

Dubious Benefactors

US Policy Towards Iraqi Kurds, 1969-1974

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Abstract

When Richard M. Nixon became president in early 1969, the Iraqi conflict with its Kurds was one of the least important foreign policy challenges that his administration faced. However, Iraq and the Iraqi Kurds would grow in importance. Both the Cold War and regional considerations forced a response from the Nixon administration.

In 1972, the Nixon administration shifted away from the long-held policy of non-intervention in the conflict between the Iraqi government and the Iraqi Kurds. This was done by covert support of the Iraqi Kurds funnelled through one of their most important allies in the Middle East, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the Shah of Iran. This covert support was kept secret even within the Nixon administration, resulting in different parts of the Nixon administration working at odds with each other. This thesis examines the US policy towards Iraq and the Iraqi Kurds during the Nixon administration. The thesis will expand on why the US policy drastically changed and specifically how US-Iraqi relations influenced this decision. The US policy on Iraq and the Iraqi Kurds during the Nixon administration will be examined based on declassified material from the *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS).

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Chapter One: Introduction

The 1960s in Iraq were marked by a brutal conflict between the Iraqi Kurds and the Iraqi government. Named the first Iraqi-Kurdish War (1961-1970), the conflict resulted in multiple regimes ending in Iraq. The Iraqi Kurds fought for autonomy and fiercely repelled attacks on their mountainous position in Northern Iraq.¹ As stalemates turned into renewed fighting, and negotiations failed, promises of rights were broken, and the Iraqi Kurds continuously sought support from foreign benefactors. While the Iraqi Kurds solicited US support, the Americans held to a policy of non-intervention.²

When Richard M. Nixon (1913-1994) ascended to the American presidency on 20 January 1969, he inherited a tumultuous Middle East in which to navigate American foreign policy. The two preceding presidencies had resulted in the US policy in the Middle East shifting away from Eisenhower's policy of even-handedness into a focus on supporting staunch American allies such as Iran and Israel.³ The Johnson administration especially increased the support to regional allies. The Six-Day War of 1967 had forced the issue even further, as Arab states, including Iraq, cut diplomatic ties with the United States as a response to US support of Israel. This development in US policy on the Middle East contributed to forming the Nixon Doctrine.⁴ In 1968, the Iraqi Ba'ath party had taken power. As Iraq developed a closer relationship with the Soviet Union, Iraq's importance grew within the Nixon administration. Developments from both inside and outside Iraq would contribute to the American perception that Iraq was averse to American interests and allies.

¹ Autonomy is defined here as rights and self-governance but still within the political entity of the Iraqi state.

² Edgar O'Ballance. *The Kurdish Revolt 1961-70*. London, 1973

³ Odd Arne Westad. *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 7, 137. Hulda Kjeang Mørk, *Between Doctrines. Emerging Patterns in the Relations among Israel, Iran, and the United States, 1964-1968*. (2021) PhD dissertation, Faculty of Humanities, University of Oslo. 2, 16

⁴ The Nixon doctrine stipulated that the US would keep its treaty commitments, continuing to serve as a shield for its allies, but most importantly that it expected friendly nations to be responsible for its own security. The US would, however, support its allies in this endeavour. Jussi Hanhimäki. *The Flawed Architect. Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy*. Oxford University Press. New York, New York. 2004. 53

How was the US policy on Iraq and Iraqi Kurds shaped between the conflicting interests during the Nixon administration? How did Iraq and US-Iraqi relations effect the US policy? What other factors contributed to the US perception of Iraq?

American Foreign Policy in the Middle East

The aftermath of the Second World War saw the traditional European powers weakened. The United States and the Soviet Union emerged as the only viable powers to fill that international power vacuum. Both countries developed into superpowers opposing each other in the global conflict for power and influence known as the Cold War. The US and the Soviet Union never engaged each other directly, so to stop the other from gaining influence in a particular region, both sides would use regional proxies. For the American side this was part of the policy of containment, a policy that affected most of its foreign policy decisions during the Cold War, including the Middle East.⁵

The Middle East became a perfect example of this development. With the decolonisation of states in the Middle East, the United States and the Soviet Union both attempted to gain hegemonic influence. While the US was concerned about stopping the spread of communism, there were also other regional considerations which coloured their policies in the Middle East after 1945. As the region contained an enormous amount of oil, it became a priority to secure that oil for the West. A final vital factor which continuously affected US policy in the Middle East was ensuring the security of Israel. These three vital considerations produced a very active US policy in the Middle East, wanting to support allies and subvert regimes who favoured the Soviet Union.⁶

⁵ Peter L. Hahn. *Crisis and Crossfire. The United States and the Middle East Since 1945*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005. 1-7

⁶ Abbas Kadhim. "opting for a lesser evil: us foreign policy toward Iraq, 1958-2008." In *Handbook of us-middle east relations: formative factors and regional perspective*, edited by Robert E. Looney. London, England: Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2009. 467; Yakub Halabi. *US Foreign Policy in the Middle East. From Crises to Change*. Farnham, U.K.: Ashgate, 2009. 2. William B. Quandt. *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967*. Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 2005. 12, 14.

The Shaping of US Foreign Policy

In order to discuss what foreign policy consideration the Nixon administration made in the covert support of the Iraqi Kurds; it is beneficial to understand how US foreign policy was constructed. To understand how US foreign policy was constructed, it is necessary to establish a theoretical framework. William Quandt provides three theoretical models within which to explain US decision making and policy creation. The first, the *strategic* model, expects rational decisions being made based on national interests. This model can help reveal a continuity through various presidents, in this case the Cold War. The second model is the *bureaucratic* model. This model focuses on the agencies within the administration providing competing advice to construct policy. This does, however, require analysis on a micro level to understand who is able to influence the decision-making process. The third and final model is the *domestic politics* model, which focuses on the influence of domestic US politics.

Especially for US policy on the Middle East, pro-Israeli lobbyists had a strong influence on US domestic politics.⁷ Of these, the strategic model and the bureaucratic model are most applicable for this thesis. Working within a shared Cold War framework, the various parts of the Nixon administration differed in their perspective on US foreign policy. The Cold War, regional and national perspectives caused this division in perspective when assessing the Iraqi Kurds. The bureaucratic model highlights the divisions within the Nixon administration as foreign policy on Iraq and the Iraqi Kurds was constructed.

Within the structure of these models, two other considerations are important, the significance of crisis and influence on perception. A crisis has the potential to rapidly shift otherwise rigid policy, by making policymakers find a new solution in response to the crisis, believing the old policy to be inadequate.⁸ As the Nixon administration reacted to developments in Iraq, its responses revealed who, and which ideas, influenced the decision-making and changing perceptions. In discussing the significance of perceptions on US policy making on Iraq,

⁷ William B. Quandt. *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967*. Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 2005. 7

⁸ Yakub Halabi. *US Foreign Policy in the Middle East. From Crises to Change*. Farnham, U.K.: Ashgate, 2009. 3, 11. William B. Quandt. *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967*. Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 2005. 19

Robert Jarvis' theories of perception and misperception are a valuable contribution. Jarvis argues that policy makers have rigid perceptions which influence their decisions, more likely to adjust information to fit within these perceptions.⁹ This thesis will highlight that the policymakers in the Nixon administration only responded to information which fit with their perception of Iraq as moving towards the Soviet Union. At the same time, the Nixon administration's focus on Iraq was heavily influenced by their regional ally, the Shah. Both perceptions and influence aligned to form US foreign policy in the Middle East. Arguments that Iraq was averse to US interests and allies were practically uncontested but raised the importance of Iraq because of the perception of increased Soviet activity.

The Structure of the Nixon Administration Regarding Foreign Policy

From the beginning of his presidency, Nixon wanted to shift away from the traditional and 'slow' departmental structure of policymaking regarding foreign policy. This limited the powers of the Secretary of State, William Rogers. President Nixon's national security advisor, Henry Kissinger was placed at the head of a restructured and empowered National Security Council (NSC), which included representatives from several governmental agencies assisting in the policymaking. While most of the NSC was replaced, Harold Saunders retained his position on the NSC staff as its expert on the Middle East.¹⁰ The NSC produced 'National Security Study Memoranda' (NSSM) which informed the President's decisions which would be conveyed in a 'National Security Decision Memorandum' (NSDM) instructing the relevant agencies. This system kept control of the overall Cold War plan in the hands of the President at the top of the pyramid, based on the information funnelled to him through Kissinger.¹¹

Kissinger and the NSC enjoyed increased influence in this new system, and the traditional powers of the Secretary of State were reduced during the tenure of William Rogers. In addition, Kissinger became the head of two important committees which would ensure his

⁹ Robert Jarvis, «Hypotheses on Misperception,” *World Politics* 20, no. 3 (1968). 455. Mari Salberg. *“Conventional Wisdom”: U.S. policy toward Iran 1969-1979*. 2018. PhD Dissertation at the University of Oslo. 10

¹⁰ Odd Arne Westad. *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*. 2005. 138

¹¹ Mari Salberg. *“Conventional Wisdom”: U.S. policy toward Iran 1969-1979*. 2018. PhD Dissertation at the University of Oslo. 61-62. Odd Arne Westad. *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*. 2005. 138

control of US foreign policy. The Washington Special Action Group (WSAG), which purpose was to quickly react as situations emerged, and the “40 committee”, an interagency committee which authorised covert operations.¹²

This power balance within the administration was seen in the division of labour between Kissinger and Rogers. Initially, Rogers’ responsibilities contained Africa and the Middle East, while Kissinger was given control over the most pressing issues, such as Vietnam, the Soviet Union, and China.¹³ This division of labour also shows that the Middle East was not an area which the administration focused on for the first years of Nixon’s presidency.¹⁴ The first NSC group that focused on the Near East region did not meet until 5 June 1970. Before this, it had deferred to the State Department.¹⁵ In the Middle East, the Shah and his interests were taken into consideration by the NSC because of his role in the larger Cold War picture, while the issue of Iraq and its Kurds was left to Talcott Williams Seelye (1922-2006), who handled specifically Iraq for the State Department.¹⁶ Historians Mari Salberg and Hilde Henriksen Waage discuss in their article this ‘ideological difference’ between the NSC and the State Department. The NSC was focused on the Soviet Union and the Cold War, countered by the State Department's adherence to a regional focus when discussing local issues.¹⁷ The State Department was not immediately convinced that the Soviets were increasing their position in Iraq. This meant that as long as the issue of Iraq or the Iraqi Kurds was under the purview of the State Department, they were unresponsive to any attempts at changing US policy on Iraq or the Iraqi Kurds. This division within the administration side-lined the State Department and concentrated the decision-making with Kissinger and the NSC. This division is an important focus as the State Department's misgivings about Iraq and the Iraqi Kurds would be dismissed when the issue became a priority for Kissinger and Nixon.

The Nixon doctrine would have a major influence on the US policy on Iraq and Iraqi Kurds. The Nixon doctrine, announced in Guam in July 1969, came as a result of what the US considered several foreign policy blunders, the waging of war in Vietnam being the most

¹² Jussi Hanhimäki. *The Flawed Architect. Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy*. Oxford University Press. New York, New York. 2004. 24

¹³ Mari Salberg. "Conventional wisdom" 61, Mari Salberg & Hilde Henriksen Waage (2019) Master of the game: The Relationship between the United States and Iran Revisited, 1969-1972, *Diplomacy & statecraft*, 30:3. 469

¹⁴ Odd Arne Westad. *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*. 2005. 138

¹⁵ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out? US Foreign Policy, Iraq, the Kurds, and the Cold War*. New York, 2015 118

¹⁶ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 121-122

¹⁷ Mari Salberg & Hilde Henriksen Waage (2019) Master of the game 473

prominent.¹⁸ The Nixon doctrine meant that US allies would be responsible for their own security - they could, however, still depend on American political and military assistance. The US support of the Shah of Iran during the Nixon administration was a perfect example of this idea.¹⁹

The Shah's influence on the Nixon Administration

The Shah held immense influence within the Nixon administration, which ultimately contributed to US support of the Iraqi Kurds in 1972. The first years of Nixon's presidency saw the Shah lobby for Iran's increased responsibility in the Persian Gulf, following the British declaration of withdrawal from the Persian Gulf by 1971.²⁰ The suddenness of the news meant that Nixon did not inherit a plan for this development from the former administration.²¹ There were several political avenues available for the Shah to strengthen the idea of him as vital for US interests, not least of which was his personal relationship with Nixon which he had cultivated even before Nixon became President.²² The importance of the relationship was strengthened by the fact that the Nixon administration already considered Iran important for American interests in the region.²³ The Nixon administration developed a formal policy on the Persian Gulf on 7 November 1970 with NSDM 92. While the memorandum included Saudi Arabia among regional partners that should be prioritised, it nevertheless considered Iran the more valuable of the two.²⁴ This acknowledgement of Iran's significance had in practice already been American policy.

According to Roham Alvandi, Associate Professor of International History at the London School of Economics and Political Science, the reason that the Shah was supported to such a degree was that the US was more pressed in other areas of foreign policy, such as ending the war in Vietnam, achieving political détente with the Soviet Union, and developing a new foreign policy towards China.²⁵

¹⁸ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 118

¹⁹ Jussi Hanhimäki. *The Flawed Architect. Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy*. Oxford University Press. New York, New York. 2004. 53-54; Helge Danielsen. USA og Den Kalde Krigen. Chapter in *Krig og fred i det lange 20. århundre* Hilde Henriksen Waage, Rolf Tamnes. Cappelen Damm Akademisk. 2019. 56

²⁰ Roham Alvandi. *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah* 39

²¹ Roham Alvandi. *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*. 2014. Oxford University Press. New York, New York. 33

²² Roham Alvandi. *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah* 40. Odd Arne Westad. *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*. 2005.. 136

²³ Mari Salberg & Hilde Henriksen Waage (2019) Master of the game 469-470

²⁴ Mari Salberg & Hilde Henriksen Waage (2019) Master of the game. 477

²⁵ Roham Alvandi. *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah* 27

The Shah had learned quickly to use the political context of the Cold War to achieve what he wanted from the United States, most importantly military improvements and a greater share of the oil revenues from the western companies operating in Iran. Yet the Shah's position was not forced towards kowtowing to American policies. Indeed, as Salberg and Waage point out in their article, the American military support and concessions that only grew over the years were born out of the US' wish to "secure the Shah's goodwill", rather than genuine Iranian needs.²⁶ The Shah portrayed himself as a stable and reliable partner which the US could be trusted to counteract the Soviet influence and schemes in the region, playing into what the Nixon doctrine desired from its smaller Cold War allies and American assessments of the region.²⁷ The Shah used his influence and position to change the American perception of Iraq. He wanted Iraq to be perceived as a threat to American interests, and Iran as the way to stop Iraq. This thesis will show how the Shah superseded advice from within the Nixon administration.

Primary Sources

This thesis relies heavily on primary source material from the *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS), which is a digital and published archival series created by the U.S.

Department of State. The FRUS series is based on declassified documents pertaining to US diplomatic activity and foreign policy decision-making. The most important volumes of the FRUS 1969-1976 for this thesis are Volume E-4 1969-1972 and Volume XXVII 1973-1976.

The *CIA Records Searching Tool* (CREST) also provides some supplementary sources.

Literature

There is also a vast amount of literature which discusses US foreign policy in the Middle East, which serves to supplement the declassified primary sources to study US policy on Iraq and the Iraqi Kurds. This includes literature on US policy on the Iraqi Kurds. The literature is, however, divided on what influenced the US policy on the Iraqi Kurds during the Nixon

²⁶ The Americans were well aware of the Shah's willingness to pressure for increased US support, and the NSC and State Department warned the President how and what the Shah would ask for, namely oil and military support. Memorandum from Harold Saunders to the Kissinger October 20, 1969 Subject: Further Background for Shah Visit. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, VOL. E-4. Doc. 27.* Mari Salberg & Hilde Henriksen Waage (2019) *Master of the game*. 476

²⁷ Yet, the Shah pressured the US during the 1960s by signing several agreements with the Soviet Union, including a deal to acquire Soviet weapons for 100 million US dollars in 1967. Roham Alvandi. *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah* 26

administration. The US policy on the Iraqi Kurds is often seen as an extension of US-Iranian relations. The most prominent work of US policy on the Iraqi Kurds as an extension of US-Iranian relations is Roham Alvandi's *Nixon, Kissinger and the Shah*.²⁸ Alvandi's book falls under the school of thought that emphasises superpowers regional allies' role in the Cold War. Alvandi highlights the Shah's power in the bilateral relationship, showcasing his ability to influence US decision-making. Alvandi argues that the Shah was instrumental in making the Nixon administration change its policy towards the Iraqi Kurds in 1972.

Bryan R. Gibson's book, *Sold Out? US Foreign Policy, Iraq, the Kurds and the Cold War*, provides a wider perspective.²⁹ While he acknowledges the Shah's influence on the Nixon administration, it is only one of many factors which contributed to changing US policy on the Iraqi Kurds. To him, the Shah is only a part of the grander Cold War, which caused the US policy on the Iraqi Kurds to change. Based on significant materials from presidential archives and the *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, his book deals with several topics like US foreign policy and the Cold War in the Middle East. Gibson attributes more significance to developments in Iraq and Iraq's position in the Cold War in general. Alvandi argues that it was the Shah and Iran's position as a US regional partner which made Iraq a point of focus for the Nixon administration within a Cold War framework.

Mari Salberg in her PhD dissertation, "*Conventional Wisdom*", *US policy toward Iran 1969-1979*, largely agrees with Alvandi's arguments of the Shah's agency in the US support of the Iraqi Kurds. Salberg, however, argues that Gibson and Alvandi's arguments are not mutually exclusive, but complimentary, both contributing to forming US policy on the Iraqi Kurds.³⁰

Hulda Kjeang Mørk's PhD dissertation, *Between Doctrines. Emerging Patterns in the Relations among Israel, Iran and the United States, 1964-1968*, serves as an important addition to this thesis.³¹ Mørk's PhD serves as setting the stage for the Nixon administration, by showing the policies of previous administrations. The inheritance of the previous administrations had a huge impact on the Nixon administration's foreign policy in the Middle East, including US policy on the Iraqi Kurds. *The Kurdish Revolt 1961-1970* by Edgar

²⁸ Roham Alvandi. *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*. 2014. Oxford University Press. New York, New York

²⁹ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out? US Foreign Policy, Iraq, the Kurds, and the Cold War*. New York, 2015

³⁰ Mari Salberg. "*Conventional Wisdom*": *U.S. policy toward Iran 1969-1979*. 2018. PhD Dissertation at the University of Oslo.

³¹ Hulda Kjeang Mørk, *Between Doctrines. Emerging Patterns in the Relations among Israel, Iran, and the United States, 1964-1968*. (2021) PhD dissertation, Faculty of Humanities, University of Oslo

O'Ballance also contributes to setting the stage for the internal developments in Iraq, focusing on the conflict between the Iraqi Kurds and the Iraqi government from 1961 to 1970.³²

The literature on the Kurds is also a vital contribution to supplement a study into the subject of US policy on Iraq and the Iraqi Kurds. David McDowall's book *A Modern History of the Kurds* provides a detailed account of the Iraqi Kurds' struggle against the Iraqi government.³³ Iraqi history is a necessity for this thesis in looking at the Iraqi government's actions to the deterioration of US-Iraqi relations. The book, *Iraq Since 1958. From Revolution to Dictatorship*, by Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett, and Charles Tripp's *A History of Iraq* provide a rich history of Iraq.³⁴

This thesis positions itself in a revisionist school of Cold War history, by emphasising the smaller nations power in bilateral relations with the United States. This thesis thus follows Alvandi, Salberg and Mørk in arguing for the Shah's influence and position. This thesis differs from Alvandi in understanding the scope of the Shah's influence. In line with Salberg, this thesis does not understand the Shah's position as mutually exclusive to Cold War motivations within the Nixon Administration which Gibson focuses on. These two ideas aligned to form US policy on Iraq and the Iraqi Kurds. The Shah used his position to amplify the perception of Iraq as a threat to US interests and allies, but the Iraqi government and the Soviet Union also had agency. The Cold War is thus pivotal in understanding both US-Iraqi relations and its significance for US support of the Iraqi Kurds. Support of the Iraqi Kurds served a dual purpose of supporting the Shah and countering the Soviet influence in Iraq.

Structure

The structure of this thesis is meant to highlight how the Shah's interests and influence aligned with the US Cold War concerns of Iraq. The second chapter will establish the Kurdish struggle in Iraq prior to 1969 and the most vital aspects of US policy in the Middle East which

³² Edgar O'Ballance. *The Kurdish Revolt 1961-70*. London, 1973

³³ David McDowall. *A Modern History of the Kurds*. London, New York 1996

³⁴ Marion Farouk-Sluglett & Peter Sluglett. *Iraq Since 1958. From Revolution to Dictatorship*. I.B. Tauris publishers. New York, 1990. Charles Tripp. *A History of Iraq*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007

President Nixon inherited from previous administrations.

The third chapter serves to underscore the deterioration of US-Iraqi relations, and the State Department's role in the Nixon administration's policy on Iraq. The fourth chapter investigates the background for the decision in 1972 to begin covert US support of the Iraqi Kurds. The fifth chapter discusses the divisions within the Nixon administration and within the Iraqi Ba'ath regime. In both governments, factions worked at odds of each other, which influenced US-Iraqi relations and the American perception of Iraq. As the Iraq-Kurdish conflict began anew in 1974, the Shah leveraged the conflict to his own benefit. The sixth chapter will show how Iraq and Iran were drawn towards negotiating their differences under the pressure of the mounting Iraqi-Kurdish conflict. These negotiations and the result will be further discussed in chapter seven, which serves as an epilogue and reveals the result of the US support of the Iraqi Kurds. The eighth and final chapter concludes this thesis and its discussions of US support of the Iraqi Kurds.

Chapter Two: The Kurdish Struggle in Iraq Prior to 1969

The Kurdish fight for rights in Iraq dates back to the birth of the country. What started as Kurdish discontent grew into a movement set on achieving autonomy and rights for the Iraqi Kurds. The Kurdish struggle in Iraq had an immense effect on Iraqi politics, often contributing to toppling regimes, but also pushing Iraqi governments towards the Soviet Union seeking military support. As Iraq grew more unstable and moved towards the Soviet Union, the US would struggle to maintain a working relationship with Iraq. The US perception of Iraq was largely driven by the foreign intervention in Iraq, both the growing Soviet influence on the Iraqi government and the foreign support to the Iraqi Kurds, from US allies, Iran and Israel. As Iraq became a Cold War battleground, the struggle of the Iraqi Kurds was used by the United States to counter the Soviet influence in Iraq.

The British Mandate (1920-1932)

By the very nature of its construction, the foundation of Iraq would breed internal conflict. Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the First World War, the British created a country with an ethnic composition which had no history of bending to each other.³⁵ The official British mandate of Mesopotamia, later named Iraq, was established in 1920.³⁶ Although there were many attempts at Kurdish autonomy, the British suppressed these attempts during their mandate period.³⁷

The British mandate contained the former Ottoman *vilayets* Baghdad and Basra.³⁸ The British also occupied the predominantly Kurdish province of Mosul, a region highly prized for its oil, effectively including Mosul in the state of Iraq. It was clear from the start that the Iraqi Kurds were adamantly opposed to be ruled by Turks or Arabs and favoured British Control. They would not, however, benefit from the British rule.

