

# When the Rivers Wept: Government Persecution of Iraq's Minorities

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For every victim that has died in the name of freedom at the hands of an oppressive regime, this is dedicated in your memory.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

While the awareness of the circumstances that currently surround Iraq's minorities has greatly increased since the start of the Iraq War, the amount of information produced in academia as to whether minorities were always persecuted has not been sufficient. It is because of the lack of scholarship in these areas that I intend to answer the following: **Which Iraqi regimes were most likely to discriminate against which minorities?** Essentially, I seek to understand why different regimes oppressed, left alone, or elevated different minority groups. For example, a common critique of former dictator Saddam Hussein was that he hated and killed Kurds. However, what is not widely known is how Abd al-Karim Qasim treated them. Nor is the treatment of Kurds in other regimes examined as thoroughly. This 'missing link' of how different minorities were treated causes a gap in modern Iraq's history. This gap produces two main questions: what happened to minorities and why? Firstly, were minorities treated badly across the board, or were others elevated, untended to, or treated somewhere in between? Secondly, why were they treated as such? While Iraq has been and continues to frequently be portrayed as a war-stricken country that oppresses its own people, it is vital to understand why that is the case. With all of the rhetoric that surrounds the current state of Iraq, there has been little discussion as to what caused Iraq to be this way in the first place.

## 1.2 Significance

This question is important for the following three reasons: First, it can help explain what exactly the cause for discrimination is; second, it can deliver a picture of how certain regimes function when faced with minority pressure; and third, it could predict how future Iraqi regimes will handle its minorities.

First, up until the late 19th century the number of mass murders and amount of resentment towards ethno-religious minorities was low compared to what would occur in the following century. It could possibly be attributed to the Ottoman view of “live and let live” in order to reduce sectarian violence in their own society; or because most ethnic groups benefited from each other, among other reasons. This thesis question seeks to identify the factors that caused sectarian violence to erupt after the formation of Iraq in 1932. Were independence movements stemming from Ottoman times challenging the new Iraqi state? Were Arab-led governments, now free from Ottoman constraints, finding an excuse to dominate non-Arabs? Or were international events to blame for the persecution of certain groups?

Second, the answer to this question can provide a better picture of how certain regimes function, especially in the Middle East. It may highlight how differences in leadership can affect their policies towards their people. In Iraq, President Abd al-Karim Qasim’s treatment of Jews, for example, was much better than President Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr’s. The explanation for the difference may be that Qasim wanted to stir a common brand of nationalism among all Iraqi groups and preserve their diverse cultures, while al-Bakr considered Israel and the Jews enemies of the Arabs. Essentially, each leader had his own agenda, and al-Bakr’s actions towards minorities may help explain his goals for the nation.

Lastly, the answer to the thesis question can help predict how future Iraqi regimes will handle issues regarding minorities. For example, many Iraqi minorities believe that the current Shi'a-led government does not care about them, and that "Iraq can only be one again if we remove the people in power. The government does not care about the people."<sup>1</sup> As will soon be discussed, this type of mentality is a recurring theme in modern Iraqi history.

### **1.3 Minorities**

Four different minorities will be discussed: Assyrians, Jews, Turkmen, and Kurds.

The vast majority of the Christians in Iraq are ethnic Assyrians. There are separate sects of Assyrians that belong to different denominations, such as the Chaldeans and Syriacs, though they all maintain the same ethnicity. Assyrians trace their lineage back to the times of the first Assyrian Empire 3,400 years ago. They are considered by many to be the original people of Mesopotamia. The majority of Assyrians live in the northern part of the country, though there are sizeable populations in Baghdad and Basra. They have been in modern Iraq since its foundation, and have played important roles in government, society, and culture. Yet, they have also been heavily persecuted by some Iraqi regimes, especially since 2003.

The Jews have been in Iraq for 4,000 years.<sup>2</sup> They are considered to be the oldest religion still in Iraq. Up until the Zionist movement in the early 20th century, there were substantial Jewish populations in different cities in Iraq, including Baghdad, Basra, Mosul, and Fallujah. Iraqi Jews have experienced intense persecution since the 1930s. In 1938, the Jewish population was around 150,000 - 170,000. As of 2008, an estimated 7 Jews remain. The vast majority of the

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<sup>1</sup>Basu, Moni. "Voices of Iraq: Minorities on the Edge of Extinction."

<sup>2</sup>Glanz, James, and Irit Garshowitz. "In Israel, Iraqi Jews Reflect on Baghdad Heritage."

Jewish population fled after 1951, so only 2,500-3,000 remained by 1967.<sup>3</sup> Knowledge about Iraqi Jews in the post-1970 era is limited. Thus, I cannot describe their treatment after 1980.

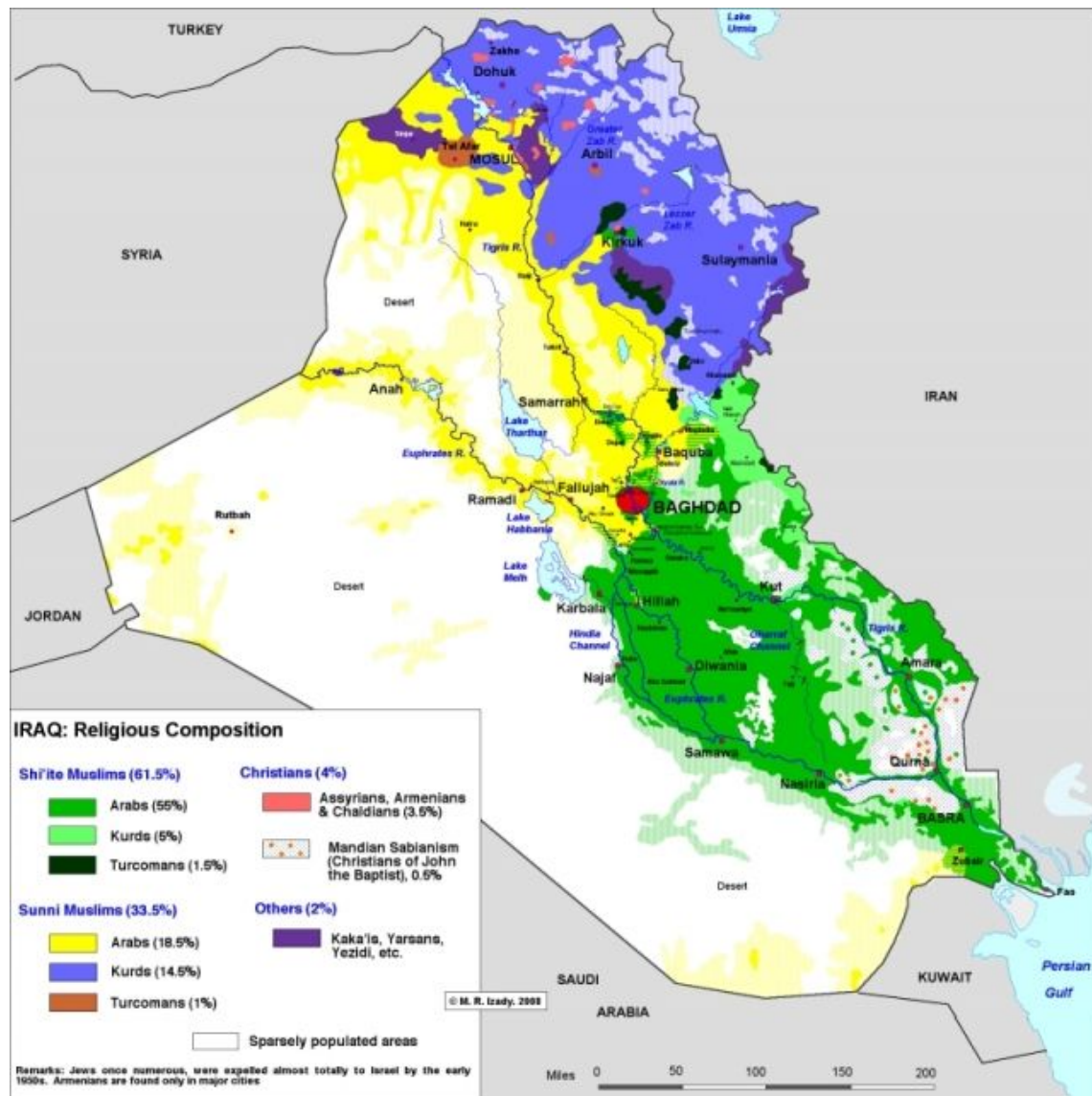


Figure 1.1 An ethno-religious map of Iraq's ethnic groups.

The Turkmen are another ethnic group residing mainly in northern Iraq near Mosul and Kirkuk, though there are many who reside in Diyala in eastern Iraq. Iraqi Turkmen are ethnically

<sup>3</sup>Fox, Sandi. "Who Owns the Jewish Treasures That Were Hidden in Saddam Hussein's Basement?"

Turkic in origin and identify mostly with Turkish culture and heritage. They are the third largest ethnic group in Iraq at 3 million people, according to a 2013 Iraqi Ministry of Planning estimate. They speak their own language, Turkmen, though the majority of them also speak Arabic. Turkmen are not part of the Arab majority and have experienced discrimination by several Iraqi governments.

The Kurds are a mainly Sunni Muslim group that speaks their own language, Kurdish. They reside in northern Iraq, or Iraqi Kurdistan. They are the only ethnic group to have their own semi-autonomous region. According to Kurdish media outlet *Rudaw*, they number around 5.5 million in Iraq, making them the second largest ethnic group in the nation. Aside from northern Iraq, they claim lands that spread into southern Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Turkey. Since before the formation of modern Iraq, Kurds have been demanding an independent state of their own. They have suffered periodic persecution at the hands of Iraqi governments since 1932.



## 1.4 Regimes

<b>Pre-Nationalists</b>	<b>Civic Nationalists</b>	<b>Transition to Ethno-Nationalists</b>	<b>Ethno-Nationalist Ba'athists</b>
King Faisal I (1932-1933) King Ghazi I (1933-1939) King Faisal (1939-1958)	Abd al-Karim Qasim (1958-1963)	Abdul Salam Arif (1963-1966) Abdul Rahman Arif (1966-1968)	Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr (1968-1979) Saddam Hussein (1979-2003)

Three types of regimes have taken control over Iraq since its foundation. Regimes will be defined, for the purposes of this thesis, as *a government with a certain ideology*. There are three types of ideologies: pre-nationalism, civic nationalism, and ethnic nationalism. Pre-nationalism, also known as non-popular sovereignty, does not favor one ethnic group; but its primary goal is to maintain the territorial sovereignty of the state. This ideology was prevalent throughout the monarchy. Civic nationalism is defined by common citizenship of people in a state.<sup>4</sup> It provides rights and freedoms to all citizens, regardless of race, religion, or creed. This was most prevalent during the Qasim era. Ethno-nationalism is a system in which the state's claim to sovereignty is based on favoring a specific ethnic group, such as the Arabs, and their language and culture of the ethnic group. It tends to elevate one group, while simultaneously promoting the dominant group's culture and language onto others. This ideology is distinguished in Ba'athist Iraq.

