan a movement for self-determination. The exclusivity of this committee and their inability to appeal to cities with a large number of Kurds prevented Komala from becoming very influential. However, they did manage to get a pact signed by Iraq and Turkey symbolizing a greater Kurdish unity and outlining geographic contours for the Kurdish homeland. As the Committee worked toward its broad objectives, they assumed a new title, the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) (Olson 1998). A manifesto was produced by the party, which the Iranian government viewed as a promotion for Kurdish irredentism and a threat to Iranian authority in Kurdistan. The party’s main objective was to form an autonomous region in Iran an “eventual aim of linking this autonomous region with Kurdish lands outside Iran” (Entessar 1992, 17).

With the aid of the Soviets, who occupied the area, the Kurds were able to establish the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad in Iran in 1946, which posed a serious threat to Iranian authority (Entessar 1992). A flag was raised and an army organized under the authority of Mustafa

Barzani. Unfortunately, few Kurdish tribes actively defended Mahabad attempts and with the departure of Soviet aid and an economic slump over Iran came the end of the first and only Kurdish state. The most concrete evidence of Kurdish independence in modern times had ended in failure (Nisan 2000).

A new opportunity for the Kurds to demonstrate “collective self-fulfillment” occurred during the 1958 Revolution in Baghdad. A provisional constitution acknowledged the Kurds as a distinct ethnic group with national rights (Gunter 1999). By 1963 Kurdish guerrilla forces (tribal forces of Barzani) carved out a liberation zone in the northeast. The rebellion slowed down as the Iraqi army penetrated deeper and deeper into Kurdish territory. The Iraqi government used methods of cultural suppression and physical repression to deal with the Kurdish threat. In 1968 the Ba’ath Party came to power, giving the Kurds hope. The Ba’ath Party catered to the Kurds’ needs by presenting them with a settlement. This settlement proposed recognition of the Kurdish language and the provision of economic development. Also, it would appoint a Kurdish Vice President and proclaim Iraq as the home of two equal people. The implementation of the program was scheduled for 1974. Barzani was not satisfied with this arrangement because it excluded Kirkuk as a Kurdish region. The settlement was soon rejected and the rebellion reinstated with the aid of Iran (Gunter 1999, Nisan 2000). As a result of Barzani’s incendiary behavior, Kurdish aspirations were again crushed.

In 1975 the Shah of Iran and Vice President Saddam Hussein of Iraq signed an agreement concerning the Iran-Iraq boundaries and agreed to put an end to Iran’s support of the Kurds. Accompanied by the loss of Iranian aid, the Kurds also lost American and Israeli funding, creating dire circumstances for the Kurds. After the Kurdish defeat, the Iraqi government created a no man’s land along the Iraqi-Syrian border by deporting the inhabitants of this frontier.

This led to social discontent, which resulted in a greater movement to join political parties involved in guerrilla warfare (Entessar 1992). Since the 1920s, Iraq's Kurds and the government in Baghdad have never been able to agree on issues of Kurdish independence, and the Kurds' wish to control the oil-rich city of Kirkuk and to have their own militia.

In March 1975 Barzani announced the collapse of the struggle in Iraq, which ultimately led to the establishment of another party called the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), which was led by Jalal Talabani, a leading Barzani critic. Two months later the PUK launched an attack against the Iraqi government. They responded with heavy repression, accompanied by the destruction of hundreds of villages “in order to create a security belt along the borders of Iran, Turkey, and Syria, and resettled the inhabitants in camps in southern and less mountainous areas” (Hassanpour 1994, 6).

Meanwhile, cultural and physical genocide of Kurds was taking place in Turkey as a result of “catalyzed Kurdish action” (Nisan 2000, 48). Like Iraq, several Kurdish groups were established in Turkey during the 1960s and 1970s, such as the Democratic Party of Turkish Kurdistan (1964). In Turkey, Kurds were arrested for being involved with nationalist activity and even for more trivial acts, such as listening to Kurdish music. It was estimated that 80,000 Kurds were imprisoned for such activities from 1980-81 alone (Nisan 2000), simply punished for demonstrating their national consciousness. The Turkish government denied the existence of the Kurds by calling them ‘Mountain Turks,’ banning traditional Kurdish costume, Turkifying village names, and restricting the Kurdish language. In fact, a law was introduced in 1983 to prohibit the use of the Kurdish language (Robins 1993).

As nationalist groups emerged in Turkey, they first demanded civic and social rights, like integration. However, by 1970 Kurdish demands became more radicalized and more separatist

in nature, thus they were suppressed by the Turkish government and consequently became even more radicalized. The Workers' Party of Turkey (WPT), which included a number of Kurds, won seats in the National Assembly and as a result, began to recognize the Kurdish problem in Turkey. In 1971 the party formally stated their acknowledgement of the minority suppression taking place. Subsequently, the leaders of this group were imprisoned for "undermining the unity of the nation" (Entessar 1992, 90). Later that year the WPT and Revolutionary Cultural Society of the East (DDKO) were outlawed and the Turkish military resumed attacks against Kurdish villages.