³⁵ After the Bolsheviks in 1917 had revealed the Sykes-Picot agreement as French and British plan made in 1916 to divide the Middle East between them, the agreement contradicted the principles of Wilson's Fourteen-point speech. President Woodrow Wilson's fourteen points for peace, included a declaration that the different nationalities that had resided in the Ottoman empire were entitled to autonomy, which Britain and France also promised in 1918. David McDowall. *A Modern History of the Kurds* 1996. London, New York. 115, 163

³⁶ Soren Scholvin. "The Failure of Nation-Building in Iraq" *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues*, Vol. 15, no. 3 (Autumn 2011 (JULY-SEPTEMBER)). 51

³⁷ Kurdistan has never been a politically defined entity but is based on the area which is dominated by the ethnic Kurds across the borders that were established after the first World War. Gareth R. V. Stansfield. *Iraqi Kurdistan Political Development and Emergent Democracy*. Routledge Curzon, London and New York. 2003. 1

³⁸ Vilayets were administrative units under the last stages of the Ottoman empire.

The British, facing mounting protests to their direct rule, quickly began constructing an Iraq they could control. This would have long-lasting and severe consequences for the stability of Iraq. The British decided to establish the monarchy of Iraq. The former king of Syria - Faisal I (1885-1933) had been removed from Syria by the French and was made king of Iraq by the British in 1922.³⁹ Faisal was a Sunni and a Hashemite, considered a descendant of Mohammed. This was part of the British design to favour the Sunni population of Iraq to create a loyal Arab elite that could dominate the Shiites of Basra and the Kurds of Mosul.⁴⁰ King Faisal argued for pan-Arab unification and denied Kurdish autonomy to cement his rule. He viewed the Kurdish population as a necessary counterweight to the Shiites who outnumbered the Sunni Arabs alone. The king's use of pan-Arab sentiments was also meant to remove the idea of him as a foreigner backed by an imperialist power.⁴¹

From the beginning, The British used the Kurdish national aspirations, promising both autonomy and rights, to get the Iraqi Kurds to comply with their project in Iraq.⁴² The British had been in conflict with Turkey over Mosul and the border between Turkey and Iraq since the mandate was established. When the League of Nations decided who should control Mosul, the British took advantage of the Kurdish population to resist the Turkish ambitions.⁴³ However, when the Lausanne agreement was established in 1923, it made no mention of the possibility of a Kurdish state, establishing the borders of Turkey, effectively dividing the Kurds between Iraq, Turkey, Iran, and Syria. Partially owing to the strong position of the British in the League of Nations, Mosul was placed under the British mandate in 1925. The decision came with two requirements. Firstly, the area had to remain under mandate control

³⁹ Usha Natarajan. "Creating and Recreating Iraq: Legacies of the Mandate System in Contemporary Understandings of Third World Sovereignty." *Leiden Journal of International Law*, 24 (2011). 807

Martin Walker. "The Making of Modern Iraq." *The Wilson Quarterly* (1976-), Spring, 2003, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Spring, 2003). 30

⁴⁰ Soren Scholvin. "The Failure of Nation-Building in Iraq" 51-52, Usha Natarajan "Creating and recreating Iraq" 810

⁴¹ Martin Walker. "The Making of Modern Iraq" 31, David McDowall. *A Modern History of the Kurds* 167-168

⁴² the Sevres agreement of 1920 declared an autonomous region for the Kurds. However, this only proved to be a temporary promise, as the negotiations continued with the French, the Iranians, the Turkish, and the British, all claiming their part of the Kurdish territory. David McDowall. *A Modern History of the Kurds* 57-58, 116-125, 137. Kerim Yildiz. *The Kurds in Iraq. The Past, Present and Future*. Pluto P Press. LONDON • ANN ARBOR, MI 2004. 11-12

⁴³ Jordi Tejal Gorgas. "Making borders from below: the emergence of the Turkish-Iraqi Frontier, 1918-1925", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 54:5, (2018). 811, 819; Jordi Tejal Gorgas. "Urban mobilization in Iraqi Kurdistan during the British Mandate: Sulaimaniya 1918-30", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 44:4, (2008). 39-40; David McDowall. *A Modern History of the Kurds* 143, 159-162

for 25 years. Secondly, the Kurds should be given partial autonomy - allowed to establish a Kurdish administration, justice system, and educational system.⁴⁴ Both stipulations would be neglected, as the king continued to enact policies meant to further suppress the Kurds. This early period of Iraqi history highlights not only the animosity between the Kurdish and the Arab population of Iraq but also the start of the Kurdish struggle for autonomy. The internal divisions that had weakened the Kurds also continued.⁴⁵

The reasons for internal divisions among the Kurds were numerous. As opposed to Turkish or Arab nationalism, which were growing simultaneously, the Kurds lacked a national structure that cemented the idea. The former basis for unity had been community under the Ottoman empire.⁴⁶ While the unity under the Ottoman Empire disappeared, the culture of tribalism and tribal rivalry continued. This tribal rivalry seemed insurmountable.⁴⁷ Different tribes might have agreed politically but refused to cooperate. The military, social, and political significance of the Kurdish tribes would remain a staple of the Kurdish struggle, not only by retaining tribal rivalries and tribal culture, but also separating the urban Kurds who desired social and economic reforms that would hurt the position of the Kurdish tribal leaders.⁴⁸

King Faisal pushed for independence from the British. The negotiations were completed in 1930, with Iraq gaining independence in 1932. Neglecting to mention any development concerning the Kurds, the agreement promised continued British military presence with free airbases, in addition to extensive oil rights for British companies.⁴⁹ The issue of ensuring some Kurdish autonomy and development was buried completely, yet the Iraqi Kurds would never let go of their nationalistic ambitions.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ David McDowall. *A Modern History of the Kurds* 144-145. Kerim Yildiz. *The Kurds in Iraq. The Past, Present and Future*. 12

⁴⁵ David McDowall. *A Modern History of the Kurds* 177

⁴⁶ David McDowall. *A Modern History of the Kurds* 2

⁴⁷ According to Kerim Yildiz, the British doubted that a Kurdish leader could be found which would put Kurdish interests above his own or tribal interests. Kerim Yildiz. *The Kurds in Iraq. The Past, Present and Future*. 10

⁴⁸ Martin van Bruinessen. *Kurdish society, ethnicity, nationalism, and refugee problems*

1992, Philip G. Kreyenbroek & Stefan Sperl (eds), *The Kurds: a contemporary overview*, Routledge, 1992. 39

⁴⁹ David McDowall. *A Modern History of the Kurds* 172, Usha Natarajan. "Creating and Recreating Iraq" 810

⁵⁰ David McDowall. *A Modern History of the Kurds* 172-177. Kerim Yildiz. *The Kurds in Iraq. The Past, Present and Future*. 14

A Maturing Movement and Political Division (1932-1958)

The Kurdish struggle in Iraq grew over the next thirty years, owing to the structural oppression of the Iraqi Kurds, established by the British. This growing discontent and neglect of the Iraqi Kurds would have massive consequences for Iraq and the Iraqi Kurds. As the Iraqi Kurds began to organise, important leaders emerged, most notably Mulla Mustafa Barzani.⁵¹ This organised Kurdish struggle would ultimately lead to the Iraqi-Kurdish conflict escalating to open warfare in 1961.

Following the death of King Faisal I in 1933, a power struggle ensued. Assuming that Baghdad was unstable, some Kurdish chiefs petitioned their cause once again in 1935. Their petition rested on the League of Nations' recognition of Kurdish rights. Rather than seeking autonomy, they sought actual representation in the national assembly. They wanted Kurdish as an official language, increased development of the Kurdish areas, and a fair share of the resources.⁵² Their petition fell on deaf ears, as Baghdad did not regard this smaller faction of Kurds as a threat.

At the same time, the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) was founded in 1934, which many Kurds joined. The ICP argued for the rights of minorities and even briefly championed Kurdish independence in 1935.⁵³ This political division of Kurds would be a staple of the Kurdish struggle for autonomy and independence for decades to come. With the traditional chiefs representing the tribal culture versus the new wave of left-leaning, often educated Kurds. The growing desire for independence took years to bloom. A leading British advisor to the Ministry of the Interior in Iraq even remarked in 1940 that Kurdish nationalism had subsided.⁵⁴ The nationalist fires were stoked again in 1943 when a prominent Kurdish chief, Mulla Mustafa Barzani (1903-1979) began his insurrection against the Iraqi government.⁵⁵

Barzani had been detained following a failed attempt at insurrection in 1932. Fleeing his imprisonment, Barzani then petitioned for his release to live free in the Kurdish territories. At the same time, discontent had been growing among the Kurds. The neglect of them, their rights, and their region peaked with a devastating famine in 1943. The British feared that the

⁵¹ Named Mulla Mustafa Barzani, the Kurdish leader did not hold the religious title of Mulla.

⁵² David McDowall. *A Modern History of the Kurds* 287

⁵³ David McDowall. *A Modern History of the Kurds* 288. Edgar O'Ballance. *The Kurdish Revolt 1961-70*. 1973, London. 42

⁵⁴ David McDowall. *A Modern History of the Kurds* 289

⁵⁵ Edgar O'Ballance. *The Kurdish Revolt 1961-70*. 44

combination of the starvation that the Kurdish areas experienced and Barzani's grievances with the government would lead to Barzani rallying the entire Kurdish population. Even with the British pressuring both the Kurds and Baghdad to find a peaceful solution, the sides could not reach an agreement. Barzani won some early victories in the ensuing conflict. He was, however, pushed back when other Kurdish tribes, including some of his allies, joined the Iraqi forces. As a result, Barzani fled Iraq in 1945, vowing revenge on those who had betrayed him.⁵⁶ Even though he had not fought for independence or greater Kurdish autonomy, his rebellion in 1943-1945 contributed to making him a significant Kurdish figure, a figure that would have a monumental impact on the Kurdish struggle for independence.

The Barzani rebellion of 1943-1945 was not the only inspiration for Kurdish unrest during this period. A growing portion of urban, socialist, and educated Kurds looked to the Soviet Union to disturb the Iraqi status quo. This idea was strengthened by “the Mahabad Republic”, a rebellious attempt at a Kurdish republic (1946) in Iran that had been supported by the Soviets. Barzani, who had fled into Iran and the Mahabad republic after his rebellion, earned greater renown by fighting for a Kurdish state. Although the Kurdish republic was defeated by Iran, the conflict served to make Barzani a symbol of Kurdish nationalism as he continued his exile in the USSR. While in Iran, Barzani sent a letter to Iraq instructing the Kurds to form a political party modelled after the Kurdish political party in Iran.⁵⁷

The Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) was formed in 1946, and Barzani was made president in exile. Much of the leadership constituted of tribal leaders, who argued that there was a need for their military capabilities. Such a conservative leadership was untenable for the younger urban Kurds who had been inspired by socialism and opposed the traditional tribal system. With Barzani away in Iran and the Soviet Union, the influence of the urban Kurds in Iraq grew within the KDP. This resulted in a political shift in the KDP, which changed its name to Kurdistan Democratic Party in 1953. This mirrored the younger Kurds who wanted independence rather than increased influence within the Iraqi system.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ David McDowall. *A Modern History of the Kurds* 290-292. Edgar O’Ballance. *The Kurdish Revolt 1961-70*. 48

⁵⁷ David McDowall. *A Modern History of the Kurds* 296. Edgar O’Ballance. *The Kurdish Revolt 1961-70*. 55. Kerim Yildiz. *The Kurds in Iraq. The Past, Present and Future*. 16

⁵⁸ David McDowall. *A Modern History of the Kurds* 297

Like the Kurds, Iraq in general was experiencing a shift towards communism and the ICP. As strikes and demonstrations became frequent, they were dealt with harshly by the Iraqi government, which increasingly had been relying on the elite.⁵⁹ The growing discontent resulted in a coup in 1958. The new regime would empower the Iraqi Kurds to a new extent, as part of a constantly shifting balance of power in Iraq. The division which plagued the regime and destabilised Iraq, also allowed the Iraqi Kurds to grow. The Iraqi Kurds were becoming a force to be reckoned with and gaining momentum to claim their own autonomy.

Qasim's Unruly Iraq (1958-1961)

The coup of 1958 was carried out by Abdul Salam Arif (1921-1966) and other military officers, which resulted in the death of the Iraqi king and his ministers. They had been inspired by Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918-1970) and the Egyptian free officer coup in 1952. Establishing military rule in Iraq, Abd al-Karim Qasim (1914-1963) was chosen as prime minister. The new Iraqi state was recognised by the USA on 30 July 1958, who hoped that Iraq would, as Egypt, ban communist parties. The Iraqi Kurds had gained a significant position in Iraq, forcing the central government to take them into consideration. Qasim's rule was marked by his attempt at reform while trying to balance the influence of the ICP, the KDP, and the Arab nationalists who often held more powerful military positions than the ICP.

While the new Iraqi leadership expressed to the American ambassador that it wanted good relations with the US and the West, it began a policy of non-alignment. In this effort, Iraq withdrew from the Baghdad pact in 1959 and signed an arms deal with the Soviet Union.⁶⁰ The Baghdad pact was a defence treaty meant to block the Soviet Union from entering the Middle East. It was established in 1955 by Iraq, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, and Great Britain, with American support.⁶¹ These political decisions by the Qasim regime were seen as a shift towards the Soviet Union by Washington. As a result, the Eisenhower administration established a special committee on Iraq (SCI) to follow developments in Iraq and consider

⁵⁹ David McDowall. *A Modern History of the Kurds* 297-298

⁶⁰ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out? US Foreign Policy, Iraq, the Kurds, and the Cold War*. New York, 2015 5,7. Hanna Khazri. "Masters of War. USAs forhold til kurderne I Irak, 1961-1963." Master's Thesis, University of Oslo, 2019. 29.

⁶¹ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 2. Abbas Kadhim. "opting for a lesser evil: us foreign policy toward Iraq, 1958-2008. 468

American options in countering the Soviet influence. The committee established a policy of observation towards Iraq.⁶²

Internal divisions soon emerged as Qasim resisted the Arab nationalists who looked to Nasser, forcing their leader Arif into exile in late September 1958. Arif quickly returned with Nasser's help, intent on taking power from Qasim. Arif's coup failed and put Qasim in staunch opposition to Nasser and his Arab nationalism.⁶³ As a result, he relied more heavily on the ICP for support. In addition, Qasim pardoned Barzani and allowed him to return to Iraq to gain Kurdish support for his regime.⁶⁴ This development put the US on high alert about an Iraqi shift towards communism. The US wrongly assumed that Barzani, nicknamed "the red Mulla", was a Soviet agent, based on his participation in the Soviet-backed Mahabad republic and the following eleven years of exile he spent in the USSR.⁶⁵ This suspicion of Soviet influence on Kurdish affairs, according to Gibson, influenced the US view on Kurdish independence in the following years. Gibson further contends that the Soviets supported the Kurds to make Iraq dependent on Soviet arms and support.⁶⁶

The return of Barzani also caused trouble for the socialist Kurds in the KDP, led by Ibrahim Ahmad. While they had wanted Barzani to lead the KDP, realising the tribal support he could bring them, friction soon developed between Ahmad and Barzani as it became clear that Barzani did not intend to share power. Barzani's return also worried the Kurds who had turned on him when he had been defeated and was forced to leave Iraq, as he refused to forgive his proclaimed enemies.⁶⁷ Barzani's desire for control and his refusal to mend old personal grievances in favour of Kurdish unity would only compound the differences within the Kurdish community and continuously throughout the 1960s and 1970s drive his opponents into the arms of Iraqi administrations who used these groups against Barzani. Barzani might represent the old tribal system in the eyes of some Kurds, but a huge portion of the tribal Kurds resented Barzani. Underscored by the fact that many of the tribal Kurds fought the

⁶² Hanna Khazri. *Masters of War* 30

⁶³ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 8

⁶⁴ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 9 and David McDowall *A Modern History of the Kurds* 304

⁶⁵ Edgar O'Ballance. *The Kurdish Revolt 1961-70*. 56

⁶⁶ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* XIIX

⁶⁷ Edgar O'Ballance. *The Kurdish Revolt 1961-1970*. 63-64

Kurdish movement alongside the Iraqi government rather than making common cause with Barzani.⁶⁸

Both the nationalists and the ICP acted against Qasim, forcing him to move against them. In March 1959, the nationalists tried and failed to take control of Mosul, which led Qasim to purge nationalists from his regime.⁶⁹ In July of that same year, the Kurds united with communists and revolted against local Turkish influence. The revolt resulted in a fatal confrontation with the Iraqi army.⁷⁰ Qasim answered by publicly condemning the communists while attempting to purge them from the military. The instability of Qasim's regime did not relieve US concerns about the communist threat or even civil war, but Washington remained indecisive about how to handle the situation. On 7 October the Ba'ath made attempts to take Qasim's life, resulting in hospitalising him for months.⁷¹ The Ba'ath party was a political movement in the Middle East that preached Arab nationalism, pan-Arabism, anti-imperialism, and Arab socialism.⁷² In Iraq, the Ba'ath party manifested as anti-Kurdish and predominantly Sunni. The relationship between Qasim and Barzani had proved mutually beneficial in the beginning, as both attempted to consolidate their respective positions. Nonetheless, the relationship soured with Qasim failing to fulfil his promises of Kurdish autonomy and support of Barzani's Kurdish opponents leading up to the first Iraqi-Kurdish War (1961-1970).⁷³

Kurdish Revolt and Kennedy (1961-1963)

Qasim had promised Barzani Kurdish autonomy back in 1958 when he needed Barzani's support. The issue came to a head in 1961 with Kurdish tribal chiefs resisting a land reform and the KDP sending demands of autonomy to Qasim. This land reform would diminish the power of the Kurdish tribal chiefs. Several ambushes of Iraqi military forces led Qasim to respond with troops and air assaults on Kurdish villages. Barzani had not been part of the tribal chiefs opposing the reform but saw the opportunity to mix the traditional tribalism with Kurdish nationalism. Barzani responded to the Iraqi forces' actions by joining the Kurdish

⁶⁸ Edgar O'Ballance. *The Kurdish Revolt*. 71

⁶⁹ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 18

⁷⁰ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 22

⁷¹ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 25

⁷² Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* XVII

⁷³ David McDowall. *A Modern History of the Kurds* 306-307. Edgar O'Ballance. *The Kurdish Revolt 1961-70*. 71

struggle against Qasim.⁷⁴ Qasim, still supported by Kurdish tribes hostile to Barzani, ordered the KDP disbanded, which drove many of its members into the arms of Barzani. The Iraqi Kurds had been plagued by their tribal infighting, and Barzani forcefully produced Kurdish unity with threats and power.⁷⁵ Qasim quickly condemned the Kurds as US imperialist pawns. Both sides quickly petitioned the US and USSR respectively for support. Gibson points to this start of hostilities as a clear indication of the influence that the Cold War had on Iraq.

However, the US was not paying much attention to the developments in Iraq. The first contributing factor to this was that the Cold War was developing on several fronts, such as the Cuban missile crisis in the fall of 1962 and Vietnam. Secondly, when President Kennedy became president in 1961, he disbanded the committee overseeing Iraq as part of his aim to cut the bureaucracy in Washington. The committee had during the Eisenhower administration settled on a policy of observation, which contributed to the Kennedy administration's delayed response to the conflicts that followed. US allies, however, like Israel and Iran, were paying close attention and began supporting the Kurds when hostilities broke out in 1961.⁷⁶

Israel and Iran had cooperated since 1948, both on development and appealing to the US for support. By 1957, following the building of an oil pipeline which connected the Gulf of Aqaba with the Mediterranean Sea, Israel became the largest consumer of Iranian oil.⁷⁷ Recognising the threat of the Arab regimes who surrounded them, the covert cooperation expanded into intelligence and security.⁷⁸ By supporting the Iraqi Kurds in conflict with Baghdad, the Iraqi forces would be too occupied to consider turning their attention to Israel or Iran. While Iran and Israel were preparing to distract their common enemy, US-Iraqi relations were deteriorating.

With US-Iraqi relations deteriorating, the US-Iraqi relationship entered a new stage in 1961-62. The US engaged in support of subversive forces in Iraq with the ultimate goal of toppling Qasim.

⁷⁴ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 37-38 and David McDowall. *A Modern History of the Kurds* 308-311

⁷⁵ Edgar O'Ballance. *The Kurdish Revolt 1961-70*. 84

⁷⁶ Hulda Kjeang Mørk, *Between Doctrines. Emerging Patterns in the Relations among Israel, Iran, and the United States, 1964-1968*. (2021) PhD dissertation, Faculty of Humanities, University of Oslo. 131

⁷⁷ Hulda Mørk. *Between Two Doctrines*. 53-55

⁷⁸ Hulda Mørk. *Between Two Doctrines*. 56-57

By acknowledging the newly independent Kuwait the West had, unknowingly to the Kennedy administration, offended Qasim. Qasim had harboured ambitions of claiming Kuwait as part of Iraq. In response to the Western recognition of Kuwait, he nationalised large oil concessions in Iraq which belonged to western companies. In support of Qasim, the USSR vetoed Kuwait's UN membership. This had been known by American diplomats but had not reached the political leadership in Washington. American relations with Iraq were damaged several times due to this poor communication within the American diplomatic chain of command. The deteriorating US-Iraqi relations contributed to Iraq passing a law that let the regime confiscate and nationalise the oil fields that the Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC) had not begun to drill yet.⁷⁹

The US-Iraqi relations only worsened when the US administration accepted the ambassador to the US from Kuwait, as a result the American ambassador to Iraq was expelled in June 1962.⁸⁰ Further diplomatic breakdowns came when Iraq took a step further and recalled their ambassador to the US, downgrading their diplomatic relations. In 1962 the US changed its policies towards Iraq in an attempt to push Iraq towards the West. This entailed both diplomatic and covert methods, including ordering the CIA to plan an overthrow of Qasim.⁸¹ Gibson points to how in the wake of these diplomatic breakdowns, several American journalists were suddenly sent to the Iraqi Kurds to report on their struggle, orchestrated by US diplomats. The press coverage made it possible for Barzani to publicly ask for US support and paint himself as a Kurdish nationalist friendly to the West, hoping to place the conflict within the Cold War. The articles they produced, in addition to Kurdish victories, led Qasim to double down on his anti-American rhetoric in the face of mounting protests against his unpopular rule. Several factors made Qasim unpopular, not least of which was the failure of the war against the Kurds. The US, on the other hand, seemed to have given up on reaching out to Iraq. Washington expected the Iraqi regime to fall soon enough.⁸² In the meantime, the Kurds agreed with the Ba'ath party on the overthrow of Qasim. The Kurds pledged not to take advantage of the coup in Baghdad to attack.⁸³

⁷⁹ The IPC was partially owned by English and American companies. Hanna Khazri. *Masters of War* 42

⁸⁰ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 43

⁸¹ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 44-45

⁸² Hanna Khazri. *Masters of War* 53

⁸³ David McDowall. *A Modern History of the Kurds* 312. Edgar O'Ballance. *The Kurdish Revolt 1961-70*. 96

A Brief Ba'ath Rule

The Baathist coup started on 8 February 1963. It was the result of years of planning. The US supported the regime in hopes of pushing Iraq towards the West, recognizing the new regime two days after the coup. Ahmad Hasan Bakr was made Prime Minister, with Abd-al Salam Muhamed Arif becoming president.⁸⁴ Fitting to their ideology, the Baathists sought pan-Arab cooperation and postponed the Kurdish issue until they could prepare the army. The war had after all been incredibly unpopular and contributed to Qasim's downfall. Publicly, both sides expressed a desire to negotiate for peace, but the Ba'ath had no such intentions.⁸⁵

While the Ba'ath had played for time, the Kurds failed to take advantage of the situation. The Kurds struggled with internal conflicts born of old tribal divisions and personal mistrust between Barzani and the non-tribal parts of the KDP. Barzani was more appealing to the Kurdish tribes than the urban Kurds that wanted social change, but the idea of Kurdish nationalism was more foreign than the tribal chiefs' own power and influence. The conflict between the central administration and Barzani was a choice of political alliances for many political rivals and Kurdish tribal leaders, as opposing their tribal rivals was more important. The Iraqi regimes continuously used this fact to arm tribal militias and send them to engage Barzani's forces.⁸⁶ Barzani represented the traditional and tribal in the eyes of many young and urban Kurds. Jalal Talabani and Ibrahim Ahmad represented the increasingly socialist urban Kurds. While the division was magnified by political differences, the Kurdish culture also exaggerated the division. The two most common variants of Kurdish, Kurmanji and Soran, also divided the north and south. The Kurmanji (like Barzani) were seen by the Soran (like Talabani) as primitive, while the Soran were considered unmanly and unreliable by the northern Kurmanji.⁸⁷ There had never been a strong foundation for cooperation between Barzani and the faction represented by Talabani. On the contrary, the mistrust between the two men only grew.⁸⁸ The most potent way for the Kurds to unite was the conflict with Baghdad, which would be proven true several times.