In 1932, the Hashemite Kingdom of Iraq was formed after gaining independence from Great Britain. It was led by King Faisal I, followed by King Ghazi, and ending with King Faisal

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<sup>4</sup>Hill, Richard Child. "Civic Nationalism & Ethnic Nationalism."

II. From 1932 to 1958, Iraq was a constitutional monarchy that had numerous prime ministers. It is important to note that the prime ministers, the cabinet, and parliament implemented policies in Iraq, but the prime ministers and monarchs exerted most of their influence in government. The monarchy was the time with perhaps the most diverse Iraqi society. Many rebellions occurred in the decade that followed Iraq's formation, such as the Yazidi, Kurdish, and Shi'a revolts in the 1930s and 1940s, and they were quickly suppressed.<sup>56</sup> Aside from these, no other revolt occurred while the monarchy was in power. The monarchy was generally tolerant of most minorities. Up until 1948, the monarchy was generally tolerant towards the Jewish population, but with the formation of Israel in 1948, the monarchy increased pressure on Iraq's Jewish community. The monarchy ended in 1958 after the assassination of the royal family.

The overthrow of the monarchy, or the July 14th Revolution, was led by 'Abd al-Karim Qasim. A brigadier general in the Iraqi Army, he overthrew the monarchy allegedly because they were too pro-western. Qasim was an Iraqi nationalist who claimed that the will of the Iraqi people was most important. He advanced women's rights, included minority cultures in the public sphere, and removed all discriminatory policies against the Jews, but he was heavily criticized for his failure to handle the Kurdish movements for independence.<sup>7</sup> With a promise of Kurdish autonomy going nowhere, the Kurds revolted in 1959. Qasim was unable to quell this uprising. In 1963 Qasim was assassinated in a coup led by Abdul Salam Arif.

Abdul Salam Arif established the first pan-Arab nationalist government in Iraq.

Pan-Arabism is an ideology that attempts to unify all Arab-majority nations through Arab culture and language. Salam Arif rejected civic nationalism and believed that a pan-Arab ideology was

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<sup>5</sup>Fuccaro, Nelida. *The Other Kurds: Yazidis of Colonial Iraq*.

<sup>6</sup>Nitze, William. "The Kurdish Rebellion."

<sup>7</sup>Davis, Eric. "Abd Al-Karim Qasim: Sectarian Identities, and the Rise of Corporatism in Iraq."

best for Iraq and its people. He believed in nationalizing all businesses and banks, and tried to mimic the Egyptian system that was led by Gamal Abdel Nasser. After Arif died in a helicopter crash, his brother Abdul Rahman took leadership. Minority rights did not change much during this period, until another coup occurred. It is important to note that while the Arif brothers were pan-Arabists like their Ba'ath successors, they were not Ba'athists; they embraced Arab ethno-nationalism but did not embrace the same left-wing stance or Arab Socialism that the Ba'athists held.

Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr took leadership of Iraq as President in 1968, and established the first Ba'athist government in Iraq. Al-Bakr mandated more oppressive laws against Jews, as well as escalating the war against the Kurds. In 1974, Ba'athist forces attacked Iraqi Kurdistan and took away nearly all autonomy they had previously earned. He also began an "Arabization" campaign in Kirkuk and other major northern cities - a campaign that targeted non-Arab minorities. Al-Bakr's reign was subsequently followed by yet another Baathist regime under President Saddam Hussein who assumed control in 1979. While Hussein conducted an Arabization campaign against all minorities, he especially targeted the Kurds, particularly in the late 1980's al-Anfal campaign. There is no difference between al-Bakr and Hussein's ideology, only that Hussein was more brutal in implementing his policies.

### **1.5 Hypothesis**

There are two hypotheses: the first is that the minorities, with the exception of the Jews, were not treated differently because of religious or cultural differences, but because of the political objectives of the regime. Following World War I, the Ottoman Empire had collapsed

and most of the Arab World was briefly controlled by the French and British as mandates under the League of Nations. Needing to divide up the conquered lands, Mark Sykes and Francois Georges-Picot formed the Sykes-Picot Agreement, the agreement that created the borders for the modern-day Middle East. This did not take into account the religious, tribal, and cultural tensions and differences that existed in the region at that time. By not taking into consideration the independence movements that had been taking hold, or the two previous genocides against the Assyrians and Armenians, nearly all minority groups were not happy with the agreement. Independence movements, such as those of the Assyrians and Kurds, began to sprout in northern Iraq. This increased tension in Iraq, and challenged the new government to maintain the sovereignty of their new state.

Second, the persecution of minorities ultimately boils down to the ideology that the government in power adopted in order to preserve their new state. Ethnic-nationalists, like al-Bakr and Hussein, treated minorities worse because they believed that the task of holding Iraq together required aggressive Arabization campaigns, which did not grant cultural rights to any minorities. Alternatively, the civic nationalist Qasim regime treated the minorities much better because it saw multicultural unity of all regions of Iraq as the best path to preserve the state's territorial sovereignty. The pre-nationalist monarchy treated most of the minorities well because the monarchy did not seek to make any one group dominant but sought an alliance of the traditional elites.

An alternative hypothesis could be military expenditures. When the Iraqi military had spent more on their military, more advanced weaponry and an increase in soldiers may have allowed them to more easily attack their domestic adversaries. The extra resources may have

given the Iraqi government an excuse to conquer their enemies, instead of attempting to deal in diplomatic negotiations.

# Chapter 2

## Literature Review

The persecution of minorities in Iraq has been well documented since the invasion of 2003. Humanitarian organizations like In Defense of Christians, International Rescue Committee, and numerous news outlets have brought to light the number of persecuted groups that have been killed or forced to flee due to the war. Aside from the recent documentation, much has been written on the history of the people there. Sargon Donabed, an associate professor of History at Roger Williams University has written on Assyrian history and culture, and Nelida Fuccaro, currently a history professor at NYU - Abu Dhabi, has aimed at writing about Kurds.

Sargon Donabed published *Reforging a Forgotten History: Iraq and the Assyrians in the 20th Century* in 2015, which as of now is the most up-to-date publication on Assyrian history and persecution. In his book, Donabed discusses who the Assyrians are, examines how they played a role in helping shaping the geopolitical landscape of Iraq, and assesses the impact they had. Donabed covers Assyrian history from the late 19th century to 2014. As of now, this is the most comprehensive publication on Assyrian history since 1932.

Authors such as Liam Anderson and Gareth Stansfield have written extensively on Kirkuk, a city where Kurds and Turkmen were at the center of government persecution. Books such as *Crisis in Kirkuk: The Ethnopolitics of Conflict and Compromise* have provided deep insight as to how exactly the government persecuted its minorities throughout Iraq's history.

Most of these articles, essays, books, etc. are very well documented and provide a great deal of information as to what happened to minorities. However, the majority of the works that

will be referenced in this thesis do not include comparisons. There is currently no scholarship or any other academic publication that combines all of Iraq's largest minorities into one work and compares this treatment over time. It is for this reason that this thesis will seek to compare and contrast the differences of treatment among the groups within the same timeframe; it is also my purpose to provide a comprehensive report of what has occurred for many of Iraq's minorities. It should be noted that throughout the time period examined, all regimes were guilty of manipulating data, most notably with Iraq's censuses. This makes obtaining quantitative data difficult due to the unreliable sources, and adds yet another gap in the literature.

The following chapters will be organized in order of regime, and further divided by minority. The Ba'ath regime will be divided into two segments due to the amount of information present. At the end of every chapter will be an analysis breaking down what the facts presented show, why the regime was or was not oppressive towards a group, followed by an examination of the alternative explanation.

Table 2.1 Regime Treatment of Different Minorities

	Pre-Nationalist	Civic Nationalist	Transition to Ethno-Nationalist	Ethno-Nationalist
Assyrians	Neutral	Free	Unknown	Neutral
Jews	Repressive	Free	Repressive	Very Repressive
Turkmen	Neutral	Free	Unknown	Repressive
Kurds	Neutral	Repressive	Repressive	Very Repressive

# Chapter 3

## The Pre-Nationalist Monarchy (1932-1958)

The Kingdom of Iraq ruled from 1932 to 1958 as a constitutional monarchy. This period saw three coups in 1936, 1941, and 1958, and multiple politically-based uprisings throughout the nation. After the 1936 coup, power lay mainly with the prime minister and his cabinet. King Faisal II took the throne at age four in 1939, had very little to do with policy creation until the mid-1950s. Having achieved independence from the United Kingdom, the Anglo-Iraqi treaty was signed in 1932 to ensure that British interests, mainly military bases, stayed in the country.<sup>8</sup> This, as well as British advisors continuing to aid the Iraqi government, stirred up resentment among the people. In addition, independence movements sprouted among minorities in the 1930s.

As adherents to a pre-nationalist ideology, the monarchy's primary objective was to make sure their territory remained intact. Any popular nationalist group or movement that threatened their power or territory was to be eliminated. This being said, the monarchy was not as oppressive towards minorities as the Ba'athists were, nor did they promote cultural rights like Qasim did. Throughout this era, the monarchy largely neglected of the Turkmen, having done nothing to make their situation better or worse. They were indifferent towards the Assyrians after the mid-1930s, and did not engage in any major campaigns against the Kurds after 1945. The Monarchy was no proactive in using violence against minorities, but did respond forcefully to anything related to secession or autonomy. The monarchy was friendly toward the Jews until 1948, but then began heavily oppressing the Iraqi Jewish population after the formation of Israel.

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<sup>8</sup> Ghareeb, Edmund, and Beth K. Dougherty. *Historical Dictionary of Iraq*.