Kurdish nationalism and radicalization of parties grew as villagers began to move into the cities. As Kurds moved east into the cities, they became aware of the great disparities between the east and west in terms of educational opportunities, health care services, and living standards. They also became aware of their region's importance to Turkey as an oil producer. It became obvious that western Turkey was reaping all the benefits. Similarly, as the number of Kurdish secondary and university students increased, they became more sensitive and politicized to social discrimination against the Kurds, adding to their sense of 'us' versus 'them' and the subsequent radicalization of political parties (Olson 1998).

The most infamous Kurdish group known today is the Revolutionary Kurdish Labor Party (Patiya Karkaren Kurdistan, PKK) or the Kurdish Workers' Party in Turkey. This party's agenda is for complete independence. The PKK grew from two sources: the Kurdish nationalist movement and the Marxist movement that began in the 1960s (Gunter 1997). The PKK, with a Marxist and socialist ideology, came into existence in 1979. They are notorious for their many terrorist attacks against the government of Turkey and its civilian populations. In retaliation, the Turkish military has gone to extreme measures to fight back against the PKK. Most Kurdish

people do not agree with the motives or hold the same ideological views of the PKK. However, in Turkey's attempts to fight against them, the former has added to the repression of all Turkish Kurds and installed a substantial amount of fear among them (Entessar 1992). Furthermore, "by merely surviving, the PKK defies defeat and must still be considered to be making political progress as the process of consciousness-raising goes on among Kurds" (Fuller 1998).

Meanwhile, the Iranian Revolution of 1978-79 broke out with full Kurdish support (Nisan 2000). Years of suppression by the Shah's regime provided added incentive for Kurdish support of this revolution. Initially, the Kurds were celebratory over the demise of the Pahlavi monarchy. However, their excitement gave way as they came to the realization that their demands for autonomy would go unheeded by the new Islamic Regime (Entessar 1992). Ayatollah Khomeini's objective was to create a strong central government, which did not coincide with Kurdish goals. The draft constitution, unveiled on June 18, 1979, fell short of Kurdish demands for autonomy and free use of language. Khomeini told the Kurdish delegates that their demands for autonomy were unacceptable to Islamic Iran, fearing that the territorial integrity of Iran would be challenged. After several attempts to negotiate with the Islamic Republic, the Kurds began an armed struggle against clerical authorities in Iran. Khomeini responded by banning the KDPI, which led the struggle (Entessar 1992).

The year after the PKK came into existence in Turkey and Khomeini threatened to spread revolution to the rest of the Middle East, Iraq launched an attack against Iran in an effort to gain land they claimed to be part of Mesopotamia, the oil-rich Iranian province of Khuzistan. Both Iraqi and Iranian regimes tried to use the Kurds against each other in the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) (Hassanpour 1994). For instance, for Iran "the Kurdish situation offered an opportunity to tie the hands of the Iraqi regime or even to overthrow it" and "the Shah's support to the Kurds

tended to confirm Iraqi views of the existence of a hostile alliance against the Ba'ath government among Iran, Israel, and the United States, whose aid was enlisted by the Shah in his Kurdish operation" (Ghareeb 1981, 137). The Kurdish Democratic Party of Iraq (KDP) established bases in Iran before the War to challenge Baghdad and continued to support them throughout the war. The PUK, however, felt that at this time of weakness, Baghdad would be more willing to negotiate. The PUK did indeed go through a process of negotiation with the Iraqi regime, but finally terminated the dialogue and began to reconcile with the KDP. Talabani of the PUK joined Barzani (KDP) in Tehran in 1986 and eventually their alliance became known as Iraqi Kurdistan Front or the IKF. The IKF's objective was to overthrow the Ba'athist regime of Saddam Hussein, to establish a democratic government in Iraq, and develop a federal status for the Kurds (Gunter 1999). However, the two relapsed into conflict in the early 1990s. The initial struggle was for power and quickly escalated into more serious fighting between the two (Gunter 1999).

Meanwhile, the apparent success of Kurdish-Iranian cooperation during the Iran-Iraq War led to Saddam Hussein's destruction of hundreds of enemy Kurdish villages in Iraq. The devastation that the Kurds experienced was characterized by both chemical weapon attacks and simple bulldozing methods (Entessar 1992). Saddam Hussein's "clean-up" operation against Kurds who opposed his government resulted in fifty thousand Kurdish refugees, who fled to Turkey from August 25 – September 1, 1988 (van Bruinessen 1986).

Only two years later the Kurds were caught between a second war. On August 2, 1990, the morning of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Talabani (leader of PUK) was informed of Saddam Hussein's latest move. Ten days later, he made a trip to Washington to gather support for Kurdish armed rebellion against Hussein in defense of the United States. Talabani saw this as an

opportunity to not only gain U.S. support, but also as an opportunity to assist in the downfall of Hussein. Talabani met with middle-ranking State Department officials and Senators Claiborne Pell and John Kerry, but neither endorsed U.S. involvement in Kurdish plans (Entessar 1992).