⁸⁴ Hanna Khazri. *Masters of War* 55

⁸⁵ Hanna Khazri. *Masters of War* 59. Edgar O'Ballance. *The Kurdish Revolt 1961-70*. 99

⁸⁶ Martin van Bruinessen. *Kurdish society, ethnicity, nationalism, and refugee problems*. 41

⁸⁷ Michael M. Gunter. "The KDP-PUK Conflict in Northern Iraq", *Middle East Journal*. Vol. 50, No. 2 (Spring, 1996). 228

⁸⁸ David McDowall. *A Modern History of the Kurds* 313-315

With the new government in Iraq, the US was heavily invested in its success. When the conflict with the Kurds resumed, the US looked the other way and backed the Iraqi government to keep its gains in the Cold War.

When the war started again in June 1963, the Iraqi forces advanced aggressively into Kurdish territory. The Ba'ath had also started to suppress the communists in Iraq. A consequence of this was that the Soviets and their satellite states were now more than willing to speak about Kurdish suffering to humiliate the US. The USSR even made a satellite state, Mongolia, raise the issue of Kurdish genocide in the United Nations.⁸⁹ This put the US in a precarious position. They knew full well of the situation in northern Iraq, and it would be highly irregular for the US to vote against such an investigation of atrocities. They were, however, very interested in maintaining their good relationship with the Ba'ath regime. The solution was to push for a truce in the conflict, which in a month had cost over 60 000 lives.⁹⁰ Their attempt at resolving the issue before the UN general assembly would prove futile, as the Ba'ath proved unwilling to come to terms. The Mongolian delegation, rumoured to have been pressured by Arab states, decided to withdraw their suggestion, which relieved the Americans.⁹¹

The Soviet pressure and Iraq's developing position in the Cold War forced the US to continue their support of the Ba'ath regime, including by arranging arms sales.⁹² Soon after the war was declared against the Kurds, the Ba'ath leadership reached out to the US for an arms deal. Iraq had established arms deals with the Soviet Union under Qasim. The US saw this as their opportunity to hijack the Soviet position of influence in Iraq. The sale was quickly approved. The US also assumed that delivery needed to be urgent, as Washington assumed the Soviet response would be to arm the Kurds.⁹³ US-Iraqi diplomatic connections were re-established with the increased hostilities between Baghdad and the Kurds, the US disregarded the Iraqi Kurds for securing their Cold War ambitions.

After a few brutal months, on 18 November 1963, the Ba'ath regime fell to a military coup. It had reigned for nine months.

⁸⁹ Hanna Khazri. *Masters of War* 69

⁹⁰ Hanna Khazri. *Masters of War* 70

⁹¹ Hanna Khazri. *Masters of War* 72

⁹² Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 71

⁹³ Hanna Khazri. *Masters of War* 63

A New Coup and a New President (1963-1968)

The newly installed President Lyndon B. Johnson moved the US back to an observatory policy towards Iraq. In clear opposition to this policy were several of the US's allies, especially Great Britain, Iran, and Israel who covertly trained, funded, and supplied arms to the Kurds for their benefit.⁹⁴ The Johnson presidential period proved fruitful to both Israel and Iran. As both demanded increased support, Washington progressively agreed to their demands. This represented a stark contrast to Eisenhower's ideas of balancing regional considerations, not wanting to show clear favouritism to Israel.⁹⁵ Both Israel and Iran took a more dominant role in their respective relations with the United States, extruding pressure on US diplomats to gain increased support and help each other in doing so.⁹⁶ The Shah in particular wanted the US to see Iran as a regional leader they could depend on. This development would ultimately lead to the Shah convincing president Nixon to support the Iraqi Kurds in 1972.

After the coup against the Ba'ath regime, the new regime in Baghdad consisted of Arab nationalists and Nasserists, with Arif, who had led the 1958 coup, at its head. Arif made peace with Barzani on 10 February 1964, temporarily ending an unpopular and costly conflict. The Kurds were to receive national rights, the return of confiscated property, and the release of imprisoned Kurds. The deal did, however, not mention autonomy or independence. The peace was thus met with criticism from Talabani and other Kurds, which led Barzani to associate more with Arif and denigrate the KDP. While Barzani had achieved a ceasefire with Baghdad, he again needed to confront his Kurdish rivals.⁹⁷ The conflict highlighted the old ideological divide between the nationalist KDP and Barzani with his tribal support. Still, Barzani's position as a Kurdish leader was too strong. He took control of the KDP and consolidated his power. Only after doing so did he start speaking of autonomy, indicating that his position came first.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Hulda Mørk. *Between Two Doctrines*. 116

⁹⁵ Hulda Mørk. *Between Two Doctrines*. 45

⁹⁶ Hulda Mørk. *Between Two Doctrines*. 75-79

⁹⁷ Edgar O'Ballance. *The Kurdish Revolt 1961-70*. 117-118

⁹⁸ Talabani and his compatriots would later split from Barzani in 1966. David McDowall. *A Modern History of the Kurds* 315. Edgar O'Ballance. *The Kurdish Revolt 1961-70*. 121-122. Ofra Bengio. *The Kurds of Iraq. Building a state within a state*. Colorado. 2012. 32

Iranian and Israeli support would have a massive effect on the Kurdish struggle in Iraq. Iran and Israel cooperated to weaken the Arab regimes which they felt threatened their existence. This was a particular concern for Israel. After Barzani and the Iraqi Kurds began their rebellion in 1961, Iran and Israel began supporting Barzani's effort.⁹⁹ The ceasefire between Barzani and Baghdad in 1964 made Iran and Israel nervous, as they encouraged Barzani to reignite the conflict.¹⁰⁰ The support continued even after Barzani negotiated a truce with Baghdad in 1964. The summer of 1964 saw an increase in this support as weapons and ammunition was being delivered, in addition to military advisors and further promises to make the Iraqi Kurds stand against the Iraqi forces. Despite Barzani moderating the Kurdish demands, Baghdad was not interested in negotiating, opening a new offensive against Barzani in early April 1965.¹⁰¹ By March 1965, new weapons were being delivered to Barzani by the Israelis, joined by discussions of establishing a permanent Israeli presence with the Iraqi Kurds. The value of the increased Israeli presence would reveal itself in the coming years, as already in August 1965 Israeli instructors began training Barzani's Peshmerga forces.¹⁰² As Washington learned more of the extent of the conspiracy by Israel and Iran to aid the Iraqi Kurds, the Americans attempted to convince its allies to use other means to disturb the Iraqi threat. Washington realised getting involved with the Iraqi Kurds would negatively affect its bilateral relations with both Iraq and Turkey. While the US agreed with Iran and Israel that the Arab Threat had to be curtailed, they differed on the method.¹⁰³

Gradually, the Israelis and the Iranians discovered that the US was reluctant to push back in their bilateral relations even if the US disagreed with their policies on destabilising Arab regimes. Since 1964 the Shah had pressured the US by improving relations with the USSR. To the Shah, evoking the tensions of the Cold War appeared to be the most effective way to achieve American support.¹⁰⁴ While this would also lead the Shah and Washington into a conflict over the next years, it would result in the Shah achieving even greater American support.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹ Hulda Mørk, *Between Two Doctrines*. 131-132

¹⁰⁰ Hulda Mørk, *Between Two Doctrines*. 133-135

¹⁰¹ Edgar O'Ballance, *The Kurdish Revolt 1961-70*. 125

¹⁰² Hulda Mørk, *Between Two Doctrines*. 135

¹⁰³ Hulda Mørk, *Between Two Doctrines*. 141-145

¹⁰⁴ Hulda Mørk, *Between Two Doctrines*. 148-154

¹⁰⁵ Hulda Mørk, *Between Two Doctrines*. 178-183

The Iranian and Israeli pressure in addition to the division within the Kurdish leadership contributed to the resurfaced conflict with Baghdad. When the conflict spilled over the Iranian border, the Iranians supported the Iraqi Kurds by firing artillery at the Iraqi troops. The conflict lasted through the winter and a final offensive was planned for April 1966, but Arif's death in a plane crash and the power struggle that followed halted the conflict. Arif was succeeded by his brother Abd al Rahman (1916-2007). Despite Rahman and others considering a peaceful resolution with Barzani, Rahman was easily pressured by the Iraqi military which argued for continued war against the Kurds.¹⁰⁶ The Shah fruitlessly suggested that Iraq and Iran come to an agreement over their differences, including the Shatt Al-Arab. The Shatt Al-Arab is a waterway between Iraq and Iran. The Shah desired more control in the waterway to have better supply-lines for his ships exporting oil in the Gulf. The current agreement over the Shatt had been forced on his father, Reza Shah Pahlavi, by the British in 1937, a shame the Shah wanted to rectify. The Shah admitted to the Americans that concessions had been his motivation for supporting the Iraqi Kurds.¹⁰⁷ On 4 May 1966, the Iraqi government began a heavy offensive against the Kurds. Over 40 000 Iraqi soldiers and 3500 Kurdish forces, made up of Kurds who opposed Barzani, were deployed against Barzani to break his supply lines from Iran. In what would prove a fatal mistake, the Iraqi forces gathered in a valley below the mountains of Handren and Soren.¹⁰⁸ The Israeli instructors had been training Barzani's peshmerga for months and the resulting battle would show the significance of Israeli and Iranian support to the Iraqi Kurds.¹⁰⁹ The Israeli advisor to Barzani, Zuri Sagy had realised the opportunity of the Iraqi position in the valley and convinced Barzani to attack the Iraqi position. With the Israelis commanding the Kurdish forces in the ensuing battle, the Iraqi forces were trapped and defeated. The result was the biggest victory in the Kurdish rebellion against Iraqi forces. Lasting two days, the battle resulted in an estimated 1400-2000 Iraqi casualties and hundreds taken prisoners against 20 peshmerga casualties.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Edgar O'Ballance. *The Kurdish Revolt 1961-70*. 136

¹⁰⁷ Hulda Mørk, *Between Two Doctrines*. 250

¹⁰⁸ Edgar O'Ballance. *The Kurdish Revolt 1961-70*. 137

¹⁰⁹ Hulda Mørk, *Between Two Doctrines*. 251-252.

¹¹⁰ Hulda Mørk, *Between Two Doctrines*. 252

The offensive in May 1966 led to the most devastating defeat the Iraqi forces had experienced in their war against the Kurds, aided by both Israel and Iran.¹¹¹ The resulting negotiations achieved many of the Kurdish demands in what was called the Bazzaz declaration, such as Kurdish nationality and representation in government.¹¹² The agreement annoyed the Shah, who temporarily stopped his support of the Iraqi Kurds in the fall of 1966 and closed the border.

If the US had thought its policy of balance in the Middle East successful, the Six Days War in June 1967 would prove its failure. The Soviet influence only grew in the Arab states in the Middle East, while the US was vilified and identified as a target of the resulting Arab oil embargo for supporting Israel.¹¹³ US-Iraqi diplomatic relations were severed by Iraq on 7 June as a consequence of American support to Israel. The expulsion of the US ambassador and later expropriation of the US embassy would have a devastating influence on the bilateral relationship for years to come.¹¹⁴ The war did, however, strengthen the ties between the US, Israel, and Iran as it forced the United States to pick a side. The political shift of American foreign policy away from placating the Arab states in the Middle East would also later make it easier for the Nixon administration to get involved in the operation to support the Iraqi Kurds.¹¹⁵

The policies of the Iraqi government also strained US-Iraqi relations, as Iraq continued to improve its relations with the USSR. In April 1968 Washington learned that Iraq had signed a deal to deliver oil to the Soviet Union. As Soviet ships entered the Persian Gulf for the first time since 1903, Iraq would be used by the Shah and Israel to show Washington the growing danger of Soviet influence in the Middle East.¹¹⁶

The idea of growing Soviet influence in Iraq was strengthened on 17 July 1968, as the Soviet-supported Ba'ath party performed a coup in Iraq. While key people in the military had made

¹¹¹ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 84 and David McDowall *A Modern History of the Kurds* 316

¹¹² Hulda Mørk, *Between Two Doctrines*. 253. Edgar O'Ballance. *The Kurdish Revolt 1961-70*. 139

¹¹³ Hulda Mørk, *Between Two Doctrines*. 267, 274

¹¹⁴ Hulda Mørk, *Between Two Doctrines*. 283

¹¹⁵ Hulda Mørk, *Between Two Doctrines*. 324-327

¹¹⁶ Hulda Mørk, *Between Two Doctrines*. 327

the coup possible, within 30 July 1968 the Ba'ath had removed many of them, solidifying their grip on power in Iraq.¹¹⁷ As a result of the Ba'ath coup in Iraq, Israel and Iran would again focus on their support of the Iraqi Kurds. Iran and Israel also renewed their efforts to convince Washington to join their support of the Iraqi Kurds.¹¹⁸

Setting the Stage for a New President

Clearly, the US relationship with the Iraqi Kurds had evolved with the US relationship with Iraq. The US stayed out of the conflict as long as diplomatic ties with Iraq existed. It was never an option to support the Iraqi Kurds as they assumed Barzani had ties to the Soviet Union. The US were, however, willing to interfere with Iraq as US-Iraqi relations deteriorated and Iraq moved towards the Soviet Union. But by supporting the Ba'ath plans to take power, and its subsequent government, the new US-Iraqi relationship forced the US to overlook the atrocities committed against the Iraqi Kurds. After the brief Ba'ath government, US-Iraqi relations continued to deteriorate, ending in the total collapse of diplomatic relations after 1967.

The Nixon administration would inherit many of the policies of the previous administrations. The improved positions of Israel and Iran in their bilateral relations with the US would be instrumental for its policy on the Iraqi Kurds. This development increased following 1967 and the public Arab displeasure of US support for Israel. While Iran and Israel cooperated closely in support of the Iraqi Kurds to their joined benefit of distracting the Iraqi forces and destabilising the Iraqi regime, their position on the Iraqi Kurds differed. As opposed to the Shah, the Israelis promised more unconditional support to the Iraqi Kurds.¹¹⁹ The Shah's involvement with the Iraqi Kurds also kept them from encouraging nationalist sentiment amongst the Iranian Kurds. However, the Shah did not desire a Kurdish state on his border next to his Kurdish population - his ultimate goal was Iraqi concessions in the Shatt Al-Arab.

¹¹⁷ Abbas Kadhim. "opting for a lesser evil: us foreign policy toward Iraq, 1958-2008" 476

¹¹⁸ Hulda Mørk, *Between Two Doctrines*. 327-328

¹¹⁹ Trita Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance. The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran, and the U.S.* New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2007. 37

The Israelis, however, saw the continued benefit of a non-Arab power in the region allied to them.¹²⁰

The US had long held a policy of non-intervention in the Iraqi conflict, and even attempted to convince Israel and Iran to seek other solutions in negating the perceived Arab threat. Several developments would contribute to changing US policy. Importantly, the Arab outcry at US support for Israel in 1967, and the break of diplomatic relations between the US and Iraq, would only make the decision easier for the United States. Further, the Shah had learned to utilise the Cold War to increase American support. He would use the context of the Cold War when the issue of Iraq's improved bond with the Soviet Union again became an issue under the Nixon administration. By demonising Iraq as a Soviet puppet, he used security concerns to gain even greater support from the Americans.

¹²⁰ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 84-95. Douglas Little, "The United States and the Kurds". *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 4, Fall 2010. 72

Chapter Three: The Nixon Administration's First Years of Non-Intervention in Kurdish Iraq 1969-1971

The first three years of Nixon's presidency gave a clear indication of his foreign policies regarding the Middle East. While the influence of his Cold War ally, the Shah, grew in the region and in the bilateral relationship with the US, other regional considerations were neglected. The strengthening of Iran exemplified the Nixon doctrine of building strong regional partners to act according to US interests. This idea of increased support for US allies as regional partners was a perfect fit for the Shah's ambitions. As the British had announced they were withdrawing from the Persian Gulf in 1971, the Shah wanted to fill the power vacuum.¹²¹ To this end, he trumped up the Soviet threat in the region and the threat of Arab nationalism against US interests. Having an adversarial relationship with Iraq, the Shah would emphasise both the Soviet influence and anti-American sentiments developing in Iraq, contributing to a shift in American policy on Iraq.¹²² How would the Shah align his narrative with developments in Iraq to affect the US policy on Iraq?

For the first years of Nixon's presidency, The US foreign policy on Iraq was under the purview of the State Department which was unfazed by the Shah's grim suspicions of Iraq. The Nixon administration had inherited a policy of non-intervention in the Iraqi-Kurdish conflict from the previous administration, so there was no immediate need for the administration to establish a position. This limited the Shah's influence as he continued to push for American engagement on the issue. The State Department was adamant towards the Shah in stark contrast to other parts of the Nixon administration. Regional developments would, however, take Iraq and the Middle East out of the control of the State Department as the American perception of Iraq changed. The Shah also contributed to this change in American perception of Iraq, by underscoring the threat Iraq posed to American interests and allies and the growing Soviet influence. The Shah's narrative went increasingly unopposed, with no diplomatic ties and limited US presence in Iraq.

The relationship between Iraq and its Kurds was an important factor in changing US policy.

¹²¹ Mari Salberg & Hilde Henriksen Waage (2019) Master of the game 470

¹²² Telegram from the embassy in Iran to the Department of State. October 13, 1969, Subject.: Iraq: Soviet Efforts to Penetrate Middle East; Iran's Need for Adequate Military Establishments. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976*, Volume E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972. Doc. 23

The Shah argued that by stabilising Iraq, Soviet influence would spread. He would use this narrative to convince the Nixon administration that Iraq was becoming a Soviet satellite and that the Kurds were the only thing that could stop the Iraqi government and the USSR from stabilising Iraq.¹²³ While the Shah used his influence in the bilateral relationship with the United States from the beginning of Nixon's presidency, he was not the only voice changing the American perception of Iraq.¹²⁴

Setting the tone for US-Iraqi relations

Following its rise to power in 1968, the Iraqi Ba'ath party began subjecting the population of Iraq to their brutal regime. The Iraqi Ba'ath quickly began accusing Israel and the US of subverting their rule. These accusations were meant to legitimize their violent consolidation of power but had international ramifications in January 1969, as they began to publicly execute Jews for being part of an Israeli conspiracy.¹²⁵ The very public issue forced the higher echelons of the Nixon administration to discuss the issue. The public killing of Iraqi Jews, despite American attempts to stop it, pointed to Iraq developing into a state adverse to American interests and allies. Director Hughes of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research and Secretary Rogers communicated their assessments on 14 February 1969. The Ba'ath regime had attempted to blame external threats and conspirators for their brutal consolidation of power. The alleged conspiracy was according to the Ba'ath regime led by the US, with the Kurds as willing participants. The idea of conspiracy resulted in the execution of several political opponents.¹²⁶

The animosity deepened between Iraq and Israel following the public killing of Iraqi Jews. The hostile regime in Baghdad's actions emphasised the need for Israeli support of the Iraqi

¹²³ Telegram from the embassy in Iran to the Department of State. March 12, 1970. Subject: Soviet-Iraq Threat to Middle East (Shah's Views). *FRUS* 1969-1976, Vol. XXIV, Middle East Region and Arabian Peninsula. Doc. 53

¹²⁴ The Shah's first opportunity to communicate this directly to the newly appointed President Nixon came in April 1969 with the official funeral of former President Eisenhower. Traveling to Washington himself for the funeral, the Shah emphasised the importance of Iran in the face of Soviet expansion into the Middle East, especially Iraq. Roham Alvandi. *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah* 41-42

¹²⁵ Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*. 189

¹²⁶ Research Memorandum from the Hughes (Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research) to Secretary of State Rogers. February 14, 1969. Subject: Iraq: Internal Stresses and the Search for the Bogeyman. *FRUS* 1969-1976, Vol. E-4. Doc. 251

Kurds. The Iranians and Israelis had long understood the value of the rebellious Iraqi Kurds. Both saw the benefits of the Kurds keeping the Iraqi forces bogged down rather than engaging Iran or Israel. The Israelis considered the Kurdish rebellion decisive in keeping Iraq out of a united Arab conflict with Israel, as the war of 1967 had proven. With Israel and Iran's importance to the US, their adversaries in the region were also a concern for the United States.

While US regional allies were heavily invested in supporting the Iraq Kurds, the Nixon administration abstained. One explanation for the continued American reluctance to support the Iraqi Kurds was highlighted when the interdepartmental group for Near East and South Asia met on 30 January 1969.¹²⁷ While the group agreed on a desire for peace in the region, the different departments and agencies differed greatly on how this could be achieved. Parts of the Nixon administration favoured improving relations with radical Arab states where Soviet influence was dominant. Opposing this idea of garnering wide Arab support was the Department of Defence, which expressed more adamant support for Israel. Gaining US influence in radical Arab states would be especially difficult in Iraq considering the severed diplomatic ties and the fact that the Ba'ath regime planned to expropriate the former American embassy in 1969.¹²⁸ Already by March, the idea of improving relations with Iraq quickly became untenable for many American diplomats.¹²⁹ The very public 1969 execution of Jews in Iraq had put an early and insurmountable hurdle for anyone advocating establishing ties with the Iraqi Ba'ath regime.

In the early years of Nixon's presidency, American diplomats also assumed that the unstable Ba'ath regime would collapse on its own, making it unnecessary to commit to improving relations.¹³⁰ The bad state of US-Iraqi relations would contribute to the later change in US policy to support the Iraqi Kurds to destabilise the hostile regime.

¹²⁷ Paper prepared by the interdepartmental Group for Near East and South Asia, 30 January 1969, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976*, Volume XXIV, 1969-1972; Jordan, September 1970. Doc. 2

¹²⁸ Memorandum from John M. Leddy of the Bureau of European Affairs to Secretary of State Rogers. February 7, 1969. *FRUS* 1969-1976, Vol. E-4. Doc. 250

¹²⁹ Memorandum from Bryan H. Baas, Office of Lebanon, Jordan, Syrian Arab Republic, and Iraq Affairs, Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs to Davies (the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs). March 13, 1969. *FRUS* 1969-1976, Vol. E-4. Doc. 254

¹³⁰ Research Memorandum from the Hughes to Secretary of State Rogers. February 14, 1969. Subject: Iraq: Internal Stresses and the Search for the Bogeyman. *FRUS* 1969-1976, Vol. E-4. Doc. 251.