## The Assyrians

American representative Paul Knabenshue wrote that public animosity towards the Assyrians was at “fever heat” in the spring of 1933, due to the fact that Assyrians were seen as British allies and were becoming a nuisance to the new Iraqi government.<sup>9</sup> The first massacre ever conducted by an Iraqi government is known as the Simele Massacre. In August of 1933, a few hundred armed Assyrians crossed into Syria, then under French Mandate, offered their surrender and asked to settle.<sup>10</sup> French authorities denied them permission and turned them back to Iraq. The Assyrians were still fully armed. While heading back to their villages, the Assyrians were intercepted by the Iraqi Armed Forces.<sup>11</sup> The Assyrians were able to drive the force back to their villages. There the Assyrians surrendered their arms to the Iraqi police in a bid to cease fighting. However, after Arab and Kurdish tribesmen raided Assyrian villages, the Iraqi army, at the orders of Colonel Bakr Sidqi, massacred the village of Simele and targeted other villages in Duhok province. While the bulk of the killings lasted from August 7th to August 11th, looting and some killing extended throughout the month. Sixty-three villages were looted in total, with 5,000-6,000 Assyrians murdered within five days.

While the now promoted General Sidqi led the massacres, former Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Said stated that responsibility for the massacre laid with King Faisal I as he was the one that ordered the attack.<sup>12</sup> According to official British accounts, it seems as if the “weak” Faisal initially urged caution and was welcoming of all Iraq’s minorities. However, it may well have been that he grew agitated with the threat and ordered the attack. The British accounts state that

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<sup>9</sup>Simon, Reeva Spector. *Iraq Between the Two World Wars The Militarist Origins of Tyranny*.

<sup>10</sup>Zubaida, Sami. “Contested Nations: Iraq and the Assyrians.”

<sup>11</sup>Stafford, Ronald Sempill. *The Tragedy of the Assyrians*.

<sup>12</sup>Husry, Khaldun S. “The Assyrian Affair of 1933 (I).”

his cabinet, headed by Prime Minister Rashid Ali, suggested more aggressive approaches. Overall, while it is difficult to lay blame on one individual, the government and Iraqi army were to blame for the events, even admitted by Iraqi Delegate to the League of Nations Yasin Pasha. In addition, when King Faisal I passed away in September 1933, the new King Ghazi I went to Mosul and personally decorated the Iraqi veterans of the Assyrian engagements. Due to the killings and fleeing of Patriarch Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII to Chicago, up to 6,200 Assyrians fled to Syria with 15,000 more refugees coming the following years.<sup>13</sup> Throughout the rest of the reign of King Ghazi I and King Faisal II, the Assyrians were virtually silent in Iraq's politics.

### **The Jews**

The Jews were considered to be some of the most well-educated and affluent in Iraqi society. Many held government positions in the monarchy, such as Sassoon Eskell, the first Iraqi Minister of Finance. In the early 1940s, the Jewish population numbered around 137,000.<sup>14</sup> In the very early years of the monarchy, Jews were not persecuted. If they were, there was no overt oppression of the community. Yet, there was a significant change in ideology towards the latter half of monarchy.

Anti-Semitic acts, such as the dismissal of Jews from government posts and defamation of Jews, had begun in the mid-1930's. During this time, 10 Jews were dismissed from their posts from the Ministry of Economics and Communications.<sup>15</sup> Several dozen more would be dismissed from their government posts in the following years. While Prime Minister Nuri Said and the monarchs had relatively liberal policies towards the Jews, anti-Jewish rhetoric grew due to the

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<sup>13</sup>“Official Journal: Special Supplement .” *League of Nations* , 1935.

<sup>14</sup>Soussan, Michael. “Iraq's Last Jews.”

<sup>15</sup>“Iraqi Virtual Jewish History.” *Jewish Virtual Library*.

rise of Nazi Germany and the increasing tensions in Palestine. Pro-Palestinian organizations began to circulate anti-Jewish propaganda; a rising German influence led by Ambassador Franz Grobba began to use newspapers and certain radio stations as a method to incite hatred. This resonated fairly well with the anti-British sentiment present throughout Iraq, many Iraqis saw the Jews as allies of the British.<sup>16</sup> Tensions peaked on June 1st, 1941. Following another failed coup, this time by Iraqi politician Rashid Ali al-Gaylani in May, an angry band of soldiers, police officers, and civilians looted and burned hundreds of Jewish homes and businesses; women were raped, children were thrown into the Tigris River, and 180-200 Jews were killed within two days.<sup>17</sup><sup>18</sup> This would later be known as the *Farhud*. Following the events, the monarchy attempted to restore order and suppress the supporters of Rashid Ali. While the vast majority of Jews stayed, the first flight of Jews began to leave following the Farhud. From 1932 to 1948, there were no overt discriminatory laws that were implemented targeting the Jews. Rather, it was a combination of government inability to combat public discrimination towards Jews, and arguably some degree of covert government discrimination.

In 1948, however, the government began to overtly implement discriminatory policies towards the Jews. With the United Nations' plan to partition Palestine, Prime Minister Nuri Said stated "severe measures would be taken against all Jews in Arab countries", along with Iraqi Foreign Minister Fadel Jamal stating:

"Partition imposed against the will of the majority of the people will jeopardize peace and harmony in the Middle East. Not only the uprising of the Arabs of Palestine is to be expected, but the masses in the Arab

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<sup>16</sup>Shute, Joe. "Remembering the Last Jews of Iraq."

<sup>17</sup>"Precisely as in Germany." *Locked Doors: The Seizure of Jewish Property in Arab Countries*.

<sup>18</sup>Black, Edwin. "The Expulsion That Backfired: When Iraq Kicked out Its Jews."

world cannot be restrained...But any injustice imposed upon the Arabs of Palestine will disturb the harmony among Jews and non-Jews in Iraq; it will breed inter-religious prejudice and hatred.”<sup>19</sup>

With the declaration of the state of Israel, Iraqi policies drastically shifted. On July 19th, 1948, the Iraqi government amended Penal Code 51, a law that made it illegal to support anarchy, immorality, and communism by adding the word “Zionism.” Thousands of Jewish homes were searched and jail sentences, financial punishments, and even death sentences were imposed on anyone convicted of being a Zionist. Most notable of these incidents was that of Shafiq Ades, a Ford automobile importer, who was publicly hanged in Basra for allegedly selling cars to Israel.



Figure 3.1 Iraqi Jews leaving Iraq during Operation Ezra and Nehemiah

In response to the increasing persecution, the Communist party of Iraq found more Jews joining due to the communists' pledge of protection. This was coupled with an increasing growth

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<sup>19</sup>United Nations, 125. *Continuation of the Discussion on the Palestinian Question.*

of Zionism. It is important to note that Zionists in Iraq were not intent on overthrowing the state, but rather teaching Jewish youth Hebrew and convincing them to move to Israel. From December 1949 to February 1950, nearly 3,000 Jews left through illegal river crossings into Iran where they were then airlifted to Israel.<sup>20</sup> In March 1950, the Prime Minister Nuri Said permitted the emigration of Jews for one-year on the condition that they give up their Iraqi citizenship. Known as Operation Ezra and Nehemiah, nearly 120,000 Jews were airlifted from Iraq to Israel. After the operation ended only about 6,000 Jews remained.

### **The Kurds**

Prior to the creation of Iraq, Kurds were granted some degree of autonomy by the Ottoman Empire to control the lands inhabited by their tribes. When Iraq gained independence in 1932, their acceptance into the League of Nations was based on the condition that they protect the political and civil rights of Kurds.<sup>21</sup> Namely, boundaries were drawn to demarcate region where the Kurdish language, municipal administration, courts, and primary education were to function. However, the Iraqi monarchy did not keep their promises, and legislation that was supposed to grant certain privileges to Kurds was poorly implemented, if at all. Whether this was done intentionally or the government simply lacked the administrative capacity to follow through with their promises is unknown, but it may very well be a combination of both. Despite the government quelling Kurdish insurrections, there is no indication of overt persecution of Kurds. The monarchy did not attack Kurds except when dealing with rebellions.

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<sup>20</sup> Israeli Ministry of Aliyah and Integration.

<sup>21</sup>Yildiz, Kerim. "The First Gulf War: From Uprising to Democracy."

Following the death of King Faisal I and King Ghazi, Sheikh Mahmud, a leader of the Kurds in Sulaymaniyah in northeastern Iraq, had rallied support for the coup of Rashid Ali in 1941. The government responded with a military offensive in the north. With the Kurds defeated and the Sheikh surrendering, they lost hope for autonomy.<sup>22</sup> The Kurds, now led by Mustafa Barzani, again staged a revolt from 1943 to 1945 that was soon suppressed by another military offensive. Following this, Barzani fled to Iran and later the Soviet Union and returned to Iraq only after the overthrow of the monarchy.

This would be the last regime in Iraq's history where the central government controlled all territory with no autonomous Kurdish region. The Kurds would remain relatively silent in Iraqi affairs up until 1958. In fact, it was only after the monarchy was overthrown that Kurdish leader Mustafa Barzani returned to Iraq.

### **The Turkmen**

As stated in the Royal Constitution of Iraq written on March 21st, 1925 Article 16 states, "As determined by a general programme prescribed by law, each of the minorities originating from various nations has the right to set up schools where education is provided in the language used by that minority and is entitled to be in charge of these schools."<sup>23</sup> Under constitutional guarantee, minorities such as the Turkmen and Kurds were allowed to have schools conducted in their respective languages, even though Arabic became the official language in 1933. However, following the brief Bakr Sidqi takeover of 1936, the military regime revoked the right to be educated in minorities' native languages.<sup>24</sup> This government takeover undoubtedly affected all

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<sup>22</sup> Naamani, Israel T. "The Kurdish Drive for Self-Determination."

<sup>23</sup> Iraqi Royal Constitution of 1925.

<sup>24</sup> Kerkuklu, Mofak. *The Plight of the Iraqi Turkmen*.

minorities. While it is not explicitly stated, it appears that these rights were not enforced following the restoration of the monarchy.

Most of the issues that would plague the Turkmen would be in Kirkuk, a city that continues to provide tension between Turkmen, Arabs, and Kurds to this day. Tensions further rose following the Gawer Baghi massacre in Kirkuk. On July 12th, 1946, 5,000 oil factory workers, who the Turkmen claim came mainly from their communities, protested for better working conditions in a local factory. While chanting, police fired upon the unarmed protesters and killed five. While there is disagreement over why the protesters were killed, Turkmen claim that this was due to racial bias on the part of the government.<sup>25</sup> The government did not take the responsibility for killings, nor did they attempt to aid the affected families of the attack, further exemplifying how the monarchy neglected the Turkmen.