The Kurds faced several threats with the commencement of Allied attacks. First, they feared that Iraq would backlash against Turkey, a U.S. ally, which would lead to counterattacks. The Kurds, of course, would be the target of such actions by the Turks, due to their geographic position. The KDP's Barzani rejected outside pressure to open a second front against Iraq's regime. This, Barzani feared, could lead to a second gassing of the Kurds. In spite of Barzani's initial hesitation, the Kurds led a revolt against Iraq after the U.S. defeat of Hussein's military (Strohmeier 2003).

The Kurds gained control of a few cities initially, but were eventually driven back. The Kurdish defeat led to another mass exodus of Kurds to Turkey and Iran in 1991. The Iraqi's success at putting a stop to the Kurdish rebellion and the situation of the refugees convinced the PUK and the KDP to reconcile their differences with the Iraqi regime (Gunter 1999). Barzani (leader of the KDP) soon announced an impending agreement on a Kurdish autonomous region. While at first it seemed as though all partners of the Iraqi Kurdistan Front were in agreement, Talabani rejected Barzani's plan. Instead, he denounced the PKK and its leader for opposing the Turkish state and then proposed that Turkey take a more active role in solving the Iraqi Kurdish problem (Entessar 1992). This situation exemplifies the lack of unity and fragmented nature of the Kurds. Even after coming together in a unified effort to fight for a common Kurdish cause, Talabani was willing to sabotage autonomy for the Kurds. In the mean time, talks on Kurdish autonomy continued while the Kurds were involved in a few skirmishes which eventually led to the reclaiming of a Kurdish city, Sulaymanieh.

The Turkish government was not pleased with the proceedings taking place in Iraq. First of all, they were unhappy about the Kurdish refugees in their country. Refugee camps could have potentially led to the emergence of guerrilla forces and a possible alliance with the PKK. Secondly, the Turks were opposed to the establishment of an autonomous region for Kurds in Iraq. They feared that this would have negative repercussions for Turkey's restive Kurdish population (Olson 1998).

Similarly, Ankara and Tehran both with the support of Damascus opposed an autonomous entity in Iraq and signed a number of security protocols to prevent such from happening. The first protocol was signed on November 30, 1993 and determined that neither country would permit any terrorist organizations to exist on its territory (Olson 1998); the two agreed to cooperate against the PKK, for example. The foreign ministers of Turkey, Iran, and Syria met again in Tehran on September 8, 1995 and agreed that they were opposed to the division of Iraq, against terrorism, and were concerned about the stockpiles of weapons in Iraq (Olson 1998). These agreements indicated the serious challenge of Kurdish nationalism and the acknowledgment of the need for Turkey to maintain a close relationship with Iran to prevent the emergence of a Kurdish state in northern Iraq. Meanwhile, the two Kurdish parties in Iraq, the KDP and PUK were growing closer to Turkey and Iran respectively. While the KDP grew more economically dependent on the Turkish government, the PUK opened its borders wider to Iranian trade. One requirement of Iran was greater presence in northern Iraq so that the former may counter the presence of Turkey (Olson 1998). After the KDP-PUK civil war (1994-1997) the two set up separate administrations. The KDP controlled the Iraqi Kurdish cities of Arbil and Dohuk, while the PUK controlled Sulaimaniya and parts of Kirkuk. Even upon the Iraqi election of 2005, the two Kurdish parties continued their quarrels (Bahrain Tribune July 6, 2005).

Current Kurdish Situation

The Kurds received relative autonomy under a regional government in Iraq after the 1991 Gulf War with U.S. and British protection from Saddam Hussein's military (Dawn, May 30, 2005). Territory north of the 36th parallel was declared a safe haven for the Kurds and other minorities by UN Resolutions. With the financial aid of the United States and the UN, this area was turned into "an example of minority self-determination and proto-statehood for the historically oppressed Kurdish people" (Nisan 2002, 51). However, the region faced several obstacles in the midst of its autonomy. The KDP and PUK fought continuously over power of the area. Similarly, Hussein was also a constant irritant to the security zone, appointing pro-Saddam Kurds into positions of power. Therefore, the momentous occasion of the Iraqi election on January 30, 2005 gave hope and inspiration among the Kurdish population of Iraq that their autonomy may become enshrined in the permanent constitution. The Kurds were again inspired when the election proved successful, as they won the second most seats in the National Assembly and a Kurd was appointed President of Iraq (Jarvis and Cartier 2005).