The US saw the Ba'ath regime as weak. Meanwhile, the regime continued to rid itself of opposition, portraying many of those executed as spies. On 5 June 1969 the Iraqi Minister of Information, Salah Umar al-Ali, announced publicly that the imperialist Americans should pay attention as their dirty tricks would be exposed and their spies executed.¹³¹ The Ba'ath gained public favour by attacking the US and showing it would take a tough stand against US agents. Not only signalling the poor state of US-Iraqi relations, but also that the Iraqi regime gained public favour by denigrating the United States.

The Iraqi Government Pressured on Two Fronts

The Ba'ath regime in Iraq was attempting to stabilise their regime in early 1969. They quickly realised that they needed to resolve their Kurdish problem quickly, lest it topple their budding government.

The Iraqi Ba'ath regime had attempted to reach a settlement with Barzani's Kurds already in 1968, but things quickly turned sour as they supported Barzani's Kurdish opponents in an attempt to exploit the division between the Kurdish factions, bombing several Kurdish villages.¹³² The government forces kept pressuring the Iraqi Kurds, opening a new offensive against Barzani on 3 January 1969. As they recaptured positions, they were given to Kurdish forces friendly to the government to hold before the winter halted the offensive after a couple of weeks. The conflict reignited when the Iraqi Kurds, on the suggestion of the Shah, attacked an Iraqi oil pipeline on 1 March 1969.¹³³ At the same time, the Shah was exerting pressure on Iraq in the Shatt al-Arab.¹³⁴

The Shah had long opposed the Iraqi hegemony of the Shatt Al-Arab waterway. The British had forced his father to sign a treaty regulating the waterway in 1937. The waterway treaty was not only a point of pride, but the treaty had also given Iraq control over the waterway, to

¹³¹ Abbas Kadhimi. "opting for a lesser evil: us foreign policy toward Iraq, 1958-2008." 476

¹³² Research Memorandum from the Hughes to Secretary of State Rogers. February 14, 1969. Subject: Iraq: Internal Stresses and the Search for the Bogeyman. *FRUS 1969-1976*, Vol. E-4. Doc. 251. Edgar O'Ballance. *The Kurdish Revolt 1961-1970*. 1973, London. 152. Marion Farouk-Sluglett & Peter Sluglett. *Iraq Since 1958. From Revolution to Dictatorship*. 128

¹³³ Marion Farouk-Sluglett & Peter Sluglett. *Iraq Since 1958. From Revolution to Dictatorship*. 129

¹³⁴ Roham Alvandi. *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*. 42-46; Asadollah Alam, *The Shah and I*. 1991. London. 53-54; Marion Farouk-Sluglett & Peter Sluglett. *Iraq Since 1958. From Revolution to Dictatorship*. I.B. Tauris publishers. New York, 1990. 129-130

the detriment of Iran. Viewing this as an opportunity to establish his authority in the Persian Gulf, the Shah ordered a ship flying the Iranian flag to pass through the Shatt with a military escort, opposing Iraqi threats that they would not accept such an open insult.¹³⁵ The Iraqis did not attack the ship and contrary to American advice, the Shah came out on top. The Shah had assumed that the Kurdish conflict would draw the attention of the Iraqi forces, allowing him to succeed in his gambit. The American embassy in Iran had shared the Shah's assumption that the chances of an Iraqi retaliation were low as the Iraqi forces were occupied containing the Kurds in northern Iraq.¹³⁶ The incident would, however, contribute to the Iraqi regime lashing back, in turn giving the Nixon administration the impression that Iraq was growing more aggressive. As a dark foreshadowing of the Shah's future betrayal of the Kurds over the issue six years later, the Shah proposed to the Iraqi Ba'ath regime to withdraw his support for Iraqi Kurds for concessions in the Shatt.¹³⁷

The renewed fighting between Barzani and Baghdad continued, and Barzani's forces pushed the Iraqi forces back in March while the Shah rattled his sabres in the South over the Shatt Al-Arab. The Iraqi forces were divided and by June the fighting with the Kurds had exhausted both sides. Compounding the situation for the fresh Iraqi Ba'ath regime was internal division within the government and military. Many within the regime favoured harsh military measures to handle the Iraqi Kurds, only compounded by the loss of face after the incident in the Shatt. Divided, the Ba'ath needed time to stabilise and consolidate its power, lest it fall as quickly as it had in 1963.¹³⁸

Kurdish Pleas for US Support

The US response to Kurdish pleas for support during this period shows the significance of the later decision to change US policy and support the Iraqi Kurds. At the time, Iraq or the Soviet influence in Iraq was not enough for the US to engage in destabilising it. The US had long held a policy of non-intervention when it came to the Kurdish rebellion in Iraq, even as it was

¹³⁵ Roham Alvandi. *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*. 42-46; and Asadollah Alam, *The Shah and I*. 1991. London. 53-54; Marion Farouk-Sluglett & Peter Sluglett. *Iraq Since 1958. From Revolution to Dictatorship*. I.B. Tauris publishers. New York, 1990. 129-130

¹³⁶ Telegram from the embassy in Iran to the Department of State. May 19, 1969. Subject: Iran-Iraq Dispute Over Shatt *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. E-4, Doc. 17

¹³⁷ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 120-121

¹³⁸ Edgar O'Ballance. *The Kurdish Revolt* 151-153

aware of its regional allies' involvement.¹³⁹ They reaffirmed this position in several meetings with Kurdish representatives during the first three years of Nixon's presidency. These meetings also highlight the differences between the various groups opposing the regime in Iraq. A lack of unity continued to hamper the Iraqi Kurds. On 13 June 1969, a meeting was arranged in Washington between Tolcott W. Seelye, Bryan H. Baas, and several Kurdish and Assyrian representatives seeking American assistance in Iraq. The representative for the Kurdish Revolution in the USA, Shafiq Qazzaz had brought a letter from Mulla Mustafa Barzani addressed to Secretary Rogers imploring the Americans to aid the minorities of Iraq, tying the Iraqi Assyrian cause together with his own. Barzani had perhaps thought the Christian Assyrians would get more support among the American people and diplomats. Qazzaz attempted to justify possible American intervention and aid in toppling the Ba'ath regime by drawing on historical examples like American deployment in Lebanon in 1958. Seelye shot the possibility down, saying the American people and government had lost their patience for such "foreign adventures" and that the US, while sympathetic, did not support an independent Kurdish state. Dr. Perley, Attorney for Assyrian-American Federation expressed his disapproval privately to Baas for an independent Kurdish state: "He knew that the Muslim Kurds at that point would immediately turn on the Christian Assyrians", he claimed.¹⁴⁰ Dr. Perley's private comment revealed the division and mistrust that faced Barzani from American interest groups as well.

Multiple such meetings also serve to demonstrate the American position in meeting oppositional groups from Iraq in the period 1969-1971, in which the diplomats responsible from the State Department held to their non-intervention policy and regional considerations.

¹⁴¹ There were no considerations that sufficiently motivated a different American response to the situation in Iraq. The State Department, not swayed by Iran and Israel's warnings, only saw the conflict in Iraq as increasing the Iraqi Ba'ath regime's dependence on Soviet arms.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Memorandum of Conversation. 29 May 1969. Subject: Kurdish Threat Against Kirkuk Oil Installations; Iranian and Israeli Support for Assyrians. *FRUS* 1969-1976, Vol. E-4. Doc. 258

¹⁴⁰ Memorandum of Conversation. June 13, 1969. Subject: Kurdish/Assyrian Appeal for U.S. Assistance. *FRUS* 1969-1976, Vol. E-4. Doc. 259

¹⁴¹ 15 October 1969 Seelye met with an Iraqi emigre businessman, Loutfi Obeidi, who sought American support for a coup in Iraq organised by exiles, Kurds, and Iranians. Seelye remained adamant that the US would not support any such coup. Memorandum of Conversation. October 15, 1969. Subject: How to Buy A Revolution: Talk with an Iraqi Plotter. *FRUS* 1969-1976, Vol. E-4. Doc. 262. A similar conversation occurred on 8 December at the American embassy in Beirut between an Iraqi emigre and American diplomats, with the same result. Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 122

¹⁴² Roham Alvandi. *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*. 74

Compounded by the Shah's militarisation and rivalry with Iraq, the region only grew more unstable with the Kurdish rebellion in Iraq.

Negotiating a Ceasefire

After the Shatt incident in August 1969, Kurdish sabotage, and failed negotiations with the Kurds, the Iraqis opened a new offensive against the Kurds. The offensive lasted until October, when the Iraqi army withdrew.¹⁴³ The Ba'ath were realising they needed to find a solution to their Kurdish problem and negotiations started in late 1969.¹⁴⁴ These negotiations quickly revealed the division within the Iraqi leadership on the issue of conceding to Kurdish demands. The breakthrough came when Saddam Hussein, Vice Chairman of the RCC of Iraq and Assistant Secretary General of the Ba'ath party, travelled North to find common ground with Barzani's representative, Dr. Othman.¹⁴⁵ Late January 1970 shifted the negotiations when an Iranian-backed coup was discovered and publicised, leading to the death of 33 conspirators and the expulsion of the Iranian ambassador.¹⁴⁶ Bryan Gibson suggests that the coup was part of the Shah's plan to disrupt the negotiations between Barzani and Baghdad. It had the opposite result. It showed President al-Bakr and the Ba'ath their internal opponents and the need to neutralise threats to its regime. The Ba'ath government publicly announced an amnesty for Kurds and that it would fulfil the terms of the 1966 Bazzaz agreement. However, the indications that Barzani would make a deal with Baghdad worried his foreign benefactors.

On 4 March 1970, Mulla Mustafa Barzani's eldest son, Idriss Barzani arrived in Teheran to discuss the future of Kurdish independence with Iranian and Israeli representatives. In Teheran, the Israelis promised greater military support if the conflict was resumed, including anti-air and light artillery. Tanks and training would also be available if Barzani was able to capture a few Iraqi tanks, to have an excuse for the increased capabilities. Idriss Barzani also met with the head of the Iranian secret police, SAVAK, Nematollah Nasserri on 6 March, who expressed Iranian concerns regarding the accord.¹⁴⁷ At the same time, his father was meeting

¹⁴³ Edgar O'Ballance. *The Kurdish Revolt* 155. Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 121

¹⁴⁴ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 122-123

¹⁴⁵ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 123. Marion Farouk-Sluglett & Peter Sluglett. *Iraq Since 1958. From Revolution to Dictatorship*. 131

¹⁴⁶ Marion Farouk-Sluglett & Peter Sluglett. *Iraq Since 1958. From Revolution to Dictatorship*. 120

¹⁴⁷ Central Intelligence Agency Information Cable, March 9, 1970, subject: Israeli Aid to Kurdish Rebels. *FRUS* 1969-1976, Vol. 4-E. Doc. 267

with Saddam Hussein in Northern Iraq. Saddam Hussein had again travelled north, this time to meet with Barzani himself and secure an agreement. Desperate for a more permanent ceasefire, the agreement, known as the March accords, exceeded prior promises of Kurdish rights.¹⁴⁸ After signing the ceasefire, Barzani broke off contact with the Shah.¹⁴⁹

The March accord of 1970 promised everything the Kurds had fought for and more. The agreement would secure Kurdish culture and language, acknowledging their position in Iraq. In addition, an autonomous Kurdish area with a regional government would receive economic and general aid for development.¹⁵⁰ The accord also served to solidify Barzani's position as Kurdish leader. Before the agreement was struck, the Iraqi Ba'ath's had continued the previous administration's policy of attempting to divide and conquer the Kurds. Most notably by supporting Barzani's rival Jalal Talabani in an effort to undermine Barzani in the winter of 1969. Barzani had easily defeated the Kurdish groups supported by the government in the war, and following the 1970 March accord, Talabani recognised Barzani and joined him. Even so, Barzani kept Talabani at a distance, preferring to use him as a foreign dignitary.¹⁵¹

The public declaration of the March accords brought great dismay to Iran and Israel, who had supported the Kurds to occupy the Iraqi forces. The Shah would, however, use the agreement as evidence of the need for the US to take action. The Shah portrayed the agreement as a Soviet scheme, part of their increased influence in Iraq.

Reactions to the March Accords

Iran and Israel heavily supported the Iraqi Kurds and had done so for several years at this point. The weapons, money, training, and military advisors had been decisive in many of the Kurdish successes in their struggle against the various Iraqi regimes that they had fought since the outbreak of hostilities in 1961. The March accord of 1970 was therefore distressing news for Iran and Israel. The Israelis had a month ahead of the announcement of the accord informed the US State Department that the Soviet Union had pressured the Iraqi Ba'ath regime into making peace with the Iraqi Kurds, but the State Department doubted the extent

¹⁴⁸ Bryan R. Gibson Sold Out? 123. David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*. 327. Marion Farouk-Sluglett & Peter Sluglett. Iraq Since 1958. *From Revolution to Dictatorship*. 131

¹⁴⁹ Mari Salberg. "Conventional Wisdom" 101

¹⁵⁰ Bryan R. Gibson Sold Out? 124. David McDowall *A Modern History of the Kurds*. 328 Shows the terms in their entirety.

¹⁵¹ Research Memorandum from the Hughes to Secretary of State Rogers. Washington, February 14, 1969. *FRUS 1969-1976*, Vol. E-4. Doc. 251

of Soviet influence and scheming in Iraq and the peace accord. The State Department partly based this on the belief that Soviet interference with any Kurdish groups would be detrimental to Soviet relations with Turkey and Iran.¹⁵² Iran and Israel differed greatly in their view of the Iraqi Kurds. Israel did not oppose the idea of an independent Kurdish state as much as Iran, yet they had equally benefitted from the Kurdish conflict continuing within Iraq, as it occupied Iraqi forces. Following the March accord, only Israel chose to continue the support of the Iraqi Kurds, while the Shah temporarily stopped.¹⁵³

In response to the March accords, Israel and Iran reinforced their efforts to convince the US of the growing danger in Iraq. The Shah appealed to the US stating that the accord showed the significant Soviet influence in Iraq and revealed their long-term plan to enter the Middle East in general and the Persian Gulf in particular.¹⁵⁴ He quickly instructed his prime minister to inform the American ambassador in Teheran, Douglas MacArthur II, of the consequences and to pass the assessment on to Washington. The treaty included steps towards Kurdish autonomy and therefore increased Kurdish power within Iraq. The Shah had intended to scare the Americans into action by evoking narratives of the Cold War. The Israelis had also suggested to the Americans that the Soviet influence had been essential for the accord and that the Soviets had intentions for the Persian Gulf.¹⁵⁵

The State Department had a different understanding of Iraq. The State Department doubted the narrative of Soviet activity, fully aware that the Ba'ath government had strained the relationship with the Soviet Union in the two years since taking power, including by executing more than thirty Iraqi communists.¹⁵⁶ Additionally, while the Soviets supported the agreement, another motivation for the Ba'ath was the fact that the Kurdish rebellion had helped topple several Iraqi regimes, and the conflict required thirty percent of the Iraqi government budget in 1969.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵² Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 125-126

¹⁵³ Ofra Bengio *The Kurds of Iraq. Building a state within a state.* 73, 76

¹⁵⁴ Telegram from the embassy in Iran to the Department of State. March 12, 1970, Subject: Soviet-Iraq Threat to Middle East (Shah's Views). *FRUS* 1969-1976, Vol. XXIV. Doc. 53. Roham Alvandi. *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah* 75 and Salberg "Conventional Wisdom" 101

¹⁵⁵ Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Israel. April 14, 1970, Subject: Soviet Pressure for Iraqi-Kurdish Agreement. *FRUS* 1969-1976, Vol. E-4. Doc. 269

¹⁵⁶ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 118

¹⁵⁷ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 122-123

The State Department was not convinced and suspected that the accords would not last for long as the two parties could not trust each other.¹⁵⁸ However, Iran and Israel were still valuable regional allies, whose concerns needed to be addressed. Secretary Rogers, wanting to reassure the Shah, instructed the embassy in Teheran to do so on 14 March 1970. The Secretary's message repeated that the State Department did not think the accord would last, because of the mistrust that the Kurds and Iraqis had for each other. It was unlikely that any Iraqi troops would be moved from northern Iraq to the south towards Iran. The Secretary also agreed that there had been Soviet support for the negotiations but stopped short of confirming the Shah's theory of Soviet plans for a Kurdish corridor into the Middle East.¹⁵⁹

False Peace

The March agreement was not an end to the Iraqi-Kurdish conflict, and Barzani continued to petition for American support. On 10 August 1970, the CIA received information on the tense situation between Barzani and Baghdad. The Ba'ath government was stalling for time and consolidating its power, while Barzani prepared for a renewed conflict.¹⁶⁰ The terms for peace made manifest by the March accord were flawed from the beginning. One term of the agreement especially caused a rift between Barzani and Baghdad. The major disagreement was over the region of Kirkuk, which held massive oil reserves. Disagreement over its inclusion into the Kurdish area would be determined by a census, but disagreement over the practicalities quickly arose. The two sides could not agree on a previous census to base their decision on. Meanwhile, both sides suspected the other side of attempting to change the population of Kirkuk for a potential census which would decide the matter.¹⁶¹ The false peace of the March accord became evident in early December 1970 after a failed assassination attempt on Idris Barzani, Mulla Mustafa's eldest son.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ Telegram from the Department of State to the embassy in Iran. March 14, 1970, Subject: Soviet-Iraq Threat to Iran in Middle East. *FRUS* 1969-1976, Vol. E-4. Doc. 268. Roham Alvandi. *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*. 75

¹⁵⁹ Telegram from the Department of State to the embassy in Iran. March 14, 1970, Subject: Soviet-Iraq Threat to Iran in Middle East. *FRUS* 1969-1976, Vol. E-4. Doc. 268

¹⁶⁰ Central Intelligence Agency Information Cable, August 10, 1970. Country: Iraq. Subject: Indication that the Kurds Anticipate a Showdown with the Government of Iraq. *FRUS* 1969-1976, Vol. E-4. Doc. 273.

¹⁶¹ David McDowall, A Modern History of the Kurds. 329; Gareth R. V. Stansfield. *Iraqi Kurdistan Political Development and Emergent Democracy*. Routledge Curzon, London and New York. 2003. 75

¹⁶² Bryan R. Gibson. *Sold Out?* 128

Deteriorating US-Iraqi Relations

The bilateral relationship between the US and Iraq had not improved since Nixon became President. Despite part of the administration's optimism regarding regaining influence in radical Arab states. The State Department and Talcott Seelye had in April 1970 become disappointed in the quality of intel provided by the Belgians, who had agreed to represent American interests in Iraq after the American embassy in Iraq was expelled in 1967. Seelye suggested placing competent American personnel back in Iraq. Seelye hoped for improved relations or at least felt an improved American presence would better report pertinent information from Iraq. This hope promptly faded as the Iraqis took a step further and expropriated the American embassy in Baghdad without compensating the United States.¹⁶³ Arguing for improving US-Iraqi relations became a moot point as Iraq continued to project hostility towards US interests and allies. The expropriation of the US embassy highlighted how poor US-Iraqi relations were, but it would also serve to keep US-Iraqi relations poor. The United States could not accept the expropriation of their embassy, and it would remain a threshold barring any attempts at improving US-Iraqi relations. Together with the public killings of Iraqi Jews, it was clear that the Ba'ath regime in Iraq was not concerned with keeping up appearances to keep some semblance of relations with the West.

While US-Iraqi relations were in complete disarray, other factors also contributed to changing the American perception of Iraq. Gibson emphasises Nasser's death in 1970 and Sadat taking power as important factors in American involvement in the Iraq-Iran rivalry. To Gibson, Sadat's emergence and establishment of better relations with the West at the cost of the Soviet Union meant that the Soviet Union turned towards Iraq.¹⁶⁴ This would in turn confirm to the Nixon administration that the increasingly Soviet Iraq had to be handled, leading to US support of the Iraqi Kurds.

The State Department continued to refuse to support the Iraqi Kurds, despite Soviet activity or the deterioration in US-Iraqi relations. On 8 July 1971, a representative for Barzani visited the American embassy in Lebanon. Barzani wanted the US to consider supporting a Kurdish-Arab coup in Iraq. Barzani even suggested that the support could come through allies of the US in the Middle East. Barzani further warned that the Kurdish movement would be

¹⁶³ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 129

¹⁶⁴ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 130

radicalized and spread to Kurdish populations in other states like Turkey if Barzani were to die before the Kurdish cause succeeded.¹⁶⁵

The Ba'ath shared the sentiment that the unity of the Iraqi Kurds would dissipate without Barzani. The attempt on Mulla Mustafa Barzani's life on 29 September 1971 revealed the depth of deterioration that had occurred between Barzani and Baghdad since the 1970 March accords. Barzani had refused to participate in a national coalition with the Ba'ath and ICP. To resolve the matter, Saddam Hussein sent a group of religious leaders to negotiate with Barzani. Unbeknownst to the clerics, two had been equipped with explosives disguised as listening devices. By starting the recording, the bomb was activated. Barzani survived by chance, as a servant had been serving him tea and shielded Barzani from the blast, killing most in the room.¹⁶⁶ For Barzani, the attempts on his life showed that there could be no peace found in Iraq, he would have to turn to his foreign benefactors again.

The Iraq-Iran rivalry

The rivalry between Iraq and Iran only served as kindling in the Iraqi-Kurdish conflict, but also helped change the impression of the Iraqi regime. Time and again the Shah's aggression would enrage the Iraqis, who would lash out, confirming the narrative that they were hostile and aggressive. On 30 November 1971, the Shah annexed three small islands in the strait of Hormuz, at the entrance to the Persian Gulf. While the islands, Abu Musa, the greater Tunb, and the lesser Tunb, held no strategic significance, the act served to trump up the Shah's power, to the annoyance of the Iraqis.¹⁶⁷ In response, Iraq cut their diplomatic ties with Iran on 1 December 1971.¹⁶⁸

Developing Dynamics 1969-1971

The three first years of Nixon's presidency, 1969-1971, saw many attempts at obtaining American support for the Kurds in Iraq. This pressure originated from very influential partners of the US, but also from the US' bad relationship with the regime in Iraq.¹⁶⁹ And even though the Shah was in constant conflict with Iraq, over issues such as the Shatt Al-Arab, and

¹⁶⁵ Airgram from the embassy in Lebanon to the Department of State. July 16, 1971. Subject: Request from Mustafa Barzani for Clandestine Contact with USG. *FRUS* 1969-1976, Vol. E-4. Doc. 292

¹⁶⁶ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 130. Ofra Bengio. *The Kurds of Iraq. Building a state within a state*. Colorado. 2012. 59

¹⁶⁷ Ofra Bengio *The Kurds of Iraq. Building a state within a state*. 65

¹⁶⁸ Ofra Bengio *The Kurds of Iraq. Building a state within a state*. 66

¹⁶⁹ Memorandum from John M. Leddy of the Bureau of European Affairs to Secretary of State Rogers. February 7, 1969. *FRUS* 1969-1976, Vol. E-4. Doc. 250

supported the Iraqi Kurds, his warnings of Soviet influence in Iraq fell on deaf ears during this period. Growing more nervous about his waning influence in Iraq, the Shah attempted to sidestep the gatekeeping of the State Department on the Iraqi Kurds. SAVAK contacted the CIA in November 1971, arguing that Barzani was the only viable candidate to resist the Iraqi regime. Alvandi suggests the Shah thus bypassed the rigid State Department, which eventually brought the issue before Kissinger. Not only more concerned with the Cold War than the State Department, Kissinger, like Nixon, placed greater importance on placating the Shah. Both arguments would lead to the shift in US policy in 1972. Even disregarding the opinion of the CIA and the State Departments who supported adhering to the US policy of non-intervention in Kurdistan.¹⁷⁰ Neither was Israel's conflict with Iraq and the support of Iraqi Kurds sufficient to pressure the Americans while the issue was in the hands of lower-level diplomats. American reluctance towards fanning the conflict between Barzani and Baghdad was also based on their impression that the conflict only made the Iraqi regime more dependent on Soviet arms.¹⁷¹ A change came when the conflict between Iran and Iraq took on a more distinct impression of Cold War conflict, with each of them being supported by a superpower.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Roham Alvandi. *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*. 79

¹⁷¹ Roham Alvandi. *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah* 74

¹⁷² Roham Alvandi. *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah* 75-76

Chapter Four: 1972: A Turning Point for American Involvement in the Kurdish Struggle in Iraq.