It is often considered that the 1957 census was the last reliable Iraqi census. However, even this is highly controversial, namely with the population of the Turkmen in the Kirkuk province. Population sizes undoubtedly affect the balance of power in certain areas, though Turkmen have often been at a disadvantage when it comes to deciphering how many are/were in their most populous regions. The census is important because it shows the demographic spread of the province before the Arabization process occurred in the following years. The government stated that Kurds made up 48% of Kirkuk province, Arabs 27%, Turkmen 21%. This number is widely disputed among Turkmen, especially considering that the Iraqi government in 1958 admitted they drastically manipulated the numbers of Turkmen in the entire nation,<sup>26</sup> going from 136,800 to 567,000 — an increase of 400%. This points to government discrimination towards

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<sup>25</sup>Anderson, Liam, and Gareth Stansfield. "The Turkmen Perspective: The Demise of a Formerly Dominant Community." *Crisis in Kirkuk: The Ethnopolitics of Conflict and Compromise*, pp. 56–70

<sup>26</sup>Taylor, Scott. *Among the Others: Encounters with the Forgotten Turkmen of Iraq*, pp. 79

the Turkmen people, namely in Kirkuk. By knowingly manipulating population data, the government may have attempted to skew the data to disadvantage the Turkmen.

## **Analysis**

There are multiple reasons for the oppression of minorities. The new Iraqi government was primarily focused on state building, asserting its dominance and maintaining territorial sovereignty. This pre-nationalist ideology attempted to thwart any nationalist independence movement since it was seen as a threat to the state. This is exemplified from the examples explained above. The Monarchy is unique since it is the only regime to have quelled all rebellions they were faced with. Additionally, there is no indication that they engaged in unwarranted attacks on minorities when there was no threat to the state.

For the Assyrians, the government responded aggressively to retain its sovereignty and dash all hopes of an Assyrian state. They may have also been considered to be less hostile than the Kurds and weak enough for the Iraqi Army to defeat.

For the Jews, it was mainly due to the rise of anti-Semitic rhetoric from Nazi Germany and a response to the formation of Israel that made the government lash out against the community. From 1941 until 1948, the Jewish situation did not improve much. It still remains unclear what exactly turned the fairly liberal and pro-western Prime Minister Nuri Said in the opposite direction, though 1948 seems to have been the watershed year when everything went downhill for the Jews.

In regards to the Kurds, the government responded with military force, as they did with the Assyrians, to retain their sovereignty. The government understood that the Kurds were great



in number, and thus any preemptive attack on them would have most likely backfired. However, what is shocking is that the Kurds did not revolt in larger numbers sooner. Had they done that, the likelihood of forming a state may have been much more likely considering the dysfunctionality of Iraq at the time.

As for the Turkmen, it is unclear if they were intentionally targeted because of their ethnicity, or if they simply were victims of the marginalization that ran rampant throughout the kingdom. They were not a threat to the state because they were not threatening to secede or engage in armed conflict, but rather only asking for cultural rights. They were essentially neglected and taken advantage of, such as in the census. My assumptions are that in a dysfunctional nation like Iraq, it would have made sense that the government did not enforce the laws that were guaranteed in the royal constitution.

In regards to the alternative hypothesis of military expenditures, there is no correlation between an increase in military spending and suppression of the minorities listed. The years in which military spending saw the largest increases, such as from 1955-1956 when spending went from \$48 million to \$72 million, can be attributed to factors that did not deal with the minorities mentioned. Events such as the Shi'a Revolts of 1935-1936, the Arab-Israeli War in 1948, or the Suez Canal Crisis in 1956 are more likely reasons as to why expenditures rose.

## Chapter 4

### The Civic Nationalist Qasim

Amid social and economic unrest, the Kingdom of Iraq saw turbulent times by the late 1950s, especially after the unpopular Arab Federation that united Iraq and Jordan into one nation. On July 14th, 1958 Brigadier Abd al-Karim Qasim and Colonel Abdul Salam Arif marched on Baghdad, took over the city's radio broadcasting station, and announced that a coup was taking place.<sup>27</sup> Within hours, the royal palace was captured and almost all of the royal family was murdered. Qasim would later designate himself as Prime Minister and Minister of Defense.

While many of the "Free Officers" who helped lead the coup with Qasim were more aligned with the pan-Arabist ideology,<sup>28</sup> Qasim was more an Iraqi nationalist, establishing his "Iraq First" or *Watani* policy. He was particularly friendly with the Iraqi Communist Party, and championed modernization reforms for social equality.<sup>29</sup> He reduced apartment, house, and store rents, lowered the cost of certain foods, provided social insurance for the unemployed and sick, also allowed wage earners to unionize, among other things.

The main difference between the ideology of Qasim and the other regimes was that Qasim was the only civic nationalist to lead the country. The monarchy held a non-popular sovereignty stance, while the Ba'ath government leaned towards a *qawmiyyah*, or "pan-Arab" ideology. Qasim encouraged the participation of minorities in public life. This inclusion led Qasim to establish better relations with the two smaller minorities, the Christians and Jews. He

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<sup>27</sup>Wynn, Wilton. "Pro-Nasser Rebel Chiefs Proclaim Iraq Republic."

<sup>28</sup> Davis, Eric. "'Abd al-Karim Qasim: Sectarian Identities and Rise of Corporatism in Iraq" pp.14

<sup>29</sup> Pelletiere, Stephen C. *Iraq and the International Oil System: Why America Went to War in the Gulf*.

even stated that “the Kurds, the Turkmen, the Assyrians, and Iraq's other minorities were all brothers in the republic.”<sup>30</sup> An example of this was the newly redone Iraqi flag, that included the Star of Ishtar to represent the Assyrians, and the yellow sun to represent the Kurds. Overall, the state was heavily involved in multi-cultural production and protection. Groups were able to promote their cultures since it was considered part of Iraq’s nation.

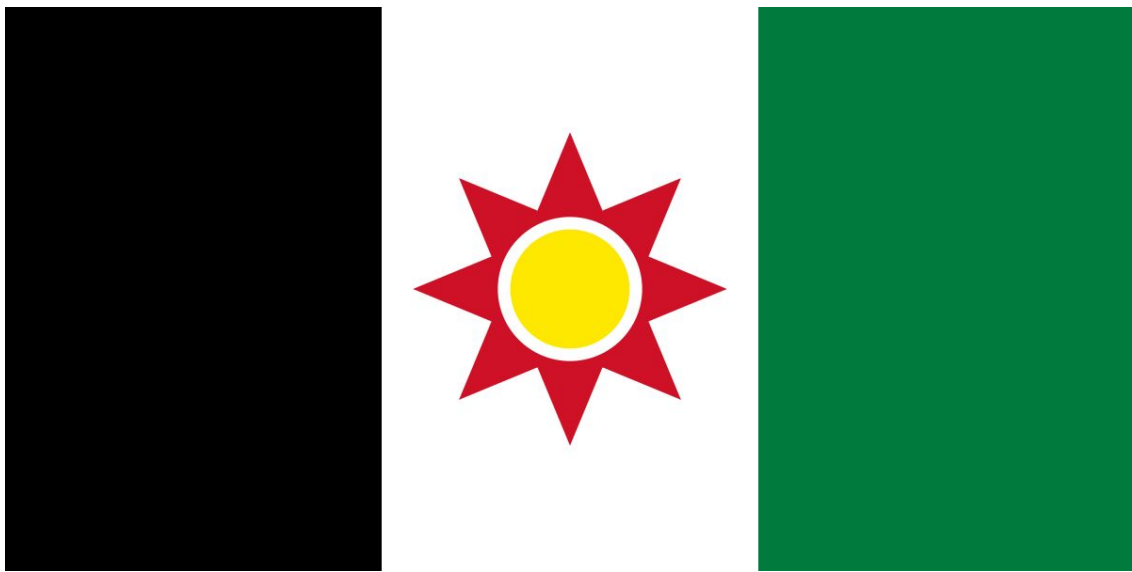


Figure 4.1 The Iraqi Republic flag with the Star of Ishtar (red) and Kurdish Sun (yellow)

### **The Assyrians**

The Qasim period was rather confusing for the Assyrians. Qasim’s agenda of uniting groups and promoting them as Iraqi, rather than uniting people as Arabs, allowed the Assyrians to be a little more at ease. However, research is scarce regarding any specific policies helped or targeted them. The most likely conclusion is that the Assyrians benefited from the modernization

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<sup>30</sup> Qasim, Abdul Karim. “Objectives of the Iraqi Revolution.” (Baghdad: Ministry of Guidance, 1960)

reforms of the period. Indeed, much of the scholarship that exists states very vague information, such as “The regime of Brigadier 'Abd al-Karim Qasim also favored the Assyrians.”<sup>31</sup> Without much information, it can only be implied that the Assyrians benefitted more than they had under other regimes.

In 1961, a Kurdish revolt occurred in northern Iraq. Some Assyrians sided with the Kurds seeing the Kurdish feud as a way to advance Assyrians rights, while others sided with Qasim. While there is no documentation of intra-Assyrian conflict, hundreds of Assyrians were killed due to the Kurdish revolts since Qasim targeted Assyrian villages that were thought to have been sympathetic to the Kurdish cause.<sup>32</sup> Assyrians were collateral damage in the Kurdish uprising.

## **The Jews**

The reign of Qasim quickly improved the situation of the Jews in Iraq. The new government lifted prohibitions on Jews leaving Iraq and allowed freedom of movement. Dr. Nissim Kazzaz, an Iraqi Jewish scholar, states that:

“Abd al-Karim Qasim’s four and one-half years of rule was the best period the Jews of Iraq had known since the mass emigration to Israel. The civil rights were returned to them. The State universities...[allowed Jews to] be accepted into any faculty or discipline taught therein.”<sup>33</sup>

Qasim had also established Law no. 11 of 1960 which eliminated the law of 1952 that ordered Iraqi Jews outside of the country to return or face nationalization and confiscation of their property. This allowed Jews to return, and approximately 450 did within four months of the law being abolished.<sup>34</sup> Instead of holding Jewish political prisoners for life, within a few months after

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<sup>31</sup>Lewis, Jonathan Eric. “Iraqi Assyrians: Barometer of Pluralism.”

<sup>32</sup>Peuch, Jean-Christophe. “Iraq: Christian Community Faces Uncertain Future In Postwar Era.”

<sup>33</sup> “Precisely as in Germany.” *Locked Doors: The Seizure of Jewish Property in Arab Countries* pg. 66

<sup>34</sup> Fischbach, Michael R. *Jewish Property Claims against Arab Countries*, pp. 64

the coup, Jews were released from prison and deported to Israel. Following this, the state also eliminated the amendment passed in March of 1951 that rescinded Jews of their citizenship if they did not return. "...the principle of the revoking of Iraqi citizenship goes against the spirit of the constitution [which states that] citizenship is a natural right...therefore...this law is struck."