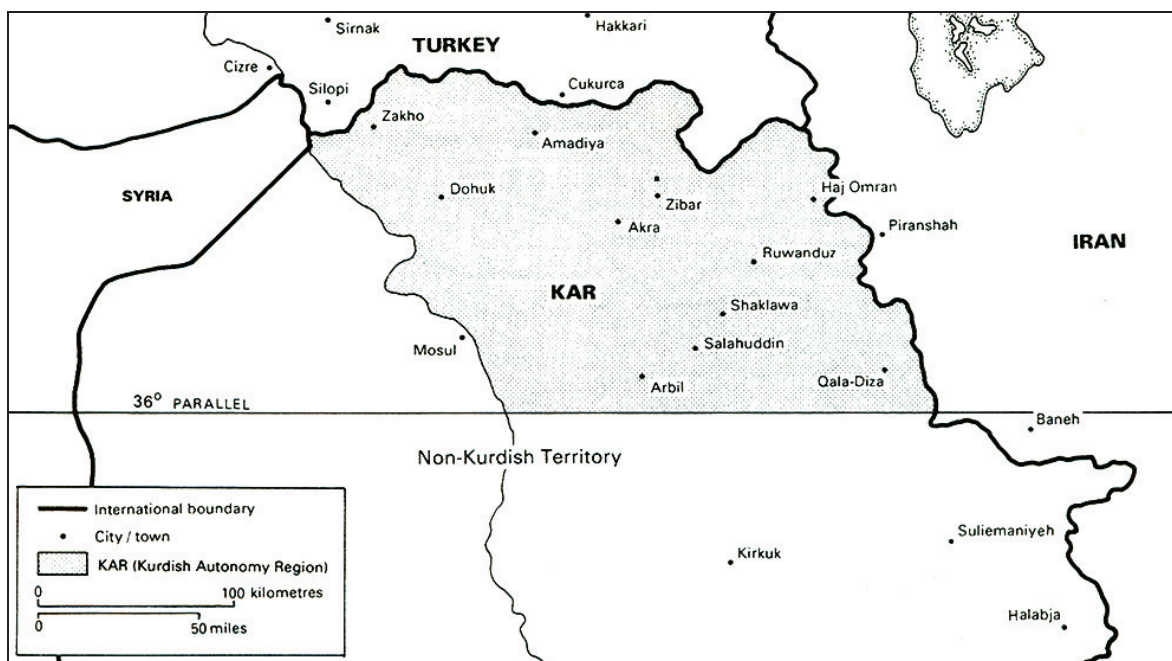


Figure 4.1. Autonomous Region in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Source: O'Balance, E. 1996. *The Kurdish Struggle*. Houndsmill: McMillan Press Ltd. pp.236.

Coming to the close of 2004 Talabani and Massoud Barzani, the son of the late Mustafa Barzani, made an agreement for one to run for a top post in Baghdad and the other to govern the Kurds. They ultimately decided that Talabani would run for President of Iraq and Barzani President of the regional government of Iraqi Kurdistan; both won. Initially, this decision caused problems between the two political rivals but eventually they settled their differences and now both have a significant amount of power in Iraq. The present positions of Talabani and Barzani may very well improve the Kurdish issue in Iraq. The appointment of Barzani has already provided greater autonomy for the Kurdish region in Iraq after experiencing decades of Hussein-led suppression (News Arab World, June 12, 2005). In addition, the Kurds now have someone they trust, someone who has experienced their struggle, to work for their rights and defend their interests.

Despite the distress of many Kurds, Talabani and Barzani are no longer making claims for the independence of Kurdistan. Instead, they are pressing for a federal Iraqi state (BBC News, June 14, 2005), a principle they hold paramount. However, the Arab majority is not keen on the idea of a federal state. The future of Iraq's system of government is critical to the future of Iraqi Kurdistan. The Kurds' autonomy rests upon a regional government with the assumption that a federal government will be set up by the Iraqi constitution. Making up less than a third (75 out of 275) of the national parliament's seats and with the opposition of the Shi'ite majority, the future presents substantial obstacles for the Kurds (bbcnews. June 2, 2005).

Another complication facing the Kurds is the debate over Kirkuk, which may well be the "make-or-break" issue for the state (Mackey 2005). The Kurds have not given up their dream of having Kirkuk as their regional government's capital (BBC News, June 14, 2005). However, the Kurds' insistence that the city be included in the semiautonomous government of Kurdistan has encountered opposition by the Arabs and Turkmen, who are vying for influence in the city (Aqrawi 2005), both preferring the city to be controlled by the central government of Baghdad (Jervis and Cartier 2005). The two "threaten to turn Iraqi internal politics into a regional conflict" (Mackey 2005). The Arabs and Turkmen both have a passion and feeling of possession over the city. Similarly, the Kurds' claim to the city has caused tension between the Arabs and Kurds. This tension has been festering since the 1980s when Saddam Hussein pushed many of the Kurds out and replaced them with Arabs.