For years several interested parties had tirelessly attempted to involve the US government in the Kurdish struggle in Iraq. Not only Kurdish representatives themselves, but also more influential groups such as the Iranian security service, SAVAK, had repeatedly appealed for American involvement. Events in 1972 made the Soviet advance into Iraq more important in the Cold War and subsequently more important to the higher echelons of the US government. The Nixon administration had little hope of improving US-Iraqi relations, as the Iraqi government had broken diplomatic relations with the US in answer to American support of Israel in 1967, publicly chiding the US as imperialists. The increased Soviet influence in Iraq in 1972 did, however, change the US perception of Iraq. No one in the Nixon administration would champion improving US-Iraqi relations through diplomatic means until the US interests section in Baghdad was established in September 1972.¹⁷³

The Shah was also contributing to the change in American policy and view of Iraq. With the British exit from the Persian Gulf in 1971, the Shah pounced on the opportunity of establishing Iran as a dominant force in the Middle East, wishing to be seen as exemplifying the Nixon doctrine in American eyes. In general, the Shah held immense influence in the bilateral relationship with the United States. The meeting in Teheran on 30 May, between President Nixon, Henry Kissinger, and the Shah, was a pivotal moment for American involvement with the Kurds in Iraq. The Shah argued for Iraq's importance in the Cold War and as a threat to American interests and allies. The Shah's goal was to increase American support for Iran, but also for the US to support the Iraqi Kurds. Why did the Shah need the Nixon administration to support the Kurds, and what did it mean for US-Iraqi relations? While the Shah made the Iraqi Kurds a point of focus at the meeting, the increased Soviet activity in Iraq had changed the American view of Iraq. Nixon and Kissinger were ultimately convinced that supporting the Shah and mitigating the Soviet influence in the Middle East could both be achieved by supporting the Iraqi Kurds and destabilising Iraq. This resulted in President Nixon approving covert US support of the Iraqi Kurds, even as the Nixon

¹⁷³ As official diplomatic connections were disbanded in 1967, the only official American presence allowed in Iraq was lower-level diplomats working through the Belgian embassy. The establishment of the US interests section in Baghdad in 1972 was a step up from this, but still not seen as a formal American embassy. The State Department were oblivious that it worked at odds with US policy.

administration was distracted by the Vietnam War, détente, and a developing Watergate scandal.¹⁷⁴

The Significance of the Improved Relations between the USSR and Iraq.

The improvement of USSR-Iraqi relations became a concern for the Nixon administration, signalling the need to counter Soviet influence. With the British withdrawal in 1971, the Middle East was ripe for political change. January 1972 proved a fitting start for a year of change in American perception of Iraq. The Iranians and Israelis had long pointed to increased Soviet influence in Iraq. In January, Washington discovered the substantial arms deal struck in September of the previous year.¹⁷⁵ For the State Department, this overdue discovery underscored the need to establish a better presence in Iraq, which in their own words would provide a better analysis of the economic and political developments in Iraq. Iraq's significance was growing in the eyes of the State Department.¹⁷⁶ The arms deal was only the beginning of increased cooperation between the USSR and Iraq. According to Gibson, the improvement in USSR-Iraqi relations only came as a result of the declining relationship between the USSR and Egypt.¹⁷⁷ The Soviets needed to shift their attention to a more reliable partner in the Middle East.

An important milestone in USSR-Iraqi relations came on 9 April 1972 with the signing of the USSR-Iraqi treaty of friendship and cooperation.¹⁷⁸ The agreement of April 1972 not only promised the USSR significant resources in Iraq but also established that the two would support each other in a potential conflict.¹⁷⁹ Despite several pieces of intelligence in February and March indicating that the USSR and Iraq would sign such a treaty, the Nixon

¹⁷⁴¹⁷⁴ Peter L. Hahn. *Crisis and Crossfire. The United States and the Middle East Since 1945*, Potomac Books, Washington, DC. 2005. 59

¹⁷⁵ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out? US Foreign Policy, Iraq, the Kurds, and the Cold War*. New York, 2015. 130

¹⁷⁶ Telegram from the Department of State to the embassy in Belgium. Washington, January 28, 1972. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976*, Volume e-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972. Doc. 296

¹⁷⁷ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 130

¹⁷⁸ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 132, Roham Alvandi. *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah. The United States and Iran in the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) 81. Marion Farouk-Sluglett & Peter Sluglett. *Iraq Since 1958. From Revolution to Dictatorship*. 147

¹⁷⁹ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 134

administration took no immediate steps to limit Soviet influence.¹⁸⁰ According to Gibson, this was based on Nixon prioritising other considerations. Iraq was not significant enough in the greater Cold War landscape. The more pressing foreign policy considerations included the “opening” of China to the West and détente with the USSR, as Nixon was intending to visit Moscow in May.¹⁸¹ Even so, the agreement revealed the Soviet interest in developing relations with Iraq. Combined with other developments which showed Soviet interest in Iraq in 1972, the treaty would come to be an important argument for limiting the Soviet influence in Iraq. As Kissinger would later recount in his memoirs, the treaty changed the American view of Iraq.¹⁸²

The treaty and shift in the Soviet Union’s focus in the Middle East towards Iraq seemingly confirmed what US allies had said for years, enforcing the trappings of the Cold War on the region. With proof of the growing Soviet influence in Iraq, the Shah increased his efforts to convince the Nixon administration that they needed to counter the development.¹⁸³ The improving USSR-Iraqi relations also increased the pressure on Barzani to join the national coalition. Barzani warned Washington in March that without support, the Kurds would be forced to comply, potentially cementing Soviet influence in Iraq and by extension the Middle East.¹⁸⁴ The State Department, still responsible for Iraq, did not react to the Shah or Barzani’s claims. The US neglect of the warnings of greater Soviet influence in Iraq reveals Iraq’s perceived insignificance in the greater Cold War. This in turn shows the significance of the Shah's influence when he later convinced President Nixon that the US needed to counter the Soviet encroachment by supporting the Iraqi Kurds, against the opinion within his administration.

¹⁸⁰ Telegram from the embassy in the Soviet Union to the Department of State. Moscow, February 18, 1972, *FRUS*, Vol. e-4, Doc. 298. Central Intelligence Agency Information Cable. Washington, March 10, 1972. *FRUS*, Vol. e-4, Doc. 300. Memorandum from the Richard Helms (Director of Central Intelligence) to Kissinger, Secretary of State Rogers, and Secretary of Defense Laird. Washington, March 31, 1972. *FRUS*, Vol. e-4, Doc. 303

¹⁸¹ Henry Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*. 1999. 581

¹⁸² Henry Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*. 1999. 581

¹⁸³ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 133-35

¹⁸⁴ Memorandum from the Waller (Chief of the Near East and South Asia Division of the Central Intelligence Agency) to Sisco (Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs) Washington, March 9, 1972, *FRUS*, Vol. e-4, Doc. 299

US Relations with the Iraqi Kurds Before the Teheran Meeting

The Teheran meeting in May was the point at which the Shah convinced President Nixon to begin American support of the Iraqi Kurds to limit Soviet influence in Iraq. As there are no accounts of the actual meeting, recounting the US relations with the Iraqi Kurds ahead of the Teheran meeting will show just how significant the Shah's influence was, as he opposed information from parts of the Nixon administration. Yet subverting Iraq was being discussed within the administration as the American perception of Iraq changed with the increased Soviet activity in Iraq.

In the early months of 1972 US' relations with the Iraqi Kurds followed the previous pattern the Iraqi Kurds appealed for US support. The State Department, the CIA, and the NSC all consider the Soviet threat in Iraq insignificant, contradicting the Shah.¹⁸⁵ On 27 March Harold Saunders, the NSC's expert on the Middle East, relayed to Deputy Assistant Alexander Haig a request from SAVAK for US aid to the Iraqi Kurds. Revealing his view on the situation, Saunders included the opinions of the State Department and the CIA that the US should continue its policy of non-intervention. Saunders argued in his message that the Iranian and Israeli support for the Iraqi Kurds was sufficient. In his view, the Kurdish struggle in Iraq would not succeed, and the Soviets would see US involvement as a direct move against them.¹⁸⁶

The State Departments' clear reservations against supporting the Iraqi Kurds were revealed following a meeting with a representative from Barzani, appealing for American support. The representative argued that the recent increase of Soviet influence in Iraq and the pressure on the Kurds would force the Kurds to comply with the Ba'ath regime. Furthermore, Barzani planned to gather all the Iraqi elements who opposed the Ba'ath in a coup. This outlandish plan and the meeting itself only strengthened the State Department in the opinion that it would be unwise to engage in Iraq or support the Iraqi Kurds.¹⁸⁷

The meeting was later surmised for Joseph Sisco, the State Department's deputy Secretary in charge of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs. His briefing revealed how thoroughly foolish the State Department viewed such a venture, and why supporting the Iraqi Kurds was deemed

¹⁸⁵ Roham Alvandi. *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*. 80

¹⁸⁶ Memorandum from Harold Saunders to the Haig (President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs) Washington, March 27, 1972. *FRUS*, Vol. e-4, Doc. 301

¹⁸⁷ Memorandum from Andrew Killgore (of the Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs), Department of State to Sisco. Washington, April 3, 1972. Subject: Kurdish Appeal U.S. Assistance. *FRUS*, Vol. e-4, Doc. 304

to counter American interests. The strength of these arguments from within the Nixon administration speaks volumes when the President later would do the opposite at the advice of the Shah. It also contributes to the idea of how little weight the opinions of the State Department would have on US policy.¹⁸⁸

Firstly, the State Department concluded that a Barzani-led regime replacing the Ba'ath in Iraq was impossible, as it would face significant opposition domestically and internationally even if it took power from the Ba'ath. Secondly, Iraq was so economically dependent on the Soviets that to break those connections would mean that the US would have to replace the Soviets as a contributor. Thirdly, no such American support could remain secret and would provoke Arab nations in the region. Fourthly, aiding the Iraqi Kurds would raise the expectations of aid for the Kurdish populations in countries such as Iran and Turkey. The final reason was that supporting the Iraqi Kurds would support the idea of nationalism potentially fragmenting an already fragmented area.¹⁸⁹ The State Department used these arguments internally in the Nixon administration to argue that the US should avoid supporting the Iraqi Kurds. At no point was US-Iraqi relations itself considered an argument against supporting the rebellious Kurds, signifying how low US-Iraqi relations had become.

Briefing the President

There were, however, signs that parts of the Nixon administration desired to engage in Iraq to counter the Soviet influence.

In preparation for President Nixon's visit to Teheran, assumably in anticipation of a request for support by the Shah, President Nixon was briefed on the developments in Iraq on 18 May. Iraq was painted as an unstable, unpopular, and militarily weak nation. Further, it was proposed that, even if the Soviets were heavily invested in Iraq, the USSR would have other interests to protect in the region. Stating that the Soviets were careful to protect their relationship with Iran when interacting with Iraq and that the Soviets were first and foremost loyal to Egypt. It was concluded that the unstable regime could collapse. Even so, USSR-Iraqi relations had improved under the Ba'ath regime. The Americans were aware of the Soviet

¹⁸⁸ Memorandum from Andrew Killgore, Department of State to Sisco. Washington, April 3, 1972. Subject: Kurdish Appeal U.S. Assistance. *FRUS*, Vol. e-4, Doc. 304

¹⁸⁹ Memorandum from Andrew Killgore, Department of State to Sisco. Washington, April 3, 1972. Subject: Kurdish Appeal for U.S. Assistance. *FRUS*, Vol. e-4, Doc 304

desire to maintain good relations with the Shah, something the Soviets would have to consider as they sought to stabilise Iraq. Acknowledging the Shah's continued interference in Iraq, through Kurds and coups, heightened hostilities between Iraq and Iran were considered devastating for stability in the Persian Gulf. And while the US-Iraqi relations were unlikely to improve through economic means, there were still US investments in Iraqi oil production to consider.¹⁹⁰

The information was meant to prepare Nixon for a discussion with the Shah in Teheran among others also on the subject of operations in Iraq. However, emphasis was placed on the Soviet position rather than the risks associated with interfering in Iraq, and as such became an early justification for such an intervention based on the Soviet activity. Clearly, parts of the Nixon administration thought the Soviet influence in Iraq needed to be stopped. Washington was also aware of Iran's role in interfering with Iraq by supporting the Iraqi Kurds, and its wish that the US also join the support of the Iraqi Kurds. In discussing the origin of the idea of US operations with the Iraqi Kurds, Salberg refers to Henry Precht, a former political/military officer who worked at the US embassy in Teheran from 1972 to 1976. According to Precht, Kissinger had asked the Shah to support the Iraqi Kurds to destabilise Iraq.¹⁹¹ Gibson quotes Alam, the Shah's advisor, as Kissinger saying something had to be done to stop the Soviets in Iraq.¹⁹² While the change in American policy is generally not considered to have originated with Kissinger as Precht suggested, the President's briefing ahead of the meeting in Teheran reveals a voice within Washington on handling Iraq differently than before, changed by the recent Soviet activity.

Other signs pointed to part of the Nixon administration taking the idea of interfering in Iraq even further. While the President was in Teheran, a research study on the Iraqi Kurds was prepared in Washington, indicating that parts of the administration expected a new policy on Iraq to be considered following the meeting with the Shah. The study analysed the background of the conflict and discussed possible outcomes if the conflict was to resume. It further discussed alternative Kurdish leaders such as Talabani, which the USSR and the Iraqi

¹⁹⁰ Briefing Paper Prepared for President Nixon. Washington, May 18, 1972. *FRUS*, Vol. e-4 Doc. 308

¹⁹¹ Mari Salberg. *"Conventional Wisdom": U.S. policy toward Iran 1969-1979*. 2018. Ph.D. Dissertation at the University of Oslo. 103

¹⁹² Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 137

Ba'ath regime would prefer over Barzani. An inclusion that could be interpreted as that it would be necessary to support Barzani to keep Iraq unstable. The study concludes that the Iraqi Kurds, a group mired by tribal divisions, could not hope to defend more than their current position in the mountains, or attain influence over a new regime should the Iraqi Ba'ath regime fall. The best outcome for Barzani's Iraqi Kurds of a resumed conflict would be a stalemate similar to the present situation. A more compliant Kurdish leader would, however, be to the benefit of the Iraqi Ba'ath and the Soviets, free to pressure Iran.¹⁹³ The Shah was considered an important ally in the Cold War. Compounded by the fear of increased Soviet pressure, and with knowledge of the Shah's involvement with the Iraqi Kurds, Washington prepared for a more serious discussion on the Iraqi Kurds with the Shah.

The Teheran Meeting and its Aftermath

Travelling directly from Moscow after signing the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, (SALT) and in the light of détente, on 30 May 1972, President Nixon and Henry Kissinger arrived in Teheran to meet with the Shah. The meeting is considered a defining moment in US involvement with the Iraqi Kurds.¹⁹⁴ In addition to securing increased financial and military support for himself, the Shah convinced President Nixon and Kissinger that US support of the Iraqi Kurds would counter the growing Soviet influence in Iraq. Less than three months later, President Nixon approved the covert operation of supporting the Iraqi Kurds with money and arms.

Setting the tone for the meeting, Nixon, disregarding his advisors, promised even greater military aid for Iran. This would give the Shah access to the entire US arsenal, barring nuclear weapons.¹⁹⁵ While Kissinger in his memoirs recalls the Shah asking for US support on the Iraqi Kurds already in November 1971, the May meeting resulted in tangible action of support from the Nixon Administration.¹⁹⁶ Inferring that the increased Soviet influence in Iraq had

¹⁹³ Research Study prepared in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. Washington, May 31, 1972. *FRUS*, Vol. e-4, Doc.310

¹⁹⁴ One can only presume what was discussed based on the documents and rhetoric leading up to and after the meeting. Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 137 Mari Salberg. "Conventional Wisdom" 105

¹⁹⁵ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 137 Mari Salberg. "Conventional Wisdom" 104

¹⁹⁶ Henry Kissinger. *Years of Renewal*. 581. Memorandum from Kissinger to President Nixon. Washington, September 6, 1973. Subject: Increased Assistance to the Kurds. *FRUS* 1969-1976, Vol. XXVII, Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976, Doc. 233

changed the US view of Iraq, the Shah's proposal presented an opportunity for Nixon to stop that development.

A central disagreement between scholars like Alvandi and Gibson hinges on to what degree the Shah's influence was decisive in convincing Nixon and Kissinger to begin the US support of the Iraqi Kurds. Gibson argues to what degree was US involvement with the Iraqi Kurds motivated by the Cold War, like the increased cooperation between the USSR and Iraq.¹⁹⁷ The most reasonable scenario is presented by Salberg, that the two ideas function simultaneously. She argues there can be ascribed an American interest in destabilizing Iraq to negate the Soviet influence. As seen with the briefing of the president on Iraq ahead of his meeting in Teheran, Washington had changed its view on Iraq and its place in the Cold War. The Shah, however, would have been vital in the discussion to use the Iraqi Kurds, considering how invested he already was. Thus, the decision to support the Iraqi Kurds, whether taken at the meeting or in the aftermath speaks to the Shah's influence.¹⁹⁸ Kissinger later recounted this reasoning as the background for American support of the Iraqi Kurds.

-In August of last year, acting upon a request from the Shah of Iran, you authorized the initiation of covert cash subsidies and military support to strengthen the Kurds under Mulla Mustafa Barzani thereby preventing the consolidation of Ba'athist-controlled Iraq, the principal Soviet client in the Middle East.¹⁹⁹

The Nationalisation of the IPC

While the meeting in Teheran on 30 May is considered the moment that began US involvement with the Iraqi Kurds, President Nixon would not approve the covert operation of supporting the Iraqi Kurds with money and arms until August 1972. Several developments would occur between May and August which, in addition to the Shah, convinced Kissinger and President Nixon to support the Iraqi Kurds to stop the growing Soviet influence in Iraq. Perhaps most notably, the nationalisation of the Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC), which removed the last major remnant of American interest in Iraq under the current government.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ Mari Salberg. *"Conventional Wisdom"* 103/4

¹⁹⁸ Mari Salberg. *"Conventional Wisdom"* 104

¹⁹⁹ Memorandum from Kissinger to President Nixon. Subject: Continued Covert Support for the Kurds. Washington, March 29, 1973. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Iran; Iraq 1973-1976. Doc. 207

²⁰⁰ There were still some American interests in other Iraqi petroleum companies, such as the Basra Petroleum Company. However, the nationalising the IPC was a significant development and indicated the Iraqi government's disposition.

A clear concern for American interest in Iraq and further motivation for American support for the Iraqi Kurds came on 1 June. Sending apparent signals of the Soviet influence in Iraq, the day after President Nixon left Teheran, the Iraqi Ba'ath regime decided to nationalize the IPC. This was a result of increased Soviet influence in Iraqi oil production and a long conflict between the IPC and Baghdad over the split of oil revenues and compensation.²⁰¹

The CIA created a report determining that nationalisation would not hurt Iraqi production, but Iraq could struggle to sell the oil. As the western companies making up the IPC would oppose the sale of Iraqi oil to the West in response to the nationalisation. Iraq's Minister for petroleum and the Minister for foreign affairs travelled to Moscow on 2 June, turning to the USSR to sell their oil, but the CIA concluded that the Soviets would not be able to provide adequate demand for Iraqi oil to replace the West. The CIA pointed to several factors why nationalisation would hurt, not only was it assumed that 40 % of the Iraqi state's revenues came from the IPC, but neither could Iraq depend on OPEC to lower production.²⁰²

The State Department had more long-term concerns over the nationalization, and how it might inspire other Arab countries to follow suit. Their solution was to pressure Iraq in the market, not openly opposing Iraq, so as to not incur a reaction of solidarity from other Arab nations.²⁰³ To Washington, the nationalisation was not only another sign of Iraqi instability and Soviet influence, but it also removed what in May had been presented to President Nixon as the most pertinent reason not to interfere in Iraq. In the wake of the nationalisation, Washington expected and hoped that the regime in Iraq would change, in turn allowing for a renewal of US-Iraqi relations. As an immediate response, Washington expected Iraq's ability to sell its oil to the West to be pressured, thereby damaging a significant part of the government's revenues.²⁰⁴ The Iraqi government had no intentions of improving relations with the US. To great effect, it often publicly attacked the US as a supporter of Israel and imperialists.²⁰⁵

²⁰¹ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 137. Marion Farouk-Sluglett & Peter Sluglett. *Iraq Since 1958. From Revolution to Dictatorship.* 147

²⁰² Intelligence Memorandum prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency. Subject: Some Implications of Iraq's Oil Nationalization. Washington, June 1972. *FRUS*, Vol. e-4, Doc. 311

²⁰³ Memorandum from Seelye (Country Director for Lebanon, Jordan, the Syrian Arab Republic, and Iraq) to Sisco. Washington, June 13, 1972. *FRUS*, Vol. e-4, Doc.316

²⁰⁴ Intelligence Memorandum prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency. Washington, June 1972. Subject: Some Implications of Iraq's Oil Nationalization. *FRUS*, Vol. e-4, Doc. 311. Memorandum from Seelye to Sisco. Washington, June 13, 1972. Subject: Essential Elements of IPC Nationalization Action. *FRUS*, Vol. e-4, Doc. 316

²⁰⁵ National Intelligence Estimate. Washington, December 21, 1972. Subject: Iraq's Role in Middle Eastern Problems. *FRUS*, Vol. e-4, Doc. 330. A spokesman for the Iraqi Foreign Ministry reaffirmed that the break of

However, neither the State Department nor the CIA could have predicted how the Iraqi economy would skyrocket the following year. After the Yom Kippur war in October 1973 between Israel and a coalition of Arab states, OPEC enacted an oil embargo meant to punish American support of Israel.²⁰⁶

Washington had no ambitions of improving relations with the current government in Iraq. The State Department had since April 1971 wanted to improve the American presence in Iraq, but that had been to protect American commercial interests in oil. In addition, after being caught off guard by the increased Soviet activity in Iraq, they had wanted to improve the quality of the intel they had been receiving through the Belgian embassy in Baghdad since 1967.²⁰⁷ The briefing of the President ahead of his meeting with the Shah reveals the administrations impressions of Iraq. The briefing portrayed Iraq as a brutal and unstable state with poor relations with its Arab neighbours. The briefing had been based on Iraq's connections to the Soviet Union and its adversarial relationship with Iran. That the American interests in Iraqi oil were considered the only reason not to engage in support of Iraqi Kurds in the fight against Baghdad, speaks volumes of the state of US-Iraqi relations. The Ba'ath regime's public expression of anti-American propaganda did not help US-Iraqi relations either. The bad state of US-Iraqi relations could itself justify, or would at least not stop, American intervention with the Iraqi Kurds. The US-Iraqi relations were absent when the issue of supporting the Iraqi Kurds was discussed in Washington. This also points to how weak the connection with Iraq was for the US in 1972.