This exemplifies Qasim's *watani* approach by showing that he tried to establish trust with people regardless of religious affiliation. Itamar Levin, in his book *Locked Doors: The Seizure of Jewish Property in Arab Countries*, states that the original Citizenship Deprivation Law from 1950 and the Property Freeze Law that applied to Jews who remained after March 1951 were not abolished. The reasons for this are unclear, though it could have been to avoid protest within Iraq.<sup>35</sup> While Qasim did not persecute Jews like the monarchy, he did, however, build a monument of himself on a Jewish cemetery, forcing the Jewish community to move their loved ones elsewhere. However, there was not much protest from the community.

Iraqi Jews were allowed to obtain passports and travel abroad, though they were still not legally able to travel to Israel. However, many Jews did not want to because their situation had improved.<sup>36</sup> According to the Israeli Office of the Prime Minister in 1961, 5,000 Jews were left in Iraq, most in Baghdad with a few hundred in Basra.<sup>37</sup> The Israeli Office states that while many wanted to leave Iraq, many lacked the funds to do so.

## **The Kurds**

What initially seemed like a very promising time for the Kurds soon turned out to be the first long-term war between the Iraqi government and Kurds. With the fall of the monarchy in

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<sup>35</sup> Fischbach, Michael R. *Jewish Property Claims against Arab Countries*, pp. 67

<sup>36</sup>Shabi, Rachel. *We Look Like the Enemy: The Hidden Story of Israel's Jews from Arab Lands*.

<sup>37</sup> Fischbach, Michael R. *Jewish Property Claims against Arab Countries*, pp. 68

1958, Qasim invited Mustafa Barzani back from exile and welcomed him as “a hero.” Qasim sought to bring the Kurds together in an effort to centralize the Iraqi state and consolidate its sovereignty.<sup>38</sup> Promising political, cultural, and language rights to the Kurds, an alliance was formed in order for Qasim to counter the stiff pan-Arab resistance. Qasim had also instituted a land, or agrarian reform, that was meant to redistribute land to poor farm workers and give them a larger share of the crops. This undoubtedly angered the rich landowners, so Qasim set out to find allies in the north, namely the Kurds. Barzani, being promised rights and privileges from Qasim, united many Kurdish factions in the north. Qasim would be the first president in which a major fallout with the Kurds would occur:

“With the help of Mustafa Barzani, Qasim was able to quell the Ba'athists and stabilize his regime. But as Baghdad became stronger, Qasim's Kurdish alliance became weaker and Iraq became more hostile towards the Kurds. He backtracked on his earlier promises to grant Kurdish rights, arrested Kurdish officials, banned Kurdish newspapers, and prohibited Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) to hold its party conference. Barzani, in response, demanded autonomy for Kurds, which was immediately rejected by Baghdad, leading to drawn-out armed conflict.”<sup>39</sup>

After the Mosul Uprising in 1959, a rebellion led by Arab nationalist Colonel Abd al-Wahab al-Shawaf who attempted to oust Qasim and establish a pan-Arab government, Qasim replaced government officials in Mosul with members of the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) who were mainly Kurds. Fearing that Barzani was becoming too powerful, Qasim instigated inter-tribal warfare among Barzani's rival tribes — the Surchi and Herki — in a bid to destabilize the north.

<sup>40</sup> This was a bad gamble and Barzani emerged victorious over the other tribes and consolidated

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<sup>38</sup>Avshalom H. Rubin. “Abd Al-Karim Qasim and the Kurds of Iraq: Centralization, Resistance and Revolt, 1958-63.”

<sup>39</sup> Saeed, Yerevan. “The Kurdish Security Dilemma, Explained.” *The Washington Institute*

<sup>40</sup> “The Development of the Party Political System.” *Iraqi Kurdistan: Political Development and Emerging Democracy*, pp. 68

his control over the Kurds. Barzani expelled all Iraqi government officials from Kurdish lands. With Qasim's promises having fallen through, and a worsening situation in the north, the first Iraqi-Kurdish War erupted in 1961. What made this confrontation different than previous Iraqi-Kurdish conflicts was that this spread throughout most of the northern region of Iraq, and lasted longer than any previous battle. Qasim's military was unsuccessful against the Kurds. Nevertheless, there were indiscriminate bombings on Kurdish villages up until Qasim's death in 1963, but the war carried on until 1969.

### **The Turkmen**

As in the monarchy, the Turkmen were most likely considered as collateral damage of the increasing tensions of the times with the Kurds. The Turkmen, too, were considered "brethren" along with the Kurds when Qasim first assumed control.<sup>41</sup> However, tensions between the Kurds and Turkmen increased, particularly when it came to the case of Kirkuk. The rise of the Iraqi Communist Party, fostered by the rising popularity of communism among the Kurds, led to the election of a Kurdish mayor of Kirkuk - a city that the Turkmen claim is historically theirs. Tensions peaked on July 14th, 1959 when fights broke out among the Turkmen and Kurds:

"From what appears to have been an accidental collapse into fighting on 14 July, leaving some 20 Turkmen dead, the events of the next two days suggest a high degree of planning and a clear ethnically based conflict between Kurds and Turkmen taking place in the heart of the city. On 15 July, Kurdish soldiers of the Fourth Brigade of the Iraqi army mortared Turkmen residential areas. By the time order was restored on 17 July by military units from Baghdad, 120 houses had been destroyed or plundered."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Bashkin, Orit. "Hybrid Nationalisms: Watani and Qawmi Visions in Iraq under 'Abd Al-Karim Qasim, 1958—61." pp. 298

<sup>42</sup> Anderson, Liam, and Gareth Stansfield. "Kirkuk in the Twentieth Century." *Crisis in Kirkuk: The Ethnopolitics of Conflict and Compromise*, pp. 34

Overall, 31 people were killed, all but three of whom were Turkmen. While the Iraqi Army did shell Turkmen houses, there is no indication that this was done at the orders of anyone in the Iraqi government. The government executed 28 people as a result of the Kirkuk Massacre, almost all of whom were Kurdish and none being Turkmen.

Turkmen benefited from the infrastructure policies, especially in Kirkuk. Qasim put electricity and water piping into the town of Tal Afar, the second most populous Turkmen city after Kirkuk.<sup>43</sup> Apparently, Turkmen were treated better than Kurds since the Turkmen were not vying for their own autonomy but only certain rights.

## **Analysis**

The Qasim-era was a turbulent period mainly due to the competition between the ethno-nationalist and Iraqi nationalist movements of the time. With Qasim in power and wanting to solidify control, he was smart to try to piece together the fractured ethnic groups of Iraq. His attempts at uniting the Kurds and Turkmen with radio broadcasts, newspaper publications, and inclusion as ‘brethren’ were well intentioned, and exemplified his dedication to civic nationalism. He consistently operated under his *Watani* policy throughout his reign. Differing from every other ruler, he granted language and cultural rights to minorities and actively encouraged their participation in society. However, like every other regime, he also engaged in conflicts with the Kurds. Overall, minorities under Qasim were treated better than under any other ruler. It should be noted, however, that even though he did allow the formation of new

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<sup>43</sup> “The Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Tal Afar.” *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq*, pp. 370



political parties, he was considered militaristic and did ban several parties, including the Iraqi Communist Party, which he believed they became too powerful.

The Jews had a much easier time living under Qasim than they had under the latter half of the monarchy or any future regime. The most likely reason for this is because Qasim may have understood that Iraqi Jews were an integral part of the nation's history and culture, and further oppressing them would have gone contrary to the *watani* ideology he believed in. The most progressive advances ultimately helped the Iraqi Jews the most, though this can be explained due to the fact that they already had the most policies implemented against them. The government, while more open, did not free the Jews from all oppression. In addition, while there is no documentation showing that there was public animosity towards Jews, many Jews still wanted to leave.

The Kurds were not specifically targeted by any policies. Rather, they were hurt by the broken promises left by Qasim that ultimately led to war. Qasim, believing that they threatened the territorial integrity of the state, chose to attack them. He may have believed one of two things: the first is that he may have believed the Kurds were a vital part of Iraqi society and their participation in society would be highly valued. Due to the situation in the north, he may have felt as if the Kurds, particularly Mustafa Barzani, could be a uniting factor and important ally. On the other hand, Qasim may have believed that he could use Barzani and the Kurds as a tool for stabilizing the north, and then turn his back on them. He could have believed that in the case of an uprising he could easily quell the revolt. What most likely happened was the former, but I believe he vastly underestimated the power the ICP would accrue in the north. With Barzani being able to unite the factions in the north, this led to Qasim fearing that they would challenge

Iraqi sovereignty — which they ultimately did. As a result, engaging in a civil war in the north of the country is how Qasim would ultimately respond to the Kurds.

As for the Turkmen, there is no record showing that there were any discriminatory policies directed at them, or any policies elevating their status. In fact, due to Qasim building their only electric and water infrastructure in Tal Afar, the same infrastructure used today, it leads me to believe that he did not have any intention to hurt them, and also considered them vital to maintaining a *Watani* approach. As stated before, the Kurdish soldiers of the 4th brigade who shelled Turkmen houses were not under any orders from the Iraqi government, so this would not count as a discriminatory act from the state. While language and cultural rights were also promised to the Turkmen, there is no documentation showing the effects of it. Nevertheless, it can be concluded that the government did not hurt them.

Military expenditures increased the most in Iraqi history up until that point, going from \$86.81 million USD to \$100.25 million USD, and increasing every year thereafter. There does not seem to be any correlation, however, between oppression of minorities and increasing military expenditures. While the Kurds were the only group attacked by the Qasim regime, military expenditures increased well before the armed conflict began in 1961, so this does not explain the increase in spending.

## Chapter 5

### The Ethno-Nationalists Rise to Power Under the Arif Brothers

In what is perhaps the least documented regime, the era of the Iraqi Republic from 1963 to 1968 was a rather tumultuous one. On February 8th, 1963, Abd al-Salam Arif, along with other pan-Arab military officers, overthrew Qasim and established an Arab ethno-nationalist government.<sup>44</sup> A member of the Free Officers himself, Salam killing Qasim brought the age of Iraqi nationalism came to an abrupt end. Meanwhile, pan-Arabism was on the rise with the new regime. As pan-Arabists, the Arif Brothers began the transition to ethno-nationalism. While they were not nearly as brutal as the succeeding al-Bakr or Hussein, the Arif Brothers did begin to implement pro-Arab programs that would be carried on by the future leaders.

As stated above, Salam Arif and his brother Abd al-Rahman Arif do not have a high quantity of sources as to how they treated minorities. As such, they are the least documented regime within the time span examined. The reasons for this are unknown, but they may be due to the fact that there were not major changes in policies towards all minorities, or that no one had document such changes. It may also be due to the fact that for nearly a year after the coup, there were constant power struggles.