To further complicate matters, Turkey also has claims to Kirkuk and regards it to be Turkish. The large population of Turkmen in the city is considered to be cousins of their Turkish neighbors (New York Times, February 9, 2005). Turkey is already preoccupied with its own Kurdish rebels attacking from northern Iraq. Since 1999 Turkish Kurds have attacked

Turkey from northern Iraq's autonomous region, making Kirkuk a city of great strategic importance. Iraqi Kurdish officials ignored the activities of the Turkish Kurds and the Americans, who were acting as protectors in the region, "have been reluctant to move against the bases for fear" of damaging relations with Iraqi Kurds (Mackey, February 9, 2005). Turkish claims to Kirkuk have been emboldened by the possibility of protecting its own country from attacks across the border.

Mackey says that the Turkish military will get involved if the city of Kirkuk is included in autonomous Kurdistan. In fact, the military plans to send troops to "thwart the Kurds' claim to Kirkuk" (February 9, 2005). The participation of the Turkish military presents the risk of damaging their relationship with the European Union. However, the possibility of a Kurdish oil-rich city as its neighbor may be worth the risk. To the satisfaction of Iraq's neighbors, Washington has quietly said that "the Kurds will not be allowed to take control of Kirkuk" (Mackey, February 9, 2005). Meanwhile, U.S. bases in the region are discreetly being reinforced. It will be essential for the U.S. to hold Kirkuk if they want to prevent another crisis, not just inside Iraq, but beyond its borders.

Initially, the Kurds refused to support the new Iraqi government unless they agreed to Kirkuk's inclusion in Iraqi Kurdistan. The Shi'ite majority refused to give in to Kurdish demands and delayed the decision until the formation of the constitution, which is scheduled for August 15, 2005 (Wong, June 30, 2005). The issue over the city of Kirkuk may possibly be a deal breaker. The city contains 40 percent of Iraq's oil reserves and is vital to the state's economy, which causes concern for the Shi'ite majority in opposition to the Kurds. The state's Shi'ites are not likely to give up the oil-rich city of Kirkuk. Therefore, the question still remains;

will the Kurds support the new Iraqi constitution if it does not support a federal government in Iraq and deny the Kurds the city of Kirkuk?

After years of being under the rule of despots and foreign occupation forces and after going through intermittent periods of autonomy and direct rule, the Kurdish political parties may respond to negative results by an all out civil war. Again and again the Kurdish momentum toward statehood has been quelled due to outside influences and internal conflicts. Their usual response to unfavorable circumstances is rebellion. For instance, in 1970 the Iraqi government tried to appease Kurdish nationalist forces, led by the KDP and PUK, with a chance for autonomy that would go into affect in 1974. Mustafa Barazani rejected the offer because it left Kirkuk out of the proposed autonomous Kurdistan. This event was followed by revolts led by Kurdish nationalists. This incident provides evidence that the Kurds will not react well to the exclusion of Kirkuk, a city that has heavy Kurdish influence, although ethnically diverse. It also demonstrates the KDP's and PUK's practice of violence when diplomatic measures do not come to fruition.

In another incident where the chance at Kurdish autonomy presented itself, Talabani rejected a plan initiated by Massoud Barzani in 1991. The denial of this opportunity once again proved that the Kurds suffer from internal conflicts and become "victims of their own personal and group rivalries" (Entessar 1992, 150). The return to violence, again reiterates the typical behavior of the Kurdish nationalistic forces.

To complicate the situation even further for the future of Iraq, another group within the state is pressing for a federal state. A tightly knit group of secular Shi'ite politicians are pushing for an autonomous region south of Basra, threatening the integrity of the central government. The group argues they have never received a fair share of the country's oil revenues and they

will distrust anyone in power, due to decades of Saddam Hussein's suppression of the Shi'ite majority. Instead, they are demanding what the Kurds already have, including their own parliament, ministries, and a military force (Wong, June 30, 2005).

Therefore, the already heated discussion over federalism in Iraq has become much more complicated by the new demands of this powerful cadre of Shi'ites. First of all, the southern region the group is interested in contains eighty to ninety percent of the country's oil reserves, has the country's only ports, and the richest date palm groves (Wong, June 30, 2005). This region will certainly not be given up by the Iraqi National Assembly. The Shi'ite parties hold considerable power in Baghdad, many of them distrust American-backed goals, such as federalism, which the Americans included in their interim constitution for Iraq. Many Shi'ites argue in favor of a strong central government and wish for oil to be controlled from Baghdad. Needless to say, it is unknown now how this will play out. However, it is evident that this claim for an autonomous region in the south helps the interests of the Kurds in the north. Furthermore, the cadre of Shi'ites shares Americans' support of a federal system, which would avoid the concentration of power (Wong, June 30, 2005). The determining factor will be whether or not the National Assembly will take heed to the Americans' proposals concerning federalism in Iraq.