Planning American Support of the Iraqi Kurds

At the encouragement of the Shah on 7 June, Kissinger planned to meet with representatives of Barzani to discuss the prospect of covert US support of the Iraqi Kurds. Saunders, a part of the NSC staff, warned Kissinger about supporting the Iraqi Kurds or even meeting with representatives of Barzani himself.²⁰⁸ Saunders' reservations against US support of the Iraqi

political and economic relations with the US was still valid in the eyes of the Iraqi government. Telegram from the embassy in Belgium to the Department of State. Brussels, August 3, 1972. Subject: Iraqi Foreign Ministry's Reaction to Department Spokesman's Announcement on US Personnel for USINT. *FRUS*, Vol. e-4, Doc. 323

²⁰⁶ Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 159-160

²⁰⁷ Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Belgium. Washington, January 28, 1972, Subject: US Personnel for Baghdad Interests Section. *FRUS*, Vol. e-4, Doc. 296

²⁰⁸ Roham Alvandi. *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*. 83, Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 138, Memorandum from Harold Saunders to Kissinger. Washington, June 7, 1972. *FRUS*, Vol. e-4, Doc. 313

Kurds mirrored the concerns of the State Department. Conceding at least that Kissinger himself should not meet with the Kurds, Director Helms and NSC member Colonel Richard Kennedy were selected to meet with the Barzani Representatives on 30 June.²⁰⁹ Before the meeting with Barzani's representatives, Saunders told Helms that the US should stay clear of the Iraqi Kurds and that the Iranian support was sufficient. "Your main purpose in seeing these fellows will be simply to hear them out and to enable Henry to send some reflections back to the Shah after hearing their case," further suggesting that he should join the meeting as he had experience rejecting the Iraqi Kurds.²¹⁰ While this showed the different opinions on the Iraqi Kurds within the Nixon administration, Saunders' wishes were not granted, signifying how the issue had evolved from a question of whether or not the US should get involved in Iraq, into a question of what such involvement would look like.

At the meeting on 30 June, the Barzani representatives repeated the warnings of Soviet influence and pressure. In exchange for supporting Barzani economically, politically and militarily, the US would gain a steadfast ally in the region, in addition to access to Kurdish/Iraqi oil. Helms responded that the meeting itself was a testament to American willingness to consider supporting Barzani. Richard Helms desired the exact economic and military needs of Barzani to consider if and how the US could assist. He demanded, however, that the American support would be kept secret.²¹¹ Dr. Mahmoud Uthman, the Political Secretary of Barzani's KDP, later recounted that a second demand was made; that the Iraqi Kurds would not bypass the Shah for American support.²¹² Confirming the Shah's position in the American plan to destabilise Iraq by supporting the Iraqi Kurds.

Reporting on the meeting, Helms concluded that considering an increased Soviet influence in Iraq, it would serve American interests if Iraq were to remain unstable and that Barzani would be the most efficient way of accomplishing that. Washington had previously argued against interfering in Iraq, partly to not affect Iran's security. This change in American policy must be seen as placating the Shah, being a result of the Shah making the Iraqi Kurds an issue that represented Iranian security, as he had accused the Ba'ath regime in Iraq of sabotaging and

²⁰⁹ Roham Alvandi. *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*. 85

²¹⁰ Memorandum from Harold Saunders Haig Subject: Background for Your Talk with Kurdish Leaders Washington, June 23, 1972. *FRUS*, Vol. e-4, Doc 318

²¹¹ Memorandum of Conversation. Subject: Washington Meetings with Kurdish Representatives. Washington, July 5, 1972. *FRUS*, Vol. e-4, Doc. 319.

²¹² Roham Alvandi. *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*. 86

terrorising Iran. Supporting the Iraqi Kurds would keep Iraq unstable, preventing it from attacking Iran. It also served the US interest in stopping the Soviet influence.²¹³

Furthermore, Helms argued that the Soviet pressure on Barzani confirmed that the Soviet Union also considered him a threat to Iraqi stability. This suggests that Helms deemed supporting the Iraqi Kurds to be the best solution to destabilising Iraq and thus negating Soviet influence in Iraq. Helms' analysis contradicted opinions within the Nixon administration which had predicted that the Soviets would be careful in the Gulf considering how much the USSR valued Iran.²¹⁴ But even if Helms expected the Soviets to sacrifice their Iranian relationship to protect their Iraqi one, other issues such as Kurdish divisions or Barzani's old age could prove even more problematic. Helms concluded by recommending US support to the Iraqi Kurds. Emphasising the threat of the Ba'ath regime as a reason for engaging in Iraq. According to him, the Iraqi Kurds had unrealistic ideas of their military abilities. With the Iraqi Kurds willing to oppose the Iraqi government, however, the timing was crucial if they hoped to destabilise Iraq. Hoping to capitalise on the Iraqi government's decreased revenues from its petroleum production. Helms concluded, "The threat to moderate Middle-Eastern governments and to western interests posed by the Soviet-backed Iraqi Ba'thi regime warrants helping Barzani maintain opposition to that regime."²¹⁵

Developments in Soviet Position in the Middle East

Seemingly confirming the perception that the Soviet influence in Iraq would grow if left unchecked, the Soviets increased their attention in Iraq in July.

The scales of USSR interest in the Middle East shifted most noticeably towards Iraq on 18 July 1972 with the expulsion of 15 000 USSR troops from Egypt.²¹⁶ The development increased Iraq's importance to the Soviet Union. The Soviets emphasised Iraq's increased importance when they attempted to convince Barzani to join the national coalition in August

²¹³ Memorandum of Conversation. Subject: Washington Meetings with Kurdish Representatives. Washington, July 5, 1972. *FRUS*, Vol. e-4, Doc. 319

²¹⁴ Intelligence Memorandum. Washington, May 12, 1972. Subject: Moscow and the Persian Gulf. *FRUS*, Vol. e-4, Doc. 307

²¹⁵ Memorandum from Haig to Kissinger Subject: Kurdish Problem. Washington, July 28, 1972. *FRUS*, Vol. e-4, Doc. 321

²¹⁶ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 139

1972.²¹⁷ The improving USSR-Iraqi relations increased the pressure on the Iraqi Kurds, as it now became more important to the Soviets to stabilise Iraq under a national coalition led by the Ba'ath regime.

This development in Iraq only emphasised the need for the Nixon administration to enact their planned support of Iraqi Kurds. Iraq had become an important Cold War battleground. On 28 July, Helms' final report on the prospect of operations with the Iraqi Kurds was sent to Kissinger. It suggested supporting the Kurds with 3 million USD over the course of a year, with an additional 2 million in arms. The report further advised circumventing the interagency "40 committee" which dealt with approval and oversight of covert operations. With the approval of the President, the principal members of the committee would be informed, and then operations would commence. The report admitted that the situation in Iraq had grown more delicate following the expulsion of 15 000 Soviet troops from Egypt on 18 July, a development believed to bring increased Soviet attention to Iraq.²¹⁸ While the Shah had contributed to changing the American perception of Iraq, the increased Soviet activity confirmed the need for US action in Iraq.

Enacting the Plan

The suggestion of the final report was enacted on 1 August, as Kissinger informed only the principal members of the "40 committee", which approved covert operations, that the President had ordered the initiation of covert US support to Barzani. The total 5 million USD of money and weapons would go through the CIA and director Helms.²¹⁹ By only informing the principal members of the "40 committee", meant to oversee covert operations, the circle of trust would remain small, not reaching the parts of the administration which would have objected to the operation. A decision partially based on fear of leaks.

Undoubtedly, the fact that the American policy on intervention in Iraqi Kurdistan changed was a significant development, breaking with the long-held policy of not interfering in the

²¹⁷ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 144

²¹⁸ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 139, Memorandum from Haig to Kissinger SUBJECT: Kurdish Problem. Washington, July 28, 1972. *FRUS*, Vol. e-4, Doc. 321

²¹⁹ Memorandum from Kissinger. Washington, undated. *FRUS*, Vol. e-4, Doc. 322

conflict. It does, however, merit a discussion of the significance of the support. The Iraqi Kurds held no trust in Iranian promises and had wanted American involvement for over a decade. Perhaps hoping to mirror the US involvement in the Cold War battleground of Vietnam led them to believe that American support in a Cold War conflict would be a serious commitment, rather than the truth that Vietnam had heavily reduced US willingness to engage US personnel in foreign operations. This should be considered when looking at the 5 million USD or even the total 18 million USD the Iraqi Kurds were receiving from the US and allied nations such as Iran and Israel. This support was a drop in the ocean compared to Soviet investments in Iraq. In 1973 the US estimated that the Soviet Union, since 1965, had given Iraq 500 million USD in economic support, and over one billion USD in military support.²²⁰ Knowing this, all the US estimations on Kurdish capabilities considered an offensive pointless. Considering the incredible difference in military capabilities, even defensive capabilities were a stretch of the imagination. The US support was, however, referred to as moral support, which for the Iraqi Kurds meant some kind of guarantee that they would not be abandoned. While the US support of the Iraqi Kurds helped them, the ultimate benefit was for American interests and allies. Ensuring that the Iraqi Kurds continued to be a thorn in the side of the Ba'ath regime in Iraq, keeping with the Shah's policy of giving them just enough.

On 5 October Kissinger informed President Nixon that director Helms had confirmed that the first shipment of financial and military support had been received, with more coming. Kissinger reported that Barzani's position would occupy the Iraqi forces and shield Iran from Iraqi sabotage and assassination attempts.²²¹ That this was included in the first report on the operations, highlights how the decision to support the Iraqi Kurds had also been based on Iranian security concerns.

With the Iraqi government feeling stable after gaining more support from the Soviets, and Barzani feeling confident after finally achieving American support, the two sides more

²²⁰ Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State. Baghdad, March 31, 1973. Subject: Country Assessment for Iraq. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976*, Vol. XXVII, Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976. Doc. 208

²²¹ Memorandum from Kissinger to President Nixon. Washington, October 5, 1972. Subject: Progress Report on the Kurdish Support Operations. *FRUS*, Vol. e-4, Doc. 325

confidently confronted the other. The Iraqi Ba'ath regime contacted Barzani in September 1972, accusing him of not following through with the March accord of 1970. The March accords were supposed to achieve peace by ensuring Kurdish rights, in exchange for surrendering Kurdish weapons. However, neither side had made any serious effort to enact the tenants of the accord. The accusation against Barzani was a clear shift from the various representatives, even from the Soviets, who had previously appealed to Barzani to join the national coalition. Barzani waited until November until sending a reply, after receiving the first shipment of American support. Baring his fangs, Barzani responded by criticising the actions of the regime since the accord was struck - not only had attempts been made to move Arab citizens into Kurdish areas, but Kurdish villages had been bombed and several assassination attempts had been made on Barzani's life.²²² The increased hostility in the public rhetoric by both sides had no doubt been bolstered by their respective support from a superpower, signalling heightened tensions in Iraq.

With the State Department largely out of the loop for the covert operations, it continued its plan of renewed efforts in Iraq following the growing Soviet influence. The plans to establish a US interests section in Baghdad, replacing five years without a diplomatic presence in Iraq, were carried out in September 1972. The chief diplomat, Arthur Lowrie, oblivious to any other developments, reported a stalemate in the conflict between Baghdad and Barzani.²²³ He also quickly made his position on US-Iraqi relations clear. In his opinion, to ensure US future access to oil from the Middle East and Iraq especially, US policy on Iraq should be careful and polite. Lowrie argued that the administration should not reacting to anti-American sentiments or propaganda, rather it should wait for the Iraqis to reach out. Lowrie wanted to placate the Iraqis, hoping to ultimately improve relations.²²⁴ As a result, Lowrie would continue to speak against the Iraqi Kurds and Iran's support of them within the administration, oblivious that he was speaking against the administration's own policy.

²²² David McDowall. *A Modern History of the Kurds* 1996. London, New York. 332

²²³ Roham Alvandi. *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*. 89

²²⁴ Memorandum from the U.S. Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State. Baghdad, October 21, 1972. Subject: U.S. Policy Toward Iraq. *FRUS*, Vol. e-4, Doc. 326

The developments of 1972

The change in American policy towards the Iraqi Kurds came due to a series of events connected to the political context of the Cold War and the Shah's ability to sway his American allies. Despite Barzani's telling Washington that without increased support he would be forced to comply with Soviet wishes to join the national coalition, the immediate reaction in early 1972 had been silence from the US.²²⁵ Yet, increasingly after the USSR-Iraqi agreement in April, the prospect of supporting the Iraqi Kurds was discussed within the Nixon administration. The briefing of the President ahead of the meeting in Teheran can be understood as supporting interfering in Iraq. The only argument against subverting the Iraqi government presented to the President was that it could hurt American interests in Iraqi oil. Yet there had been intelligence in March that indicated the Iraqis could nationalise the IPC.²²⁶ In which case, there would be no argument against taking measures to counter the Soviet influence in Iraq. This indicated that parts of the Nixon administration wanted to counter the Soviets already before the meeting between President Nixon, Kissinger and the Shah in May 1972. However, the Shah was a necessary middleman, considering the political climate for American foreign adventures required secrecy of any American involvement. In addition, as the Shah was already supporting the Iraqi Kurds, which Washington knew full well, supporting the Iraqi Kurds through Iran would be an easy task. By going through the Shah, the US also signalled that he was an important partner in the region.

The Shah had been confident, ahead of his meeting with Nixon, in his ability to achieve American support for the Iraqi Kurds.²²⁷ Ultimately, the Shah was successful, despite opinions from inside the Nixon administration and even the reluctance in Washington to engage in such operations in the shadow of the Vietnam War.²²⁸ While this can be considered a break from past policy and policy decision-making, it came as a result of a development years in the making. With the Shah's growing influence and position in the Middle East, the Nixon administration had increasingly been forced to consider Iranian interests. When the State Department handled the Iraqi Kurds, the Shah did not influence the

²²⁵ Memorandum from Helms to Kissinger, Secretary of State Rogers, and Secretary of Defense Laird. Washington, March 29, 1972. *FRUS*, Vol. e-4, Doc. 302

²²⁶ Memorandum from Helms to Kissinger, Secretary of State Rogers, and Secretary of Defense Laird. Washington, March 31, 1972. *FRUS*, Vol. e-4, Doc. 303

²²⁷ Already on 18 May 1972, when Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir had visited Iran, the Shah had been confident that he could secure American support for the Iranian and Israeli involvement with the Iraqi Kurds, which he would discuss with President Nixon and Kissinger. Roham Alvandi. *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*. 81

²²⁸ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 132

issue, the US continued its policy of non-intervention. By bringing the issue to higher levels of the Nixon administration in 1972, he was able to use his influence on the principal policymakers, namely Kissinger and Nixon. The Shah had long used Iran's position in the Cold War to his benefit, and now the Iraqi Kurds became an extension of that idea. As Kissinger's update on the issue on 5 October highlights, the issue of the Kurds was also considered a matter of Iranian security.

However, the Shah's request was not the only argument for American intervention in Iraq. Kissinger later recounted that the Shah had even broached the subject of US support for Iraqi Kurds already in November 1971. The escalation of Soviet activity in Iraq contributed massively to the decision of supporting the Kurds in Iraq. The increased Soviet activity also countered many of the reservations the State Department had expressed against getting involved with the Iraqi Kurds. The Iraqi Ba'ath had signed a friendship agreement with the USSR and seen their position elevated with the Soviets following the Egyptian expulsion of Soviet troops in July 1972. As such, the growing Soviet presence in Iraq and the nationalisation of the Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC) worked to strengthen the idea of Iraq being a Cold War battleground the Americans had to engage in, even in the shadow of detente. The Nixon administration had always been interested in and forced to agree with the Shah on his concerns about security in the region. By elevating the Iraqi issue, he finally got American support for the Iraqi Kurds.

With tensions growing in Iraq, the Iraqi Kurds and the Iraqi government were anxiously aware of March 1974. If the stipulations of the March accords had not been implemented by March 1974, the truce between Barzani and Baghdad would cease. Renewing the conflict with the Kurds was still a risky enterprise for the Ba'ath regime, as it had contributed to toppling several Iraqi regimes in the past. The tensions were, however, rising as confidence on both sides had been boosted in 1972: The Iraqi Kurds had finally gained American support, which would increase throughout 1973. The truce of 1970 had given Saddam Hussein time to stabilise and consolidate his power. Further strengthened by Iraq's oil revenue increasing from 600 million USD to 1.8 billion USD from 1972 to 1973. The revenue would only increase further following the Yom Kippur War of October 1973.²²⁹

²²⁹ Roham Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*. 101

Chapter Five: 1973, Internal Divisions and Increased Stakes

If the previous year had been a year of changing relations, 1973 would spell the resulting tension of those changes. Increasingly, the differences between the factions of the Iraqi Ba'ath regime would make themselves clear in 1973. Both factions of the Ba'ath regime, the militant extremist faction, and the civilian pragmatic faction, were vying for power and used their positions to enact their ideas of strengthening Iraq. The militant extremist faction wanted to show Iraqi power by attacking neighbours and sabotaging adversaries. Opposing the militant faction's militant solutions was the civil pragmatic faction, led by Saddam Hussein. This part of the Ba'ath wanted to stabilize Iraq and the Ba'ath regime, and then grow from a consolidated position of strength. While both wanted to solve the issue of the Iraqi Kurds, their methods differed. Both groups would enact their schemes in early 1973 which in turn would bring a reaction from the United States, and ultimately be used as an argument in discussions of the US support of the Iraqi Kurds.

After five years without a diplomatic presence in Iraq, the US had established an interests section in Baghdad in late 1972, with Arthur L. Lowrie as its principal officer. Analysing the internal divisions in the Ba'ath regime, he wanted Washington to encourage and potentially engage with Saddam Hussein's pragmatic faction to push the Soviet Union out of Iraq.²³⁰ Lowrie and the State Department were oblivious to the American support of the Iraqi Kurds, underscoring their limited influence on US policy. The covert operation conducted through the Shah with the Iraqi Kurds was kept secret, even within the Nixon administration. How did the covert operation influence the US policy on Iraq? Lowrie and the State Department followed the official US policy of non-intervention in their comments on Iraq and its conflict with Barzani. At the same time, the White House directed the Kurdish operation intending to

²³⁰ Lowrie saw the divisions within the Ba'ath party in Iraq. He identified one faction as militant, extremist and adverse to American interests and allies. The other faction he noted as constructive and realist. Where the militant faction was aggressive, the realist faction was pragmatic, often sacrificing ideology for self-interests. Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State. Baghdad, March 27, 1973. Subject: U.S. Policy Toward Iraq. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 206

disrupt the Soviet plans. Meanwhile, the new ambassador in Teheran, Richard Helms, reiterated the Shah's views that Iraq was a Soviet puppet.

As a result, multiple internal divisions of opinion on Iraq developed within the Nixon administration. While agreeing on their goal of limiting Soviet influence, Washington, the embassy in Iran, and the interests section in Baghdad all provided different advice on how to handle Iraq. With Helms often reiterating the Shah's opinion and Lowrie encouraging the administration to engage with elements within the Iraqi government, the two clashed over US policy on Iraq.

After winning his re-election in November 1972, Nixon decided to reorganise parts of his administration, firing CIA Director Richard Helms. When the President offered to make him ambassador, Helms chose Iran.²³¹ The new American ambassador to Iran would have serious implications for the Iraqi Kurds. Beginning in early 1973 as ambassador, Helms oversaw the Kurdish operation and the communication between Washington and Teheran. The American Kurdish operation was managed by CIA officer Callahan and another unnamed CIA officer in Teheran. Their doubts about and warnings against the operation and its consequences fell on deaf ears. As his successor as CIA director, James Schlesinger would later recall, Helms's former position as CIA Director gave the leadership in the CIA an unreasonable trust in his considerations and in the Kurdish operation itself.²³² According to Salberg, the value of Helms' work as ambassador during his four-year tenure was limited by the need for him to travel to the US to testify about Watergate and illegal CIA operations.²³³ Combined with the US support working through the Iranians, this resulted in the Shah gaining even greater influence on the US operation. Helms rarely disagreed with the Shah, joining the tradition of American ambassadors to Iran becoming the Shah's advocate within the Nixon administration.²³⁴ Helms, like many in Washington, valued the Shah as a partner in the Cold

²³¹ Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 143. Robert Hathaway and Russell Jack Smith, *Richard Helms: As Director of Central Intelligence 1966–1973* (Washington, DC: CIA, 1993) 207

²³² The CIA also refused to send their officers to Barzani's camp, rather opting to depend on the Shah's intelligence service. Roham Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*. 90-91.

²³³ Mari Salberg, "Conventional Wisdom" 118

²³⁴ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War*. 158

War. As supporting the Iraqi Kurds became an extension of supporting the Shah, Helms often advised the White House to increase its support of the Iraqi Kurds.

The Internal Struggle in the Iraqi Ba'ath Regime and American Reactions

Iraq had become a point of focus for the United States - thus the actions of the factions of the Iraqi Ba'ath regime in early 1973 would provoke a response. The Nixon administration had mixed reactions to the developments in Iraq. Some of the Iraqi Ba'ath regime's actions, highlighted by Lowrie, pointed to an opportunity for US influence in Iraq. However, it was never considered, as simultaneously the militant extremist faction in the Ba'ath showed their hostility to American interests. The action of the extremist faction only confirmed what Kissinger and the Shah already believed. They saw the Iraqi government as hostile to their interests and supporting the Iraqi Kurds would keep the Iraqi government occupied. By supporting the Iraqi Kurds, they would remain a destabilising element in Iraq, disrupting Soviet ambitions, which increasingly became a priority for Kissinger.

The militant faction of the Iraqi Ba'ath had been displeased that the Shah's aggression in the Shatt faced no consequences. In response, they enacted a plan to arm Iranian separatists. The scheme was revealed on 10 February, as a large number of weapons and ammunition were found in the Iraqi embassy in Islamabad, having been smuggled in through diplomatic baggage. During the ensuing diplomatic crisis, the Iraqi ambassador became *persona non grata*, while Pakistan recalled its ambassador from Baghdad. Ten days later, Lowrie at the US interests section in Baghdad noted a circulating rumour that the weapons were meant for the Balochi in Iran in an attempt by the extremist faction of the Iraqi Ba'ath to instigate a separatist conflict in Iran similar to that between the Kurds and the central administration in Iraq.²³⁵ When the Shah had petitioned for American support for the Iraqi Kurds, one of the arguments had been to counter Iraqi attempts to sabotage his rule. This public revelation confirmed the suspicions that the Iraqis were attempting to sabotage the Shah.

Countering the public failure of the extremist faction, the pragmatic faction of the Ba'ath made significant progress on 28 February 1973. Marking the end of the conflict between Iraq

²³⁵ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976*, Vol. XXVII, Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976. Doc. 204

and the IPC, the two agreed on terms of compensation for the nationalisation that happened in 1972.²³⁶ This eased tension with the US, to the annoyance of the Soviet Union. The State Department, however, did not consider that this would further benefit American interests in the near future. The Americans had been largely overlooked in the negotiations, despite representing 25% of the IPC.²³⁷ Lowrie, however, argued it was evidence of the growing desire in the Iraqi government to open to the West, an opportunity the US should seize.