The Arif brothers, primarily Salam, were ardent supporters of Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser. In an attempt to bring Iraq to Egypt's economic level, Salam had nationalized all banks, insurance and large industry companies.<sup>45</sup> Unlike Qasim, Salam removed non-Arab

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<sup>44</sup>“The Reckoning: Iraq and the Legacy of Saddam Hussein.” *The Reckoning: Iraq and the Legacy of Saddam Hussein*, pp. 191

<sup>45</sup> “The Reckoning: Iraq and the Legacy of Saddam Hussein.” *The Reckoning: Iraq and the Legacy of Saddam Hussein*, pp. 194

national symbols, like the Star of Ishtar (Assyrian) on the flag, as the official symbols of Iraq. Symbols of Arab culture of a more Sunni nature replaced the official marks of the nation, such as on postage stamps. However, the Arif brothers' failures outweighed their successes.<sup>46</sup>

### **Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr**

Following the bloodless coup d'état against Abd Rahman Arif by Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr and other Ba'athists during the July 17th Revolution of 1968, al-Bakr became the first president of Ba'athist Iraq. Under his leadership, Iraq's economy grew due to the world's rise in international oil prices. Billions of dollars of oil revenue were used to launch a huge modernization campaign aimed at building infrastructure, and improving current infrastructure that was in poor condition. Most sources concur that it was really his vice president, Saddam Hussein, who modernized the country, and that al-Bakr was simply the figurehead at the time.<sup>47</sup> He was similar to Saddam Hussein, but in the beginning of his rule al-Bakr used the same tactics that Qasim had used in promising cultural rights to minority groups. This changed over time as al-Bakr consolidated his power.

Al-Bakr's reign was the first time in Iraqi history where the Ba'athists were able to solidify control over the nation. Contrary to the pan-Arab ideology, Al-Bakr attempted to unite Iraq's minorities by appealing to the "ancient Mesopotamian" history and achievements, but also to the majority Arab population. While Ba'athism itself was intended to be secular, al-Bakr

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<sup>46</sup> Underhill, Natasha. *Countering Global Terrorism and Insurgency: Calculating the Risk of State Failure in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq*, pp. 132

<sup>47</sup> Blair, David. "He Dreamed of Glory but Dealt out Only Despair."

declared Islam as the state religion.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, the state allowed Christians, and other small ethno-religious groups, such as Yazidis and Mandaean, to practice their religions without issue.

### **The Assyrians**

There is no documentation as to how the Arif Brothers treated the Assyrians during their time in power. However, with the Kurdish autonomy granted in 1970, many nationalist Assyrians either joined the Kurdish-dominated Iraqi Communist Party, or pressed to win their own autonomy.<sup>49</sup> At this point, many Assyrians, primarily in the north, had felt more sympathetic with the Kurdish cause and allied closely with them, believing that Assyrians would be granted some rights as the Kurds. With the Assyro-Kurdish alliance getting stronger, President Ahmed Hassan al Bakr had met with then Patriarch Mar Eshai Shimun and the famous Assyrian leader Yaku Malek Ismael on separate occasions in an effort to break up the Assyro-Kurdish alliance. The Iraqis offered to arm the Assyrians to defeat the Kurds, as well as grant the Assyrian autonomy rights, but the Assyrians declined both offers.<sup>50</sup> Although al-Bakr did offer Syriac language and cultural rights to the Assyrians, the radio broadcast they were promised soon espoused a pro-Ba'athist ideology. The literary publication was soon infiltrated by Ba'ath supporters, and their rights were more limited than they had been promised.<sup>51</sup>

When Assyrian delegations from Iraq, the U.S., and the U.K. met in the summer of 1977, the Chaldean sect was the only part of the Assyrian community that voiced their loyalty to the Iraqi government. This began a process of Chaldean favoritism. The regime began to fund

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<sup>48</sup> Baram, Amatzia. "Broken Promises." pp. 41

<sup>49</sup> Petrosian, Vahram. "Assyrians in Iraq." *Iran & the Caucasus*, pp. 122

<sup>50</sup> Petrosian, Vahram. "Assyrians in Iraq." *Iran & the Caucasus*, pp. 123

<sup>51</sup> Donabed, Sargon. *Reforging a Forgotten History: Iraq and the Assyrians in the Twentieth Century* pp. 170

Chaldean religious schools and build new churches, appoint Chaldeans to government positions, and non-political Chaldean clubs began to appear all over the country. The Assyrian Church of the East and other Assyrian churches that had criticized the Iraqi government and its policies did not receive these types of benefits. However, it is important to note that just because they did not receive these benefits does not denote bad treatment by the regime or the public; they were simply not favored as the Chaldeans were because they voiced opposition. As a result of being favored by the government, Chaldeans living in Arab-majority areas began to lose their Assyrian heritage, only maintaining their religion.

In 1977, however, the Ba'ath party began to institute even more Arabization policies, particularly when the government labelled Assyrians as Arab Christians on the national census. In addition to this, Assyrians were prohibited to speak in Aramaic, their native tongue, but only in Arabic (or Kurdish in Kurdistan).<sup>52</sup> Many villages were also destroyed and looted in the north when the Iraqi government began to forcibly remove Assyrians from their homes and confiscate land for the state.<sup>53</sup> Many Chaldeans in central or southern Iraq were largely disconnected from the suffering of their own people, believing that reports of abuse in the north were either exaggerated or happened to those involved in anti-government activity. These were only three of many ways that the government attempted to eliminate Assyrian identity. Most other Arabization policies were implemented once Saddam Hussein became president in 1979.

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<sup>52</sup>Mako, Shamiran. "The Current Situation of the Indigenous Assyrians of Iraq."

<sup>53</sup>Girling, Kristian. *The Chaldean Catholic Church: Modern History, Ecclesiology and Church-State Relations*.

## The Jews

The most well documented persecution during the Arif brothers' reign was of the Jews. In regard to al-Salam Arif, once the reign of Abd al-Karim Qasim ended all progressive policies implemented towards Jews were rescinded with more anti-Semitic policies added:

“The new rulers reinstated all the restrictions which had been in force before Qāsim, and added others: Passports were not to be issued to Jews; the Jews were prevented from discounting their promissory notes and it was prohibited to grant them credit in the then-nationalized banks; again, Jewish students were not to be admitted to government colleges; a warning was issued to all Jews abroad to return to Iraq within three months, otherwise they would be denationalized and their movable and immovable property in Iraq would be sequestrated; Jews were not allowed to sell their landed property.”<sup>54</sup>

After the Six-Day War with Israel in 1967, in which the Arab coalition was defeated by Israel, conditions for the all but vanished Jewish community worsened. Under the rule of Abd al-Rahman Arif, the government enacted policies towards Jews, such as warning the public not to cooperate with them; denying access to banks, and cutting off all telephone communications from their homes, offices, or stores.<sup>55</sup>

Under Ba'athist rule conditions worsened for the Jews. On January 29th, 1969, 14 people were hung in Baghdad for allegedly spying for Israel, nine of them being Jewish. Radio Baghdad invited people to Liberation Square to “enjoy the feast”, where 500,000 reportedly attended. 51 Jews were killed in 1969 and many more were jailed.<sup>56</sup> The Iraqi government decided to issue passports to Jews in September of 1971, and as a result many of them decided to take this opportunity to leave. However, this was done only after international pressure made the Iraqi

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<sup>54</sup> “Iraqi Virtual Jewish History.” *Jewish Virtual Library*, para. 73

<sup>55</sup> “Iraqi Virtual Jewish History.” *Jewish Virtual Library*, para. 74

<sup>56</sup>Green, David B. “1969: Nine Jewish 'Spies' Are Hanged in Baghdad.”

government fear repercussions. By 1975, there were reportedly around 350 Jews left in Iraq.<sup>57</sup>

The U.S State Department reported in 1991 that “there is no recent evidence of overt persecution of Jews, but the regime restricts travel (particularly to Israel) and contacts with Jewish groups abroad.”<sup>58</sup> The last Jewish wedding was held in 1980. Once the Iraq War began in 2003, some of the remaining Jews took that chance to flee to Israel, usually as part of a secret operation to save them.

While the vast majority of the Kurdish Jews left Iraq en masse with the rest of Iraq’s Jewish community, there are a few hundred Jewish families residing peacefully in Iraqi Kurdistan. In regards to Iraqi controlled territory, as of today there may be only five Jews remaining in Baghdad, most of them likely to pass away within the next few years due to old age.

## **The Kurds**

With the first Iraqi-Kurdish War continuing, the Iraqi government decided to negotiate a truce with the Kurds. Both Arif brothers and Kurds attempted to negotiate a truce, though once again fighting continued with the Iraqis unable to quell the Kurds.

After the 1968 coup that brought al-Bakr to power, the situation went from bad to worse for the Kurds. Understanding that both Israel and Iran had been backing the Kurdish rebels for years, the now Ba’athist Iraqi government concluded that finding peace with the Kurds as soon as possible would allow Iraq to focus on foreign enemies.<sup>59</sup> The March Manifesto, negotiated between Mustafa Barzani and Saddam Hussein, signed on March 11th, 1970, sought to ease the

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<sup>57</sup> “Iraqi Virtual Jewish History.” *Jewish Virtual Library*, para. 76

<sup>58</sup> “Jews in Islamic Countries: Iraq.” *Jews of Iraq*, para. 13

<sup>59</sup> Yildiz, Kerim. “The First Gulf War: From Uprising to Democracy.” pp. 18



situation in the north. Certain rights and privileges were guaranteed to the Kurds: Kurdish would become an official language alongside Arabic where the Kurdish population was a majority; Pensions would be given to families of Kurdish militias (Peshmerga) members who were killed in battle. The sincerity of the central government signing this truce was questioned by many Kurds, though they believed that taking this offer was better than outright denying it.

Within a few years after the signing of the manifesto, it became clear that the government, mainly Saddam Hussein, was not intent on keeping its promises. Clashes began to break out between Iraqi and Kurdish forces in 1974. In a bid to halt fighting, Hussein offered another autonomy agreement that same year which promised self-governing rights in the Kurdish region and allowed for collection of local taxation. Barzani rejected the offer as it did not meet his demands.<sup>60</sup>

Between 1974 and 1975, all-out conflict broke out in the north between the Kurds and central government. Dubbed the Second Iraqi-Kurdish War, the Iraqi government succeeded in diminishing Kurdish power and ultimately forcing the resignation of Mustafa Barzani as leader of the Kurds. This is in part because of the 1975 signing of the Algiers Agreement, an agreement between Iran and Iraq where Iran would stop funding Iraq's Kurds in exchange for half of the *Shatt al-Arab* waterway in the Persian Gulf. With the CIA, a supporter of the Kurds, supporting Iran in its decision, the Kurds were left to defend themselves.