The future of Iraq will not only affect the status of Kurds in Iraq. In fact, the current status of the Kurds in Iraq has already instilled a substantial amount of fear to contiguous states. For instance, a growing number of Syrian Kurds are demanding recognition and representation in Syria's government. They have, in a sense, been emboldened by their fellow Kurds in Iraq. Some Syrian Kurds have already called for Kurdish administration in the Kurdish areas of the country (International Herald Tribune, July 4, 2005). The Syrian government, like its neighbors, has repressed their Kurdish minority for decades. Therefore, the possibility of an autonomous

Kurdistan in Iraq will undoubtedly cause Kurds in Syria to become restive. In fact, the Syrian government has already succumbed to Syrian Kurds' pressures and offered citizenship to 200,000 Kurds who were denied this privilege several years ago (New York Times, April 28, 2005).

As for Turkey, they are currently dealing with increased unrest between the PKK and the Turkish military in the southeast province of Bingol. The PKK is seeking to extract further concessions from Turkey, such as autonomy within a federal system (Kurdish Media July 5, 2005). In June 2004 the rebels called off a five year cease-fire "arguing that Ankara's reforms to expand Kurdish freedoms are inadequate" and since then the PKK has strengthened its forces (Kurdish Media, July 5, 2005). Due to increased pressure by the European Union, Ankara has made reforms to expand Kurdish freedoms, but Kurds argue that the state continues to deny them full rights. The Kurdish rebels say that the reforms are shallow and they demand more freedoms. The government has allowed the Kurdish language to be taught and to be used in public television, revoking the previous law that prohibited the language. However, the Kurds argue that as soon as the European Union announced a start date for talks concerning Turkish membership, the Turkish government failed to make any further efforts to appease the Kurds and as a result, violence has increased (Khaleej Times Online. July 5, 2005).

It is argued that Turkey has come to understand that it is essential to work with the Kurds instead of against them. He goes on to say that both Syria and Turkey are coming to the realization that handling the historic Kurdish problem is paramount to the future stability of the Kurds and thus their own success (Ismaeel, June 30, 2005). Turkey's future prosperity is heavily dependent on keeping the Turkish Kurds happy. They must appease the European Union if they

wish to gain membership. Without a good relationship with such a large minority, membership is not possible, which is why the Iraqi Kurds pose such a threat to their neighbors.

Despite heavy opposition of a federal style government in Iraq, the possibility of an autonomous internationally recognized Kurdistan exists. The majority of Shi'ites, who control a majority of the votes, is in favor of a central government. They are concerned with the control of oil reserves in both the north and the south. Turkey also fears a federal style of government for their neighbor. In the past, they did not support the autonomy that was allowed after the 1991 Gulf War that gave Turkish Kurds opportunities to fight against the Turkish government.

An autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan also poses the possibility of secession and thus a future independent Kurdistan. This is really what Iraq's neighbors fear, as well as Iraqi opponents of a federal government. Although the two high ranking Kurdish officials, Barzani and Talabani claim that they do not wish for an independent state any longer, skepticism prevails. Iran, Syria, and Turkey will be faced with the possibility of secessionist movements in their own countries. In the past, successful nationalist movements in one state have caused a resurgence of national fervor in neighboring states.

Realizing the threat that exists, the governments of Iraq's neighbors must take measures to appease their Kurdish populations. Freedoms must be granted to an extent that will prevent the desire to secede. The Turkish and Syrian governments have already begun to make such movements, but past broken promises of their respective governments have resulted in an environment of distrust. Therefore, attempts by these governments may prove to be futile.

A lack of cohesive leadership, failure to work together under one unified effort, political boundaries, and the refusal of Kurdish inhabited states to allow secession, have each prevented the emergence of a unified Kurdistan. Although the Kurds have experienced intermittent periods

of autonomy in their respective states, they have never experienced self-determination. The opportunity for an autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan exists today, but the Kurdish past and present obstacles stand in their way. Once again, the interests of greater powers thwart their efforts. The United States, a current occupying force, will undoubtedly side with the majority Shi'ites concerning the issue of Kirkuk. However, the majority of Shi'ites are not inclined to implement a federal system of government (backed by the U.S.), which will cause instability in the north and the south. With opposition on both issues, the Kurds have a long fight in front of them.

Chapter 5

The Evolution of the Principle of Self-Determination and Closing Remarks

The focus on the nation-state as an element which characterized the end of the First World War has been a persistent theme throughout the development of this Thesis. An historical approach was taken for the purpose of providing readers with the process that took place which resulted in the creation of states from former empires. The principle of national self-determination has consistently remained controversial since the First World War due to ambiguity, the controversy over who the principle applies to and its unequal application, and the injustice it leaves minorities. This Chapter will discuss how the principle of self-determination has changed since WWI and how it remains an issue today.

Evolution of the Principle of Self-Determination

The concept of national self-determination was paramount in allowing and denying the creation of new nation-states at the end of the First Great War. However, today it reminds us of the idealistic nature of Wilson and his perhaps oversimplified view of implementing peace and stability in such a diverse region of the world. Similarly, the concept remains opaque and ambiguous, making it particularly difficult to apply.