Another sign of Iraqi hostility to US interest, spawned by the extremist faction of the Ba'ath, occurred on 20 March. Iraqi forces attacked the border of Kuwait and claimed two of Kuwait's islands, Warbah and Bubiyan. Kuwait quickly asked the US for support, but Nixon did not want to deploy US forces and suggested Kuwait appeal to regional allies. Saudi Arabia sent 15 000 troops to prevent further aggression from Iraq. Embarrassingly, the Soviet Premier, Alexei Kosygin, had been in Teheran when the attack occurred. On 22 March, Saddam Hussein was summoned to Moscow to explain, not only the unprovoked attack on Kuwait but also the settlement with the IPC, which indicated a wish to engage with the United States.²³⁸

Twice at the end of March, Lowrie tried to convince Washington of his impressions of Iraq. He wanted the US to engage with the pragmatic faction of the Ba'ath. Lowrie presented the Ba'ath as the most stable Iraqi regime since 1958, even if it was control and stability through brutal means. The Kurds were the only obstacle to the Ba'ath stabilising their regime. He based his assessment that the Soviet influence could be negated on two assumptions. The first was that the settlement with the IPC showed the regime was willing to open to the West. The second was that the Ba'ath feared that the communist elements in Iraq would threaten their regime. Even if the USSR was heavily invested in Iraq, Lowrie suggested the US promote the pragmatic faction of the Ba'ath in order to gain influence in Iraq.²³⁹

²³⁶ Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 147

²³⁷ Memorandum from Eliot (Executive Secretary of the Department of State) to Kissinger, Washington, March 3, 1973. Subject: Settlement to Iraqi Oil Dispute. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 205

²³⁸ Bryan R. Gibson *Sold Out?* 147-148.

²³⁹ Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State. Baghdad, March 27, 1973. Subject: U.S. Policy Toward Iraq. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII. Doc. 206

Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State. Baghdad, March 31, 1973. Subject: Country Assessment for Iraq. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII. Doc. 208

The White House did not share Lowrie's assessment of the Ba'ath regime. On the contrary, partially in response to the developments in Iraq, the Nixon administration decided to continue their support of the Iraqi Kurds at the end of March. In his suggestion to President Nixon to continue the support, Kissinger emphasised the value of the Iraqi Kurds. The Iraqi Kurds disrupted the Soviet domination of Iraq and acted as a buffer to stop Iraqi attempts at terrorizing or sabotaging Iran. The Pakistan incident in February had just confirmed the importance of destabilising Iraq.²⁴⁰ Kissinger continued by pointing to Ba'ath's support of what he called "Palestinian terrorists" and being an adamant adversary to peace with Israel. Kissinger concluded by saying "It is a regime whose instability we should continue to promote."²⁴¹ Kissinger's arguments compounded multiple US foreign policy interests pointing to the same solution, by supporting the Iraqi Kurds the Soviet influence in Iraq would be stopped, while Iran and Israel would be relieved of Iraqi sabotage. On 29 March, President Nixon approved a continuation of the support to the Kurds of about 5 million USD.²⁴²

Internal Divisions in the Nixon Administration on Iraq

The divisions within the Nixon administration highlights how the US policy on Iraq and the Iraqi Kurds was formed. The decisions to continue supporting the Iraqi Kurds and not engage with the pragmatic elements in the Iraqi Ba'ath regime reveals how much Helms and the Shah influenced US policy on the Iraqi Kurds. According to Alvandi, there were no opposing voices to the operation because the number of people who knew of the American support of the Iraqi Kurds was so small.²⁴³ However vocal Lowrie may have been, and certainly supported by some developments in Iraq which merited consideration, his advice was never heeded. This was certainly because Helms knew of the American support for the Kurds and justified the operations in his opposition to Lowrie. These facts contribute to the idea that Kissinger was not interested in gaining Iraq's favour in the Cold War, he was interested in

²⁴⁰ Interestingly in January, the exiting ambassador Joseph Farland had sent the Department of State his analysis of Iran, presumably for his replacement's benefit. He considered the Iranian Balochi and Kurds to be able to disturb a province but would have no ability to influence Teheran, which was the key to political control of Iran. Airgram from the embassy in Iran to the Department of State. Tehran, January 9, 1973. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII Doc. 1

²⁴¹ Memorandum from Kissinger to President Nixon. Subject: Continued Covert Support for the Kurds. Washington, March 29, 1973. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII. Doc. 207

²⁴² Roham Alvandi *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*. 91-92

²⁴³ Roham Alvandi *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*. 90

making the Soviet Union bleed, which supporting the Kurds in Iraq ensured.²⁴⁴ It, therefore, did not help that Lowrie shared the opinion of the Soviet Union that the Iraqi Kurds should submit to the Iraqi government and that Iran should seek peace with Iraq.

While Lowrie was exaggerating the possibilities for the US in Iraq, he was also unaware of just how much the administration worked opposite his assessment by supporting the Iraqi Kurds. Although different parts of the administration gave contrary advice, they all worked with a Cold War scope of Iraq, only their interpretations on how to limit Soviet influence differed. Lowrie, basing his assumptions on the official US policy of non-intervention in the conflict between the Iraqi Kurds and Baghdad, still sought to push the Soviet Union out of Iraq. He considered the pragmatic parts of the Ba'ath to be the best chance of strengthening US influence and limiting Soviet influence in Iraq.

Lowrie's assessment was met with open opposition by ambassador Helms. Helms saw the Shah's role as pivotal in the Cold War and thus tried to preserve his interests. The Shah had often spoken out against Iraq and against trusting the Ba'ath regime. On 10 April, Helms criticised Lowrie's suggestions of changing American policy on Iraq and engaging with parts of the Ba'ath. Helms warned how their ally the Shah would react, condemning the Iraqi regime as extreme and hostile to American interests.²⁴⁵ That same day, Lowrie continued to argue for encouraging the pragmatic parts of the Ba'ath regime. In his opinion, the downplayed celebrations of the anniversary of the friendship treaty of 1972 signalled the cooling of Soviet-Iraqi relations. Also, the discussions of Iraq joining COMECON, the Soviet-led economic organisation, had died down.²⁴⁶

The opposing views on Iraq within the administration highlight the difficulty of keeping parts of the administration in the dark about the support they were providing to the Iraqi Kurds. Lowrie's suggestions could never be taken as sound advice as he was not informed of all

²⁴⁴ Memorandum of Conversation. Washington, July 23, 1973. PARTICIPANTS: Henry A. Kissinger, Richard Helms (now US Ambassador to Iran) and Harold H. Saunders. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 24

²⁴⁵ Bryan R. Gibson. *Sold Out?* 148

²⁴⁶ Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State. Baghdad, April 10, 1973. Subject: First Anniversary of Soviet-Iraqi Treaty. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII. Doc 212

aspects of the US policy on Iraq, as Helms was. Helms's arguments followed Kissinger's reasoning for supporting the Iraqi Kurds. Kissinger trusted Helms and the Shah.

It was increasingly evident that Lowrie had a limited ability to influence US policy on Iraq, despite being the highest representative in Iraq. As the conflict between Lowrie and Helms came to a head when the NEA chiefs of mission met in Teheran for a discussion of American policy in the region. Lowrie argued that the Ba'ath in Iraq represented an opportunity, not a Soviet puppet. Going further than before, Lowrie argued that Iraq's attempts at showing strength were a reaction to threats from Teheran.²⁴⁷ He was supported by other parts of the Nixon administration that had already raised the idea of Iraq's conflict with Kuwait being a result of Iranian control of the Shatt al-Arab.²⁴⁸ Lowrie thought peace between Iraq and Iran was possible without the USSR. To him, such peace would make Iraq less dependent on the Soviets, which in turn would strengthen American influence.²⁴⁹ Unbeknownst to Lowrie, acting on Soviet suggestion, Iran and Iraq had started meeting in April to discuss a peaceful resolution. Even so, Lowrie did not affect the US policy on the Iraqi Kurds, signifying the level to which Kissinger valued his own but also Helms' view on the matter.

The Iran-Iraqi Meetings

The meetings between Iran and Iraq began in April 1973 and would have both short- and long-term effects on the Iraqi Kurds and their struggle. In the short term, the meetings would make Barzani lash out publicly against the Iraqi regime. In the long term, the meetings would sporadically continue until 1975, with an ultimately catastrophic effect on the Kurdish struggle in Iraq. Alvandi suggests the start of these meetings symbolises that the Shah was already prepared at this point to give up his Kurdish card. The Shah also revealed this fact to the British ambassador.²⁵⁰

The major deciding factor was the lack of trust between the two parties. However, until the parties were able to make an agreement that they both trusted the other to keep, the Shah

²⁴⁷ Bryan R. Gibson. *Sold Out?* 149

²⁴⁸ Intelligence Note Prepared in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. Washington, April 17, 1973. Subject: Iraq-Kuwait: Twentieth Century Geopolitics. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII. Doc. 213

²⁴⁹ Letter from Lowrie (Chief of the Interests Section in Baghdad) to Korn (the Director of the Office of Lebanon, Jordan, Syrian Arab Republic, and Iraq Affairs, Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs). Baghdad, April 30, 1973. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII. Doc 214.

²⁵⁰ Roham Alvandi. *Nixon, Kissinger and the Shah*. 92-93

needed to keep his leverage. His bargaining position was dependent on the Kurds remaining a thorn in the side of Iraq, and thus the support for them had to be maintained or even increased. His interests were still aligned with Kissinger's, who considered Iraq a regional threat. Kissinger saw no benefit from détente between Iran and Iraq by giving up the Iraqi Kurds, which in his eyes, served to hold the Soviet influence in Iraq at bay. When Lowrie learned of the meetings in May, he wanted the US to support them.²⁵¹ The State Department even discussed the idea of Iraq opening to American interests and re-establishing diplomatic connections.²⁵² These efforts were futile, as they did not align with Kissinger's view on Iraq.

The news of the Iran-Iraq negotiations worried Barzani when the Soviets informed him in early June. The Soviets wanted to pressure him to come to peaceful terms with Baghdad, this time by suggesting that his Iranian support could disappear.²⁵³ Barzani travelled to Teheran to question the Shah, reacting to the news of Iran-Iraqi meetings. The Shah reassured Barzani and told him, rather than succumbing to Baghdad's demands, to pressure the Ba'ath regime by publicly demanding free elections. The Shah thought this was an impossible task for the Ba'ath regime in Iraq, while it would please the Soviets.²⁵⁴ The tensions brought by the news of the Iraq and Iran negotiation would surface as Barzani returned to his enclave in northern Iraq. A few days after Barzani's visit to Teheran, an American journalist, Jim Hoagland, came to Iraqi Kurdistan to interview Barzani for the Washington Post.²⁵⁵ Barzani, as usual, requested American support and promised away the oil of Kirkuk. When he was asked about the truce, Barzani stated he would keep the ceasefire of 1970 until March 1974. If the terms of the accord had not been implemented by then, Barzani would attack. In response to Barzani's threat, Baghdad deployed the Iraqi military to attack the Kurds, leaving 18 dead.²⁵⁶

Still uneasy about the Iran-Iraq meetings, Barzani sent representatives to Teheran to meet with the Americans. Barzani had always had more faith in the American promises than the Shah's. When ambassador Helms and Station chief Callahan met with Idris Barzani and Dr.

²⁵¹ Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State. Baghdad, May 17, 1973. Subject: Iran-Iraq Negotiations. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII. Doc. 215

²⁵² Memorandum from Korn to Sisco. Washington, May 21, 1973. Subject: Outstanding Iraqi Military Sales Cases. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII. Doc.216

²⁵³ Roham Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*. 92-94. Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 150.

²⁵⁴ Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 150

²⁵⁵ Jim Hoagland, "The Kurds Gird for Another War," *Washington Post*, June 24, 1973

²⁵⁶ Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 151

Othman, the Kurdish representatives stated that Barzani continued to publicly appeal for American support to hide the American support they were receiving.²⁵⁷ Lowrie, on the other hand, asked the State Department to publicly distance the United States from the Kurdish appeals for support after the Kurds also requested a meeting in Washington. He believed the Kurds would never negotiate with the Shah supporting them. He further suggested that the ensuing war between Baghdad and Iraqi Kurds would only increase Iraqi dependency on the USSR, and the danger of the Kurdish struggle spilling over to Turkey and Iran. Lowrie, in the name of regional stability, wanted the Kurdish struggle to fail and for the Iraqi Kurds to act within Iraq. In his eyes, the Israeli and Iranian support had only benefitted them, not the Iraqi Kurds. He further argued that the Iraqi Kurds could never hope to even sustain themselves in independence.²⁵⁸ Lowrie's arguments mirrored many of the concerns that had been circulating before May 1972 which still did not surmount the value Kissinger saw in supporting the Iraqi Kurds.

With heightened tensions in Iraq, the competing narratives of Lowrie and Helms continued towards the end of June. Lowrie pushed for the administration to support détente between Iraq and Iran.²⁵⁹ Helms responded by expressing the Shah's fears regarding a planned military shipment that would be delivered to Iraq from the Soviet Union. The shipment would provide Iraq with new TU-22 planes which had the capabilities to strike Iranian targets without crossing the border. The development was enough for the Shah to want Iraq to be referred to as a satellite state. Helms suspected that the Shah exaggerated his fears, potentially to receive more military support from the United States.²⁶⁰ Lowrie quickly responded to Helms' claims, stating that he did not see the situation in Iraq as dire as Teheran did, not least because the Iraqi military could not hope to equal the Iranians. Lowrie's further criticised the Shah, for resisting détente, supporting the Iraqi Kurds, not compromising on the Shatt al-Arab, and continuing his anti-Iraqi propaganda, he was pushing Iraq towards the Soviets, making the

²⁵⁷ Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 151. Backchannel Message from the Ambassador Helms to Kissinger. Tehran, July 9, 1973. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 222

²⁵⁸ Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State. Baghdad, July 1, 1973. Subject: Kurdish Bid for USG Support. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 220

²⁵⁹ Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State. Baghdad, June 24, 1973. Subject: Kurdish Problem and Iran. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 217

²⁶⁰ Telegram from the Embassy in Iran to the Department of State. Tehran, June 25, 1973. Subject: Increased Iraq-Soviet Ties. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 218

Shah's prophecies of growing Soviet influence come true.²⁶¹ Lowrie was unable to shift Kissinger away from the Shah's narrative.

Attempted Coup

To the Iraqi Kurds' detriment, events in late June would strengthen Saddam Hussein and propel him towards a position that could resolve the issue of the Kurds, one way or the other. On 30 June the infighting within the Ba'ath regime became a public spectacle in the form of an attempted coup. The attempted coup was led by the head of the Iraqi security forces, Nazim Kazzer. While the coup failed, it provided Saddam Hussein with the opportunity to remove rivals within the regime.²⁶² Either by negotiation or by force, resolving the issue of the Iraqi Kurds required a strong position. A week after the coup, the Ba'ath entered a national coalition with the ICP, excluding Barzani's Kurds. Predicting western concern about forming a government with communist elements, Saddam Hussein met with western journalists. In the meeting, he assured them that Iraq would be open to a "normalisation of relations" with the West.²⁶³ Lowrie suspected that détente with Iran and solving the Kurdish problem to stabilise Iraq would be a priority for Saddam Hussein and the Ba'ath.²⁶⁴ Just by the fact that he was able to make his public appeal to the West, Saddam Hussein's position had grown stronger.

These developments raised concerns with Barzani - improving US-Iraqi relations with the Ba'ath consolidating power in Iraq could spell trouble for the Iraqi Kurds and the US support. Knowing the official answer to any request for American support, he sent a representative to Washington as a public display. When his representatives met with Edward Djerejian from the State Department in Washington, Djerejian could only state that relations seemed to be improving. The State Department was starting to consider how US-Iraqi relations could be improved.²⁶⁵ More importantly, Barzani also sent representatives to Teheran to meet with

²⁶¹ Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State. Baghdad, July 1, 1973. Subject: Iraqi-Soviet Ties. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc.219

²⁶² Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 152. Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State. Baghdad, July 1, 1973. Subject: Abortive Coup. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 221. Marion Farouk-Sluglett & Peter Sluglett. *Iraq Since 1958. From Revolution to Dictatorship*. 161

²⁶³ Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 152

²⁶⁴ Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State. Baghdad, July 15, 1973. Subject: Post-Coup Assessment. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 223

²⁶⁵ Memorandum from Edward P. Djerejian (of the Office of Lebanon, Jordan, Syrian Arab Republic, and Iraq Affairs) to Sisco. Washington, July 20, 1973. Subject: U.S.-Iraqi Relations. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 224

Helms and Callahan to warn of Soviet influence in Iraq. Barzani's representatives in Teheran raised the concern about the truce ending in March 1974, fearing resumed hostilities and even gas attacks by the Ba'ath regime. The Iraqi Kurds requested more heavy weapons to prepare for an attack or even possibly take the initiative against Baghdad.²⁶⁶

The Shah's Visit to Washington and Continued Kurdish Operations

The Shah's visit to Washington represented an important development in the American policy on the Iraqi Kurds, as it resulted in a significant increase in American support. The visit also served to show Kissinger's commitment to combat the Soviet influence, negating any objecting ideas Lowrie raised internally in the Nixon administration.²⁶⁷

Helms arrived in Washington on 23 July to discuss the impending meetings with Kissinger, Helms could also report on the progress of their Kurdish operations and suggest further funding. The scheduled deliveries of weapons had been successful while remaining secret. Helms, like the Shah, was reluctant to give the Iraqi Kurds the offensive weapons they had requested, knowing that March 1974 would spell trouble as the ceasefire of March 1970 would expire. Kissinger supported Helms' idea of increased funding for the Iraqi Kurds, expressing his wish that the Middle East would become too expensive for the Soviets to exert their influence and that the Kurds in Iraq should be like an open wound.²⁶⁸

The following day, 24 July, the first meeting with the Shah commenced. Barzani had asked the Shah for assistance ahead of his trip to Washington, unfortunately relying on him to act in the Iraqi Kurds' best interest knowing they were the only obstacle to Iraqi stability.²⁶⁹ Meeting with Kissinger and his advisors, the Shah clarified that the value of the Iraqi Kurds was in their role in Iraq as leverage against Baghdad, not as an independent nation. He further

²⁶⁶ Roham Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*. 94. Message from the Ambassador Helms to Kissinger. Tehran, July 9, 1973. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc.222

²⁶⁷ Memorandum of Conversation. Washington, July 23, 1973. Participants: Henry A. Kissinger, Richard Helms, and Harold H. Saunders. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 24.

²⁶⁸ Memorandum of Conversation. Washington, July 23, 1973. Participants: Henry A. Kissinger, Richard Helms, and Harold H. Saunders. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 24.

²⁶⁹ Memorandum from Acting Director of Central Intelligence Walters to Kissinger. Washington, July 26, 1973. Subject: Kurdish Leadership Request for Assistance from the Shah of Iran. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 225

proposed to gather a multitude of Iraqi elements, adverse to the Ba'ath regime, in the north to form a coalition.²⁷⁰ The Shah met with Kissinger and his advisors several times during his visit. He continued to use the Cold War language which had made Iraq a point of focus for the United States to ensure increased American support for the Iraqi Kurds.²⁷¹ Kissinger was more than willing to express US interest in continued support for the Iraqi Kurds.

The outcome of the Shah's visit to Washington was an agreement, instigated by the Shah, that it was possible to increase the financial support to the Iraqi Kurds to keep them out of the national coalition.²⁷² The CIA quickly began writing a report on the best options.²⁷³ On 7 August, the new CIA director William Colby gave his suggested options on the Iraqi Kurds to Kissinger for consideration. The CIA report on the Kurds' request for increased support followed the talks Kissinger had had with Helms and the Shah. The report was based on the fact that the US did not want Barzani to leave his defensive position, as such an operation would require considerably more American support and risk revealing US involvement.²⁷⁴

The first option suggested to Kissinger was to keep the support at its current level but to build a cache of weapons in case the growing hostilities between Barzani and Baghdad led to fighting. The second option was to keep the support at its current level but grant the Iraqi Kurds a one-time cash payment which would cover Kurdish needs for infrastructure such as education and a health system. This would show the Kurds that the US was not interested in increasing the support which may make offensive operations possible. The third option was to increase the support to the Iraqi Kurds by 50%. This would placate the Shah and the Kurds while being modest enough to keep the Kurds in their defensive position. It would, however, make it difficult to decrease support in the future. The fourth and final option presented to Kissinger was doubling the support, which in Colby's eyes would give Barzani a false sense of confidence in his offensive capabilities. Colby suggested the second option, as it would

²⁷⁰ Memorandum of Conversation. Washington, July 24, 1973, 5–6:40 p.m. Participants: The Shah of Iran. Ardeshir Zahedi (Ambassador of Iran), Henry A. Kissinger, Ambassador Helms and Harold H. Saunders. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 27

²⁷¹ Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 154

²⁷² Roham Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*. 97. Memorandum of Conversation. Washington, July 27, 1973, 5 p.m. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 30

²⁷³ Bryan R. Gibson. *Sold Out?* 155

²⁷⁴ Memorandum from Director of Central Intelligence Colby to Kissinger Washington, August 7, 1973. Subject: Options for Consideration Regarding Increased Assistance to the Kurds- *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 227

satisfy the Shah and Barzani without a long-term commitment. If Kissinger did not find the second option adequate, Colby recommended the third option.²⁷⁵

Before presenting a suggestion to President Nixon, Kissinger contacted Helms and asked his opinion on the four options. Kissinger also asked Helms to inquire as to the Shah's opinion on the options.²⁷⁶ Helms recommended the third option, increasing the support by 50%, while also instructing the CIA to build a reserve of weapons in case fighting broke out. Kissinger agreed with Helms. In response, the Shah decided to increase his support of the Iraqi Kurds by more than 50% and additional guns.²⁷⁷

Gibson argues that the meetings reveal that the increased Soviet pressure on Barzani influenced the discussions; certainly, Kissinger had become more concerned regarding the Soviet's influence in Iraq. Still, one must consider the Shah's interest in maintaining the strength of his Kurdish card as rapprochement with Iraq became a possibility.²⁷⁸ Alvandi argues that the meetings reveal how the Nixon administration let the Shah decide regional matters, but clearly, Kissinger held strong convictions on disturbing the Soviet plans in Iraq. While the Shah had stoked these fires, the two ideas worked in unison to direct the American policy on the Iraqi Kurds. Neither Kissinger nor the Shah wanted the Kurds to lose their value by gaining independence or by bending to the Ba'ath regime.²⁷⁹

While Kissinger would often consult the Shah and in ways be directed by his advice on the Iraqi Kurds, this was a result of the Shah's Cold War narrative. Kissinger trusted the Shah's impressions as he was more invested in the Iraqi Kurds than the United States. They were partners in the operations and consulting the Shah served two purposes. Firstly, the Shah felt heard and essential as a significant Cold War ally, seeing as he had repeatedly made the Iraqi Kurds a point of focus and security for Iran in bilateral talks with the United States. Secondly,

²⁷⁵ Memorandum from Colby to Kissinger. Washington, August 7, 1973. Subject: Options for Consideration Regarding Increased Assistance to the Kurds. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 227

²⁷⁶ Backchannel message from Kissinger to the Ambassador Helms. Washington, August 16, 1973. Marked exclusively eyes only for Ambassador Helms. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 229

²⁷⁷ Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 155

²⁷⁸ Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 155

²⁷⁹ Roham Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger and the Shah*. 96

considering that the American support worked through Iran either way, the practical solutions were less important, as long as they disturbed the Soviet influence in Iraq.

On 6 September, Kissinger updated the President on the plan for their support of the Kurds. Kissinger raised several points which required the President's attention. He informed President Nixon about the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) attempt to block the CIA from building a reserve of weapons for the Iraqi Kurds. Additionally, the exchange rate of Iraqi Dinars used to pay Barzani's troops had increased, forcing the US to increase their support if they wanted to maintain the current level. Finally, he raised the issue of increasing the US support of the Iraqi Kurds, noting that the Shah intended to raise his support for the Iraqi Kurds by 50%, and with ambassador Helms's support, suggested that the United States do the same.²⁸⁰ President Nixon approved all three suggestions.²⁸¹ The President increasingly trusted Kissinger's decisions, approving his recommendations in full.