As a result of losing the war, over 100,000 Peshmerga fighters crossed the border into Turkey and Iran, and upwards of 300,000 Kurds were forcibly resettled across Iraq to diminish Kurdish power. The hardest hit city was Kirkuk, which the government, Kurds, and Turkmen all

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<sup>60</sup> Yildiz, Kerim. "The First Gulf War: From Uprising to Democracy." pp. 20

claimed as theirs. While Iraq still allowed for slight Kurdish autonomy, the area was now half of what it was.<sup>61</sup> As a result of the defeat, the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), the Kurdish faction that spearheaded the cause for autonomy, split into two groups: the KRG and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). The latter started another insurgency against the Iraqi government in the late 1970s, though this was quickly put down.

### **The Turkmen**

There is no information on the treatment of Turkmen during the Arif brothers' reign. In regards to Ba'athist Iraq, Turkmen had also suffered from Arabization policies in the time of al-Bakr. While it is known that they suffered, there is little knowledge of how many were affected. However, most of them were affected in major contested cities like Kirkuk, where Turkmen, as well as Kurdish, land was nationalized and residents forcibly removed.<sup>62</sup> The Turkmen were further disadvantaged when Turkmen-majority places, like Tuz Khurmatu, were transferred from Kirkuk province and put into Salah ad-Din province. Forced relocation reduced properties of Turkmen in an area, and gave them less claim to power in certain municipalities.

### **Analysis**

While the Arif brothers were not Ba'athists, they were pan-Arabists like al-Bakr. The Arif brothers did not make the same effort to ease ethnic tensions as Qasim had. They shared an ethno-nationalist ideology like their successors, but were much less successful in transforming Iraq into an Arab-dominated society than al-Bakr and Hussein. Initially, Ba'athists played an

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<sup>61</sup> Yildiz, Kerim. "The First Gulf War: From Uprising to Democracy." pp. 24

<sup>62</sup> Anderson, Liam, and Gareth Stansfield. "The Turkmen Perspective: The Demise of a Formerly Dominant Community." *Crisis in Kirkuk: The Ethnopolitics of Conflict and Compromise*, pp. 40

important role in easing inter-ethnic violence, but they quickly changed their tactics. The Ba'athists initially took the approach of Qasim early on, that is promising language and cultural rights to groups, but they backed away as they consolidated their hold on power.

The period between 1975 and 1979 was when the bulk of the Arabization campaigns began, and when al-Bakr heavily switched from dialogue to conflict. Throughout this time, only the Jews were specifically targeted in terms of policies passed against a minority. The Kurds, Assyrians, and Turkmen were all targeted by way of Arabization and, in some cases, forced relocation.

Acknowledging the achievements of the “ancient Mesopotamians” initially delighted the Assyrians, but their optimism would soon fade. With censuses putting only “Arab Christian” as an option, the central government blatantly espoused a pan-Arab ideology that, in essence, denied the existence of the Assyrian people. The Ba'ath party conducted a “divide and conquer” tactic to make some Assyrians like the government more. Favoring the Chaldean Church more than their counterparts most likely influenced some Assyrians to integrate or assimilate Arab culture and customs, as well as not to demand any special rights and/or privileges. Doing so made the vast majority of Chaldeans disconnected from what their own people were suffering from Arabization in the north, and many even found ways to excuse what was going on, either by denying it or claiming their suffering was being exaggerated. The Assyrians were also not initially the main targets of any military campaign, unlike the Kurds. Of what little opposition there was, almost nothing came of it. Overall, the early Ba'ath government most likely didn't believe the Assyrians were a threat at all. As such, they were largely left alone.

The Jews were struck with a resurgence in persecution after Abd al-Salam Arif took power. This worsened as the years went on. They continue to be the only minority group that has been consistently oppressed based not on what they demand, but solely because of their faith. International events are likely the biggest culprit as to why they had continued getting punished. With both the Arif brothers and the Ba'athists encapsulating a pan-Arab ideology, it is clear that their sympathy towards Palestine drove them to take out their anger on who they thought were Israeli, especially after the defeat of the 1967 war. Like how the post-1948 monarchy treated the Jews, 1963 onwards was an even more severe and tense time.

The Kurds once again experienced their ups and downs in achieving autonomy. During the early Ba'ath reign, they initially received the most autonomy in Iraqi history up until that point. However, once the Iraqi army was able to rid the Kurds of their allies, the Kurds were easily overrun and left in a worse state than ever before. Treaties were likely a tool to buy time to advance their military. The main reason why the central government was keen on battling the Kurds was to consolidate power, especially in the oil-rich region of Kirkuk. They also believed that they would become a larger problem if not dealt with “swiftly.”

The Turkmen were not necessarily targeted because of a threat they posed, but they were targeted as part of the Arabization campaigns that swept through northern Iraq. While not as heavily focused on, some were forcibly removed simply due to them being in the oil-rich area. It is important to note that both the Turkmen and Kurds were seen as second-class citizens to the Arabs.

Military expenditures increased almost yearly from 1963 to 1979, with the biggest jump being from \$658 million to \$1.42 billion in 1973-1974. This could be explained not by the

Kurdish conflict, but by the Yom Kippur War against Israel in 1973. As in the two previous regimes, it can not be determined that an increase in military expenditures was correlated with an increase in repressive actions.

# Chapter 6

## Full Ethno-Nationalism under “Uncle Saddam”

In July of 1979, Saddam Hussein became the president and sole leader of Iraq. Citing “health problems”, Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr resigned, though it is thought that he stepped down due to pressure from Hussein. Beginning in 1980, Saddam Hussein attempted to clamp down on any domestic resistance, and project his power abroad. In 1980, Saddam invaded Iran, which would end up being the deadliest land war since World War II. Throughout this time, Saddam would continue to persecute the Kurds and continue an aggressive Arabization campaign. The most oppressive policies were not implemented until at least 1987. Until this time, it is likely that Saddam was too preoccupied with the Iran-Iraq war.

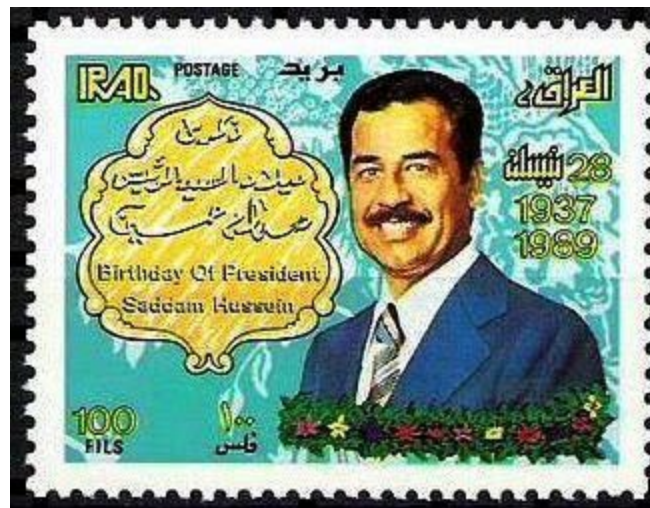


Figure 6.1 Ba’athist propaganda of Saddam Hussein on a postage stamp

## The Assyrians

The Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM), or Zowa'a, formed in April of 1979 in order to promote the cultural, political, and ethnic rights of the Assyrians.<sup>63</sup> Saddam believed that the ADM could potentially unite Assyrians across Iraq and could be of help to the Kurds in the north. Saddam was correct in that many Assyrians did support the ADM. Saddam was aggressive in shutting down ADM locations in Baghdad, and attacking ADM village strongholds in the north.

With the Iran-Iraq War starting up, many Assyrians were drafted into the military, but most had little desire to fight. Around 40,000 Assyrians would be killed, wounded, captured, or missing in action.<sup>64</sup> Some estimates place these figures at 60,000 Assyrians killed, with 6,000 in Qaraqosh (Baghdeda) village alone.<sup>65</sup> To put this in perspective, 500,000 Iraqi soldiers died during the war; this means that 12% of the casualties were Assyrian.

Even though the Assyrians were not the main targets, over 80 villages were destroyed during the Anfal Campaign against the Kurds, which began in 1987. Villages were targets of airstrikes, napalm, and forced evacuations. Syriac liturgical and cultural material, 40 to 50 historical sites, and various monasteries were destroyed at this time. Once the campaign ended, Assyrians found themselves either in government-controlled territory, or under Kurdish rule.<sup>66</sup> Christians were granted religious liberty under Article 25 of the Iraqi constitution, and as such, were free to worship. Their Kurdish counterparts had also received freedom as well, though in both regions Christians began leaving after 1991, the end of the attacks on the Kurds. Those

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<sup>63</sup> Donabed, Sargon. *Reforging a Forgotten History: Iraq and the Assyrians in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 194

<sup>64</sup> Nisan, Mordechai. *Minorities in the Middle East: A History of Struggle and Self-Expression*, pp. 191

<sup>65</sup> Petrosian, Vahram. "Assyrians in Iraq." *Iran & the Caucasus*, pp. 128

<sup>66</sup> Petrosian, Vahram. "Assyrians in Iraq." *Iran & the Caucasus*, pp 129

living under Saddam remained loyal to Saddam and posed no threat to him. Most believed that regime change would be a bad thing for them. Those living in Kurdish-controlled territory began leaving because they feared death with an increase of Islamism and an increasing tension between the Kurdish Regional Government and Patriotic Union Kurdistan.

### **The Turkmen**

With the situation in Kirkuk growing more intense, the Turkmen, while not as much as the Kurds, became a focus of attention for the Iraqi government. On May 6th, 1980 the Ba'ath government issued a directive that stated: “identify the places where Turkmen officials are working in governmental offices [in order] to deport them to other governorates in order to disperse them and prevent them from concentrating in this governorate [Kirkuk].”<sup>67</sup> They followed with another directive in 1981 that called for the deportation of Turkmen and Kurdish officials and workers in Kirkuk. Some Turkmen were not offered government jobs in Kirkuk, but in areas where virtually no Turkmen resided, such as in southern Iraq. With financial incentives offered to them Arabs flooded into Kirkuk from all over Iraq, further undermining Turkmen power in the city. Names of Turkish streets, neighborhoods, mosques, and markets were all changed to Arabic, some overnight. This type of renaming of places was a key tactic to the Arabization process and very prevalent in Kirkuk.