Woodrow Wilson's interpretation of the principle of self-determination was a process of historical development. Wilson changed his definition of the principle as his knowledge of the situation changed. The principle was originally exclusively created for war-torn Europe, but as the principle gained world-wide recognition, it became a matter of international law; however it was not included in the Covenant of the League of Nations, despite Wilson's efforts (Cobban 1945). Its exclusion from the Covenant was a result of the European Powers' fear of the

principle's implications for their own colonies and minorities, since they had already planned to be exclusive in its application. Before being implemented in international law, the principle of self-determination was merely a political concept usually referring to some sort of autonomy, which later turned into the idea of independence (Kovacs 2003).

Evolving from a concept applied to situations at the close of the First World War, the principle of self-determination was reiterated in Articles II and III of the Atlantic Charter of 1941 calling for “the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them in an effort to protect the rights of people whose sovereignty was infringed upon” (U.S. Department of State, July 7, 2005). As the Fourteen Points delineated the First World War, the Atlantic Charter would provide criteria for the Second World War. The concept was then officially sanctioned in the UN Charter as a principle in 1945 applying to existing states. The principle of self-determination is mentioned twice in the UN Charter. Article 1 paragraph 2 reads: “all the peoples have the right to self-determination, by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development” (Daes 1996, 48). Similarly, a member of the International Law Commission, Ian Brownlie, says that the principle is “the right of cohesive national groups to choose for themselves a form of political organization and their relation to other goods” (Brownlie 1998, 599). According to Brownlie, this principle has only recently, since 1945, been recognized as a legal principle and was reaffirmed in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975. Under the heading, “Equal Rights and Self Determination of People,” of this Act, reads: “The participating states will respect the equal rights of people and their right to self determination . . .” (Daes 1996, 48). The principle evolved into a right when the 1960 UN Declaration on the Granting of

Independence to Colonial Peoples Resolution 1514 (XV) was adopted by the General Assembly. This declaration reinforced the decisive role of all dependent peoples to attain independence (Hannum 1996).

Although the restating of this old principle and new right continued to pose questions, it was evident that self-determination applied to territories, not to people. Therefore, it meant that self-determination called for the right of colonies to be independent, not that all ‘people’ had the right to self-determination, which is critical to defining this principle. The lack of emphasis on ‘people’ suddenly gives new meaning to the principle. No longer can subject nations, those people living within a sovereign state, claim self-determination. However, if there is a specified territory assigned to the nation, such as a federal unit legitimized by state law, such as the present autonomous region in northern Iraq, self-determination may be granted with the approval of the host state. Thus, the Kurdish population may secede from their respective states if the latter agrees to their departure. For this reason, many countries that have a heavy minority within their borders fear granting autonomy because this status then increases the chances of secession.

Since the 1970s there has been a movement to combine minority rights with decolonization, as Wilson did in his Fourteen Points. This movement has confused the concept of self-determination even further. As a result, the idea that a culturally distinct group of people should have the right to self-determination has become popular among oppressed nations, which is problematic because this simplistic interpretation is not the case at all (Kovacs 2003).

This question was addressed in the 1970 Declaration of Principles on Friendly Relations and Cooperation among states in Accordance with the Charter. This declaration limits the universal right of self-determination to people who are not being fully represented or to people in a state that is undemocratic or becoming so. It says that once a state becomes independent and

its legitimacy is recognized, citizens must inform the representatives of their political system of their political aspirations. The only way this can result in the creation of new states is if their current political system becomes undemocratic and no longer represents the population. People may then exercise their right to self-determination by creating a new state to ensure their safety and security (Daes 1996, 52). Furthermore, the international community tends to reject secessionism as a remedy for the abuse of fundamental rights. Instead, they encourage states to be fully representative.

Regardless of the international community's naïve hopes for countries to demonstrate equal representation, minorities in several states are currently undergoing some form of oppression. In fact, the Sudan is facing a situation today where secession may be the end result. Civil war was recently ended by a peace treaty which included in it a referendum in six years, which would give southerners an opportunity to determine whether or not they wish to remain a part of a unified Sudan. This referendum poses a huge problem. The alternative to remaining a part of a unified Sudan is secession. It would be naïve to assume that the southerners could be granted self-determination without opposition (Central Intelligence Agency, June 15, 2005).

Another relatively current incident concerning secessionist self-determination was the Balkan crisis that occurred in the 1990s. This incident introduced another concern for the international community, which was the conflict between self-determination and the territorial integrity of states (Kovacs 2003). During the Yugoslav crisis, "the separation of break-away units became easier than had been the case in earlier decades" (Kovacs 2003, 434).

Requirements that were regarded as minimal preconditions for the recognition of new nation-states were abandoned in the case of Yugoslavia. For instance, the new state was expected to reach an agreement with the larger state about separation, but in this case failed to do so.