Many recent Turkmen graduates of universities were not allowed jobs in non governmental organizations, and were denied jobs in the government if the position was located in a Turkmen-majority area.<sup>68</sup> Instead, many were offered jobs in the south of Iraq so as to

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<sup>67</sup> Anderson, Liam, and Gareth Stansfield. “The Turkmen Perspective: The Demise of a Formerly Dominant Community.” *Crisis in Kirkuk: The Ethnopolitics of Conflict and Compromise*, pp. 65

<sup>68</sup> Jerjis, Sheth. *The Turkmen of Iraq: Underestimated, Marginalized and Exposed to Assimilation.*, pp. 12



reduce the Turkmen presence in the north. Aside from this, at least nine Turkmen villages were completely destroyed in the 1990s.<sup>69</sup>

### **The Kurds**

Human Rights Watch reported that by the late 1970s “the Iraqi government had forcibly evacuated at least a quarter of a million Kurdish men, women, and children from areas bordering Iran and Turkey.” This was used to put Iraqi troops in the area and seize control of major highways. However, in 1983, the Patriotic Union Kurdistan and Kurdish Regional Government united against Saddam Hussein in what is known as the Kurdish Rebellion of 1983. With the support of Iran, the Kurds held areas in the north, despite short-lived Iraqi attempts at appealing to the PUK.<sup>70</sup> Since Iraq was preoccupied with Iran, the Kurds believed this was their opportunity to win back land.

Throughout the Iran-Iraq War, the Kurds continued to clash with Iraqi forces. In 1987, Ali Hassan al-Majid became the secretary general of the northern Bureau of the Ba'ath Party. He was given virtually free reign in the ‘autonomous region’ of Iraq to quell the Kurds.<sup>71</sup> In 1987 the Iraqi government used chemical weapons against Kurds for the first time. Iraqi forces destroyed 703 Kurdish villages by the end of the year.<sup>72</sup> The first *Anfal* campaign killed between 4,000 and 7,000 Kurds when Iraqi forces attacked Halabja with chemical weapons.<sup>73</sup> The remaining *Anfal* campaigns that occurred in the following months killed between 50,000 and 100,000 Kurds with

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<sup>69</sup> Jerjis, Sheth. *The Turkmen of Iraq: Underestimated, Marginalized and Exposed to Assimilation.*, pp. 11

<sup>70</sup>“Iraqi Kurdistan Profile - Timeline.” *BBC News*

<sup>71</sup> Yildiz, Kerim. “The First Gulf War: From Uprising to Democracy.” pp. 25

<sup>72</sup> Yildiz, Kerim. “The First Gulf War: From Uprising to Democracy.” pp. 26

<sup>73</sup> Yildiz, Kerim. “The First Gulf War: From Uprising to Democracy.” pp. 28

chemical weapons attacks, air raids, mass executions, etc. Kurdish death estimates range up to 182,000.<sup>74</sup>

With the Iran-Iraq War ending in a stalemate, and Iraqi forces driven out of Kuwait, and another Kurdish rebellion occurred in the north. Chemical weapon attacks continued. Economic sanctions on Iraq crippled an already dismal economy, and both Baghdad and the Kurds attempted to find a solution to the decades old conflict. Then in October, Iraq forces withdrew from the remaining northern areas. In July of 1991, an agreement was made that gave Iraqi Kurdistan *de facto* autonomy.<sup>75</sup> This is partially due to a no-fly zone that was established by western powers, as well as Kurdish Peshmerga fighters pushing Iraqi forces out of some northern areas.

Saddam Hussein never tried to invade Kurdish areas again, though he did intervene in the Kurdish civil war, taking the side of Barzani's PUK. When the Americans threatened to strike Iraq further, Iraqi forces once again withdrew from the Kurdistan area. Until his fall in 2003, Saddam Hussein would not attempt to take over major cities in the north, most probably because Kirkuk was not under Kurdish control.

## **Analysis**

Throughout the 1980s, the Iraqi government continued to engage in Arabization policies. However, with Saddam's decision to invade Iran, he opened the door for resistance in the north. Saddam began to take a much more aggressive approach in Arabization than his predecessors. It was in this period that the ethno-nationalist ideology was strongest. No other period saw such a

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<sup>74</sup> Johns, Dave. "The Crimes of Saddam Hussein."

<sup>75</sup> Tyler, Patrick E. "Kurd Reports Agreement on Autonomy."

strong sense of ethno-nationalism than with Saddam's regime. Hussein's regime was notably more oppressive than every other regime since his Arabization policies became harsher, and used military power the most to achieve his objectives. Essentially, Saddam Hussein was an avid user of 'hard-power', that is to use military force, or coercion to achieve an objective.

Saddam Hussein did not believe the Assyrians posed a major threat throughout Iraq. As seen with his policies with the ADM, he did not blame the Christians of Basra, Baghdad, or Mosul, though he seemed to fear that the Christians in the north could influence their kinsmen around the country. He most likely thought that the ADM and other Assyrian nationalists aided the Kurds. Saddam apparently felt the need for them to be put down. Essentially, anyone who resisted his power was at risk of getting arrested or killed. He was also successful with his Arabization policies towards the Assyrians, creating a sort of divide between those residing in the north and the rest of the nation. Until his fall in 2003, Saddam seemed to disregard most Assyrians as a threat since those living on government-controlled territory did not even advocate for further rights after 1991.

1980 marks the first time in Iraqi history where documentation shows the overt persecution of Turkmen. With the decrees in 1980 and 1981, Saddam finally showed that the Turkmen were considered a threat and were on the minds of Ba'ath officials. The Kurds were easily the most affected group during Saddam's reign, though they were the only ones that put up an armed resistance against Baghdad. Had Iraq not gotten into a war with Iran, the Kurds may have never been able to defeat Iraq, and thus gain autonomy. Despite their struggles, they eventually were the most successful ones, earning autonomy and maintaining their sovereignty

throughout the remainder of Hussein's reign. It appears that the Ba'athists failed in making the Kurds 'Arabized', and certainly less so than with the Assyrians, and to an extent, the Turkmen.

Military expenditures had gone the highest to date in Iraqi history once Saddam came to power. With the Iran-Iraq War becoming more tense by the year, the country went from spending \$2.67 billion in 1979 to \$13.0 billion in 1987, the peak of military spending. However, military expenditures decreased during the Al-Anfal campaign against the Kurds, once again not supporting the alternative hypothesis of a direct correlation in oppression and increase spending.

# Chapter 7

## Analysis

The answer to the main research question is every regime was guilty of oppressing at least one minority, whether it be through enacting policies that discriminated against that group, or not following through with promises. Yet, the Iraqi regime varied substantially in its treatment of minorities.

In order of most oppressive to least oppressive, the regimes are ranked as follows:

1. Saddam Hussein
2. Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr
3. The Arif Brothers
4. The Monarchy
5. Abd al-Karim Qasim

A common trait among all regimes is that the regimes attacked, or coerced minorities if the regimes found that the minorities were a threat to the nation's sovereignty. All regimes were guilty of oppressing minorities that were thought to be critical of the central government.

However, the regime in power makes a difference in the severity of oppression. With Hussein and al-Bakr, oppression was much more intense and extensive than with the monarchy. What set apart ethnic groups to be more likely to be attacked or not ultimately came down to the state's conception of popular sovereignty — whether the government subscribed to pre-nationalist, civic nationalist, or ethno-nationalist ideology.

With an ethno-nationalist Arab leader like the Arif Brothers or Ba'athists, the government attempted to "Arabize" all groups; their rights were usually taken away or not granted to them, even if they were promised otherwise; and the central government often tried to incorporate them into society as "Arabs" despite their obvious objection. There were also more fierce tensions with ethnic groups. In essence, the government would try to incorporate everyone as part of the greater Arab world.

There was only one Iraqi civic-nationalist leader — Abd al-Karim Qasim. However, he attempted to make everyone feel as if they were part of Iraq and contributed to Iraqi culture, society, and history. He granted minority rights and did not revoke them. His government also tended to be more peaceful with ethnic groups, though like every other regime he did not follow through with his promises for Kurdish autonomy since he believed they were a threat to Iraqi sovereignty. In this respect, he was similar to the pan-Arabs, though instead he attempted to unite everyone under an Iraqi umbrella.

### **Alternative Explanations**

Increases in military expenditures do not seem to have an effect on the rate at which the government oppressed minorities. It was not present when the Monarchy, Qasim, or the Arif Brothers attacked the Kurds or others. During the 1970s and 1980s Arabization processes, persecution and military expenditures went up together, and the Kurds, Turkmen, and Assyrians were oppressed in the north. While the case may seem that there is a correlation, there are several other factors that may explain the increase in military expenditures. Policy chose spending, not the other way around. Indeed, most increases in military expenditures mentioned (1973-1974,

1986-1989, 1991) can also be attributed to international developments, such as Yom Kippur War of 1973, the Iran-Iraq War that lasted from 1980-1988 (in which 1987 was the year in which most money was spent), the invasion of Kuwait in 1990, and the subsequent Shi'a uprising in 1991. There are numerous events that can be considered justified in raising military spending throughout Iraq's history. In fact, most large-scale increases in military expenditures did not occur in the same years as major campaigns against minorities. Therefore, a direct correlation between increased military spending and an increase in oppression cannot be determined.

## **Conclusion**

After working through the research and testing the hypothesis, it can be concluded that the rate and severity of oppression had largely to do with the type of ideology the leadership had at the time. If it was pre-nationalist, the government was more likely to worry about maintaining its territorial sovereignty, put down nationalist movements that were seen as threats to the territorial integrity of the state, but be less concerned to build a base for popular sovereignty under the state. If the government based itself on civic nationalism, the government would grant minority rights, and encourage their participation in the public sphere. If leadership embraced an ethno-nationalist ideology, they would elevate one ethnic group over others, and forcefully promote said ethnic group's culture and language onto others. Of all of the regimes discussed, all had persecuted a minority in one way or another, though it should be emphasized that the extent and severity to which all minorities were persecuted was largely dependent on the type of ideology the regime had.

The issues that have plagued Iraqi society in the past have not disappeared. In fact, minorities deal with many of the same issues that they dealt with in the past, such as Kurdish autonomy being threatened, or Iraq not “standing up” for its minorities.<sup>7677</sup> Limited freedom and little rights granted to different groups have led to an increase in ethnic tension today. These tensions play out all over Iraq, whether they be through the formation of terrorist groups, diplomatic warfare or forced removal of people from their homes. It seems as if even though Iraq has dealt with government-led persecution since 1932, the mistakes haven’t been fixed. And after all of this research, it still begs the question: will Iraq ever find peace?

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<sup>76</sup> Zucchini, David. “Iraqi Forces Sweep Into Kirkuk, Checking Kurdish Independence Drive.”

<sup>77</sup> “After Recent Attacks, UN Rep Calls on All Iraqis to ‘Stand up’ for Minorities.” *Rudaw*.



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