In reference to this issue, the international community introduced new criteria for the recognition of sovereignty, thus bringing to light new approaches to the principle of self-determination. As previously discussed, minority rights were once again highlighted as they were after the First World War, when the League of Nations introduced the Minority Treaties to “limit the damage and injustice that self-determination” inflicted (Kovacs 2003, 437). It seems that self-determination was given to majority populations and, as a result, led to the oppression of minorities. Today, minority protection includes granting minorities legislative and executive powers, allowing the establishment of autonomous provinces within larger states, which is what happened in the case of the former Yugoslavia (Kovacs 2003). However, territorial autonomy may easily provide a springboard for demands for self-determination and separation, just as they did in the case of the former Yugoslavia.

The crisis in the Balkans resulted in a series of new initiatives concerning the principle of self-determination and minority protection. Among these ideas was a proposal to divide up the right of self-determination among constituent groups of states, which was introduced by Liechtenstien, but never materialized due to a lack of support (Kovacs 2003). The Yugoslav case made clear that self-determination was a territorial, not an ethnic principle, despite the specification of ‘people’ in the UN Charter. According to Wilson’s principle of self-determination, however, boundaries would be changing and therefore did not fuse the concepts of territorial integrity and self-determination.

The international community is still faced with situations similar to that of the former Yugoslavia, such as Montenegro, which is currently being discouraged from claiming independence on similar grounds that the republican units of Yugoslavia were granted independence (Kovacs 2003). It is apparent that a distinction be made between one-time policy

decisions, such as those made during the break-up of Yugoslavia, and normative conditions. Otherwise, the loosening of the meaning of self-determination during the 1990s will continue to bring false hope to those who aspire to independence.

Evidently, the ambiguous conception of the principle of self-determination continues to pose similar problems today as it did after the First World War. The debate over the meaning and implications of the principle will undoubtedly continue as similar situations arise, such as the situations in the Sudan and northern Iraq. One can only hope that lessons be learned from past decisions.

Closing Remarks

Today, in a globalizing society, the state-centered approach to studying political processes appears to be less capable than it has been in the past. Issues such as terrorism and world trade transcend state boundaries, making it necessary to apply approaches that go beyond the level of state, such as the transnational approach. However, although the world is going through a transition, it will not do away with the state system. Granting regional blocs seem to be the norm in terms of trading and commerce and “have begun to undermine the possibility of seeing power as solely a spatial monopoly exercised by states” (Agnew 1998, 50), states still have the ultimate decision whether to belong or not to belong to these world and regional institutions and/or adhere to their policies. Similarly, states are protected by sovereignty. Each state is still first and foremost concerned with its own interests and limited by its capabilities. Furthermore, it is the state that is responsible for the welfare of their own people; therefore, they must act in their own interest.

This concern with a state's interest is obfuscated by laws such as the principle of national self-determination. In today's volatile world, rights such as the principle of self-determination do not carry the same weight they did when they were first conceived. Today, creating a state only occurs at the expense of other states, which is discouraged by the international community. In response to this issue, the United Nations has developed minority rights to coincide with the principle of self-determination. Instead of secession, the international community encourages better representation of underrepresented minorities. Issues that plague our world community today include situations where states have repressed a minority population who now threaten the integrity of the state by attempts to secede. The international community's remedy is simply better representation of these minorities. Because the state is the central authority on these issues, it does not have to adhere to international laws, although may suffer from repercussions, such as economic sanctions.

In cases where aggression between the minority and majority populations of a state may occur, the international community continues to hold the position of better representation of the minority. Furthermore, it is not recommended to reward aggression with independence. It is also advised that a country that is incapable of defending its own territory against external irredentism and internal separatism (i.e. Bosnia in the 1990s) not be granted independence (Kovacs 2003). However, the international community has made exceptions, such as in the case of granting Bosnia independence. Evidently, every situation is different in terms of the circumstances that surround it. As much as the international community does not want to devise special rules to handle each conflict, it has set a precedent which requires it to do so. Therefore, future events such as the situation in the Sudan will eventually require the international community's intervention.

It is evident today that the results of the Paris Peace Conference left a legacy behind that continue to trouble the international community. The realignment and introduction of boundaries with respect to the principle of self-determination, by delegates at the Conference, marked the beginning of a world organization's involvement in the creation of the world map. This was not the last time the international community would be faced with the intricacies of the principle of self-determination and certainly won't be the last. Placing a certain amount of importance on the international community, it should be reinforced that the state continues to be the dominant political unit, while the international community plays a subordinate role where domestic issues are concerned. Moreover, ultimate authority still remains in the hands of the state and will continue to, due to the state's need for legitimacy, international recognition, and most of all independence.

Whether granted statehood or not, the people of the old Ottoman Empire continue to experience problems concerning boundaries drawn and agreed upon by the Great Powers. The "war to end all wars" did not in fact prohibit any further aggression; instead it continues to plague the international community with international boundary issues, such as the continuing Kurdish struggle for autonomy. The potentiality of an autonomous Kurdistan in Iraq instills fear among neighboring states that an appeal to self-determination will be next, assuming that autonomy is a precondition for self-determination.

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