Once again, the Shah's opinion had shaped American policy, even if based on CIA suggestions, Kissinger followed the Shah and Helms's advice against the recommendation of CIA director Colby. The Shah saw the continued value of pressuring the Iraqi government by supporting the Iraqi Kurds. Kissinger had been convinced that Soviet influence in Iraq needed to be abated and trusted the Shah as a significant ally in the Cold War. Although the Shah and Kissinger had different reasons, their interests aligned.

There was a significant divide in opinion within the administration on how to react to Iraq's perceived attempts at opening up to the United States in the wake of deteriorating USSR-Iraqi relations.²⁸² As late as 22 September, Iraq had given a 122 million USD contract to an American company to build a deep-sea oil terminal. Helms and the CIA remained unconvinced, while Lowrie and the State Department wanted to use the opportunity to reduce

²⁸⁰ Memorandum from Kissinger to President Nixon. Washington, September 6, 1973. Subject: Increased Assistance to the Kurds. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc.233

²⁸¹ Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 157

²⁸² Research Study Prepared in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. Washington, August 23, 1973. Subject: USSR-Iraq: The Lines of Tension. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 230.

Letter from Lowrie to Atherton (Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs) Baghdad, September 2, 1973. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 231

Soviet influence in Iraq.²⁸³ The premise for the discussion would change dramatically, however, as events in October would change the political environment of the entire Middle East.²⁸⁴

The Significance of the October War

The October War revealed the value of the Iraqi Kurds to the Nixon administration and the Shah. When it was suggested by an Israeli officer on 15 October 1973 that the Iraqi Kurds should be mobilised to help Israel, Kissinger, on the advice of the Shah and Helms, ordered the Iraqi Kurds not to do so. Israeli security was assumed to be sufficiently secured without risking Soviet encroachment by using the Iraqi Kurds.²⁸⁵

On 6 October, Egypt and Syria began their surprise attack on Israel to reclaim the Israeli positions along the Suez Canal and the Golan Heights. While the war was a significant regional incident in 1973, the responses to the war are more important to the discussion of US involvement with the Iraqi Kurds. The US increased its support of Israel in response to the war, to the uproar of the Arab countries in the Middle East. To pressure the US to change its policy of support to Israel, OPEC reduced its oil production.²⁸⁶

Iraq was quick to capitalise on the situation in the name of Arab support of the war against Israel. Already on 8 October Lowrie reported that the American parts of the Basra Petroleum Company (BPC) had been nationalised. In addition, Iraq said it would cease the export of petroleum to the US, and Iraq re-established diplomatic ties with Iran.²⁸⁷ At the same time, Iraq awarded another big contract to an American company while they refused to join the boycott instigated by the Saudis, arguing that the lower production would hurt Europe more than the US.

The Iraqis had not been informed of the surprise attack ahead of time but were eager to join the fight against Israel. However, they needed to make certain that the Iranians would not use

²⁸³ The CIA delivered an analysis of Iraq on 6 September to the white house in which it concluded that the US should be careful about approaching Iraq under the current regime. Bryan R. Gibson. *Sold Out?* 157

²⁸⁴ Memorandum prepared in the Office of Current Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency. Washington, October 4, 1973. Subject: Iraq: Genesis and Assessment of the 30 June Abortive Coup and on-going Instability. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc.235. Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 158

²⁸⁵ Backchannel message from the Ambassador Helms to Secretary of State Kissinger. Tehran, October 16, 1973, 0930Z. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 237

²⁸⁶ Mari Salberg, "Conventional Wisdom" 127-128

²⁸⁷ Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State. Baghdad, October 8, 1973. Subject: Iraqi Actions in Support of War Against Israel. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 236

the opportunity to attack them from the East. After establishing official ties with Iran on 7 October, Iraq sent two divisions and five air force squadrons to reinforce the Arab coalition.²⁸⁸

The Iraqi involvement in the October War had implications for the importance of the Iraqi Kurds. On 15 October Barzani asked Kissinger's advice following an Israeli suggestion that the Iraqi Kurds open an offensive in Iraq, meant to ensure that no Iraqi forces were involved in the war against Israel. Kissinger quickly contacted Helms to seek his and the Shah's opinion. The Shah had, through his minister Asadollah Alam, considered such a move a mistake. As they had armed the Kurds for defensive purposes, they would have little hope of making gains against the Iraqi army outside the mountains. The Shah did not believe the Iraqi Kurds could ease the pressure on Israel in Syria, thinking it would waste his Kurdish card. Ambassador Helms agreed. Kissinger agreed with Helms and the Shah and advised Barzani to stay in his position.²⁸⁹ While the Shah in July during his trip to Washington had suggested using the Iraqi Kurds to distract Iraq if Jordan was feeling pressured, he proved unwilling when it became an issue.²⁹⁰ By advising Barzani not to engage the Iraqis, Kissinger seemed to put the Shah's opinion ahead of Israel's security. There were, however, other considerations, Kissinger himself saw the value of having a continuously unstable Iraq, even after the October War. In addition, Israel had quickly earned a reputation for being undefeatable following the war in 1967. There would be little need for the comparably feeble contribution of Barzani's forces, which lacked the numbers and equipment to be a serious contender in a regional war.²⁹¹

After the war ended on 25 October, the US was left facing the consequences of the oil embargo and the production cut. By January 1974 the price of oil had quadrupled, massively hurting the oil-dependent European economy, and by implication shocking the US economy.

²⁸⁸ Iraq had broken diplomatic ties with Iran on 1 December 1971, following the Shah taking three islands in the strait of Hormuz, at the entrance to the Persian Gulf. The islands had no strategic significance, but the Shah used the move to showboat, while the Iraqis were provoked. Ofra Bengio. *The Kurds of Iraq. Building a state within a state*. 2012. 65. Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 159. Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State. Baghdad, November 4, 1973. Subject: Post-War Assessment of Iraq and Policy Recommendations. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 238

²⁸⁹ Backchannel message from Ambassador Helms to Secretary of State Kissinger. Tehran, October 16, 1973. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 237

²⁹⁰ Memorandum of Conversation. Washington, July 27, 1973, 5 p.m. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc.30

²⁹¹ William B. Quandt. *Peace and Progress*. 3

Kissinger also started the work of negotiating Israeli withdrawal from Syrian and Egyptian territories. US-Iraqi relations were, however, improving as Iraq continued to award contracts to American companies, while the Soviet-Iraqi relations had been strained by the fact that Iraq had not been informed of the attacks on Israel ahead of time.²⁹²

On 4 November, Lowrie gave his assessment of Iraq after the war. He reiterated that Iraq had taken advantage of the war, suggesting the realist faction of Saddam Hussein was steadily gaining control. At the same time, there was considerable mistrust between the regime and the military, as the army had had no warning that they were to mobilise, and were only given ammunition on the border, which they were relieved of when they returned across the border. The Iraqi Ba'ath regime had not followed through on its promise to stop oil exports to the US or cut their production, Lowrie attributed the choice to Iraqi hopes that economic prosperity would help stabilise Iraq.²⁹³ In total, Lowrie was still positive regarding rebuilding relations with the Iraqi government.

Lowrie also reported, hearing from the French ambassador, that the Shah was prepared to solve the Kurdish issue with Iraq after his Kurdish population had started to have nationalist aspirations. Negotiations between Iraq and Iran had been happening since April, but the lack of trust made the process difficult. The information Lowrie received was most likely meant to signal trust between Iraq and Iran. Several nations in the Middle East were working to find a solution between the two neighbours. With the development of Iraq-Iran relations, Lowrie wanted to use the opportunity to improve US-Iraqi relations.²⁹⁴ As such, he asked that the administration not react to the nationalisation of the American parts of the Basra Petroleum Company, which naturally met opposition within the administration, not least because it was considered a dangerous precedence to set for other Arab states.²⁹⁵

²⁹² Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 164

²⁹³ Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State. Baghdad, November 4, 1973. Subject: Post-War Assessment of Iraq and Policy Recommendations. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 238. Marion Farouk-Sluglett & Peter Sluglett. *Iraq Since 1958. From Revolution to Dictatorship*. 156

²⁹⁴ Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State. Baghdad, November 4, 1973. Subject: Post-War Assessment of Iraq and Policy Recommendations. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 238

²⁹⁵ Memorandum from Maw (Legal Adviser of the Department of State) to Sisco, Armstrong (Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs), Katz (Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for International Resources and Food Policy), and Weintraub (Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for International Finance and Development). Washington, December 20, 1973. Subject: Iraqi Expropriation of U.S. Oil Interests. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 240

Despite Lowrie's best efforts of glamorising US opportunity in Iraq, Kissinger was convinced that Iraq was the next principal Soviet satellite in the region. Iraq had opposed establishing a truce with Israel following the war. The State Department had also concluded that the US had limited opportunities to pressure Iraq.²⁹⁶ To distract Iraq while he negotiated with Egypt and Syria, and have them remove their forces from Syria, Kissinger arranged for Iran to start an incursion on the Iran-Iraqi border in late December.²⁹⁷

Total Developments in 1973

While 1973 saw renewed clashes between Barzani's Peshmerga and Iraqi forces, nothing amounted to war. It did, however, become increasingly clear that neither side was going to succumb to the other's demands.²⁹⁸ Rather, the Iraqi Ba'ath regime faced an internal conflict that allowed Saddam Hussein to consolidate his power in 1973. The Iraqi oil revenues had tripled from 1972 to 1973 and would triple again in 1974 to 5.7 billion USD. The stage was set for dealing with the only remaining obstacle to Iraqi stability, its Kurds.²⁹⁹ The truce agreed on 11 March 1970 would expire in March 1974, potentially resulting in a new war between the Iraqi government and Barzani's Kurds.

Lowrie suggested several developments indicated that the Shah was amenable to Iraqi Iranian cooperation to resolve their issues. According to Lowrie, the Shah's fear of his own Kurds had been strengthened by the incidents with the Iraqi weapons in February. By attempting to arm separatists in Iran, the Ba'ath regime in Iraq had amplified this fear. It remains uncertain whether this alleged fear that the Shah had for his own Kurds was a remnant of when the argument was used by the Shah to convince Kissinger to support the Iraqi Kurds or if this was renewed attempts at reproachment. In any case, the Foreign Ministers of Iraq and Iran started meeting in Geneva, where the Kurds and the Shatt Al-Arab would have been discussed.³⁰⁰ During the October War, Iraq re-established its diplomatic connections with Iran. The

²⁹⁶ Briefing Memorandum from Sisco (Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs) to Secretary of State Kissinger. Washington, November 27, 1973. Subject: Iraq: Possible Pressure Points. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 239

²⁹⁷ Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 166

²⁹⁸ Roham Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*. 99

²⁹⁹ Roham Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*. 101

³⁰⁰ Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 150 Roham Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger and the Shah*, 92

development towards more substantial Iraq-Iranian negotiations was disrupted by Kissinger's agenda in late December as he got the Shah to start trouble at the Iraq-Iran border.

The division within the Nixon administration also played a significant role in the US policy on Iraq. The fact that Washington, Baghdad, and Teheran all viewed Iraq differently caused confusion, as all worked towards their common goal of limiting Soviet influence. US involvement with the Iraqi Kurds certainly limited the possibility of the US encouraging the pragmatic elements in the Iraqi Ba'ath regime. At the same time, Lowrie was exaggerating the ease with which US-Iraqi relations could be mended.

The Shah achieved increased American support for the Iraqi Kurds in July, supported by ambassador Helms, and certainly had a great influence on the US policy on the Iraqi Kurds. Additionally, the Shah and Iran were so integrated with the operation, and the Shah himself had made the Iraqi Kurds an issue of Iranian security and Cold War necessity. Kissinger was announced as Secretary of State on 22 August, a move meant to streamline the administration and unify the State Department and the White House. Kissinger's influence on US foreign policy only grew as Nixon increasingly became preoccupied with Watergate.³⁰¹ With Kissinger perceiving Iraq as the new principal Soviet satellite State, he was also motivated to keep Iraq unstable. The Shah was, however, instrumental in enacting and forming this Cold War idea into policy.

³⁰¹ Mari Salberg, "*Conventional Wisdom*", 121. Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 156

Chapter Six: 1974: Renewed conflict

The tensions between Iraq and its Kurdish population would come to a head in 1974. Both sides had been preparing for the date 11 March 1974, at which the deadline for implementing the 1970 March accords would expire. Ultimately, the Ba'ath regime had gained the most from the four-year truce. It had consolidated its power and strengthened its military capabilities with Soviet support. The Iraqi Kurds remained the only obstacle for the regime to stabilise Iraq. Compounding the situation for the Iraqi Kurds, the foreign supporters of the Iraqi Kurds were acutely aware that the Kurds would not compare to the Iraqi military and had only provided the Iraqi Kurds with defensive capabilities. Even so, the renewed conflict of 1974 would show the difference between the Kurdish and Iraqi capabilities, which forced Iran to take an active role in the conflict.³⁰² The Shah, however, did not intend to fight a war against Iraq over the Iraqi Kurds.³⁰³ The Iraqi-Kurdish conflict was pivotal for both Iraq and Iran considering negotiations. The Shah had answered the call of Kissinger to engage on the Iraqi border. It did, however, benefit him as it increased the pressure on the Ba'ath with the Iraqi Kurds as well, making it necessary for the Iraqi government to find a solution to their Kurdish problem.

The Nixon administration remained divided on Iraq and the Iraqi Kurds, while President Nixon was increasingly distracted by his political survival which resulted in his resignation on 9 August 1974. As a result, Kissinger's opinion increasingly instructed the American foreign policy, also on the Iraqi Kurds. While Kissinger would often consult Helms and the Shah, Kissinger himself held strong convictions about limiting the Soviet Influence in Iraq. Having become convinced that Iraq had been radicalised.

Thus, the Cold War and the Shah's regional interests aligned to form the American policy on the Iraqi Kurds. Increasingly during the last year of Nixon's presidency, Kissinger appreciated the Iraqi efforts to improve relations with the West. This development did not immediately change American policy on the Iraqi Kurds. However, the Shah saw the Iraqi efforts as a

³⁰² Memorandum of Conversation. Washington, August 26, 1974. Participants: President Ford, Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State and Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, Lt. General Brent Scowcroft (Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs). *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 259

³⁰³ Roham Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*. 105

threat. With the ceasefire in Iraq coming to an end, how did the Iraqi diplomatic efforts effect the Shah's position and Iran-Iraq negotiations?³⁰⁴

Struggling US-Iraqi Relations

In response to the ongoing oil crisis, President Nixon, on 9 January 1974, invited the major oil-consuming nation and the members of OPEC for a meeting between consumers and exporters. The Iraqi response came in late January. The Iraqi President al-Bakr opposed such a meeting, pointing to economic, social, and technological differences. He suggested the United Nations as an appropriate place for discussions. In informing Kissinger of Bakr's response, the State Department and the US interests' section in Baghdad considered Bakr's response constructive. Even in the face of rejection, the State Department and Lowrie sought to highlight the importance of continued attempts at communication with Iraq.³⁰⁵ Their impressions of Iraq's importance and how the United States could replace the Soviet's influence had only been invigorated by the oil crisis of 1973.

Following the October War, Kissinger had begun his diplomatic efforts for Israel's peaceful withdrawal from Egypt and Syria. The Iraqis had opposed peace with Israel, and Iraqi troops were still in Syria. Kissinger had already in late 1973 arranged for the Iranians to distract the Iraqis to vacate Syria by stirring trouble along the border. These incursions continued in February with fighting on 4 February and an escalation on 10 February. Iraq decided to take the matter to the Security Council at the United Nations, and it was decided by the Council on 28 February that a special representative should be sent to report on the situation. On 3 and 6 March, Saddam Hussein met with the Iranian ambassador to Iraq and agreed on a truce, expressing a desire for the two nations to resolve their differences.³⁰⁶ According to Gibson, the rising tensions between Iraq and Iran caused by Kissinger would be the start of the escalated conflict when the Kurdish War would break out the following month. Kissinger prioritising Israel's withdrawal would have a detrimental effect on the Kurdish position in

³⁰⁴ Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 179-180

³⁰⁵ Memorandum from Donaldson (Under Secretary of State for Security Assistance) to Secretary of State Kissinger. Washington, January 30, 1974. Subject: Iraqi President Bakr's Letter to President Nixon. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Vol. XXVII, Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976.* Doc. 241

³⁰⁶ Roham Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah.* 101. Marion Farouk-Sluglett & Peter Sluglett. *Iraq Since 1958. From Revolution to Dictatorship.* 168

Iraq.³⁰⁷ Even as tensions rose in March, Kissinger reiterated his request to the Shah to continue pressuring Iraq until a disengagement on the Golan Heights had been ensured, to which the Shah acquiesced.³⁰⁸

The End of the 1970 Truce

The renewed hostilities between the Iraqi government and Barzani revealed the overwhelming difference in military capabilities, which had a devastating effect on the Shah's confidence in the Iraqi Kurds. This would contribute to the Shah negotiating with the Iraqis to gain something before his Kurdish card was lost. In addition, as the Israeli and US support worked through Iran, this would have effectively ended all the foreign support the Iraqi Kurds depended on.³⁰⁹

Tensions rose on 11 March as Iraq passed a law of autonomy, giving Barzani 15 days to accept. The government of Iraq portrayed the law as a result of the 1970 accord, but the law fell far short of the accord's promises.³¹⁰ The autonomous Kurdish region would be subject to Iraqi authority, with even the central Iraqi government having a veto over the Kurdish assembly. Furthermore, the Iraqi supreme court would have supremacy in the autonomous zone. The promises of a proportional share of the oil revenue and Kurdish control of the city of Kirkuk were removed altogether. Expecting a renewed conflict with Barzani, the Iraqi military forces mobilised and reinforced positions in northern Iraq.³¹¹

Barzani, realising the severity of the situation, travelled to Tehran to appeal for increased support from his allies before the deadline to accept expired. Barzani's continued solicitation would make the Shah realise how much support Barzani needed if the Iraqi Kurds were to equal the Iraqi government. On 16 March, Barzani met with the US station chief and the SAVAK liaison officer assigned to the Kurdish operation. Barzani exaggerated his position

³⁰⁷ Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 165-166

³⁰⁸ Backchannel Message from Ambassador Helms to Scowcroft. Tehran, March 18, 1974. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 242

³⁰⁹ Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 179-180

³¹⁰ Marion Farouk-Sluglett & Peter Sluglett. *Iraq Since 1958. From Revolution to Dictatorship.* 168. Kerim Yildiz, *The Kurds in Iraq.* 20-21

³¹¹ Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold out?* 167 David McDowall. *A Modern History of the Kurds* 335-336. Backchannel Message from Ambassador Helms to Scowcroft. Tehran, March 18, 1974. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 243

and opportunities in the meeting. Barzani stated the governmental forces had withdrawn from their most exposed positions in the North. Considering the almost quarter of a million people that had joined his cause and the economic blockade enforced by the Iraqi government, Barzani requested civilian support in addition to more weapons.³¹²

The station chief informed Barzani that increasing the support to the Iraqi Kurds would be discussed with the Iranians, but there were already several obstacles to Barzani's request. The station chief was trying to keep Barzani's expectations low but raised several valid concerns. Chief among his concerns were the budgetary limitations of the CIA. In addition, increased support meant the danger of exposure increased. If American support was revealed, it would be impossible for the United States to continue supporting Barzani. In response, Barzani threatened that if he was not adequately supported, the best alternative for him could be to seek asylum in Iran and inform the remaining Iraqi Kurds to take the best possible deal with the Iraqi government. To Barzani, the only options were either to accept the law of autonomy or to reject it and fight. Barzani informed the station chief that while the Iraqi Kurds did not seek war, they would not surrender Kurdish territory. Barzani suggested that all his problems had come from not cooperating with the Ba'ath and ICP against Iran and the West.³¹³

Taking the initiative, Barzani wanted Iranian approval to establish an alternative government of Arab and Kurdish elements opposing Baghdad, hoping that the US and Iran would acknowledge it. The station chief noted such a prospect required another level of preparation and doubted it would receive significant Arab support which opposed the Ba'ath regime.³¹⁴ Even as the conflict between the Iraqi and the Iraqi Kurds reignited, the allies of Barzani could only hope to keep him from increasing the hostilities with the Iraqi government.

The following day the US station chief met with the head of SAVAK, general Nassiri, who also expressed Kurdish needs for more advanced weapons as well as civilian support to

³¹² Backchannel Message from Ambassador Helms to Scowcroft. Tehran, March 18, 1974. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 242

³¹³ Backchannel Message from Ambassador Helms to Scowcroft. Tehran, March 18, 1974. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 242

³¹⁴ Backchannel Message from Ambassador Helms to Scowcroft. Tehran, March 18, 1974. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 242

handle the great influx of people who fled to Barzani's side, which had grown to 1.5 million people. Nassiri and the station chief agreed it was unlikely Barzani would leave his position and seek asylum if he was refused increased support, rather they considered it a ploy to pressure the US and Iran.³¹⁵

Barzani and the KDP rejected the law of autonomy. Again, Barzani publicly promised the oil of Kirkuk to western companies and appealed for western support. Despite Barzani telling his allies that the Iraqi Kurds were united, the decision led to parts of the KDP breaking from Barzani. This development highlighted the internal criticism that was rising against him. The political divisions amongst the Iraqi Kurds had not disappeared and Barzani was accused of conspiring with imperialists in addition to fighting with the Iraqi Communist Party. The Kurds that rebelled against Barzani also accused him of violently removing opposing, often communist, Kurdish leaders who threatened his rule.³¹⁶ Even Barzani's eldest son, Ubayd Allah left and criticised his father, suggesting that his father would never accept the law of autonomy suggested by the Iraqi government, as it would mean Barzani relinquish his power and control. Many of the departing Iraqi Kurds joined the Ba'ath under the national coalition.³¹⁷ While the number of Iraqi Kurds who defected from Barzani was low, it revealed the divisions were still lingering within Barzani's camp.

Raising the tensions, the Shah refreshed his efforts at the Iraqi border on 20 March 1974, perhaps both to support Barzani in addition to answering Kissinger's renewed request to distract Iraq from his efforts in the Israeli-Arab conflict.³¹⁸ The American response to Barzani's request, however, was delayed as Kissinger did not return to Washington until 28 March. When he arrived in Washington his deputy, Scowcroft, presented the view of Kissinger's staff. Firstly, Barzani's ambition to establish an alternative government would, in Scowcroft's eyes, escalate the situation considerably. It would also be impossible for the CIA to adequately support the project. Barzani's request would make the discovery of US contribution likely, which would have a detrimental effect on American interests and

³¹⁵ Backchannel Message from Ambassador Helms to Scowcroft. Tehran, March 18, 1974. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 242

³¹⁶ Marion Farouk-Sluglett & Peter Sluglett. *Iraq Since 1958. From Revolution to Dictatorship*. 167

³¹⁷ David McDowall. *A Modern History of the Kurds* 336-337

³¹⁸ Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 168

relations. US-Turkish relations and potential Soviet and Arab responses would have to be considered. Secondly, Scowcroft questioned the benefits of such a government, which would be an act of aggression against the Iraqi government, compelling a violent response. There was also serious doubt that Barzani could form a government with Arab elements.³¹⁹

Scowcroft continued by highlighting the importance of the Shah's opinion on the situation and questioned if he would support Barzani's idea. Both the US and Iran had benefitted from the stalemate, as neither wanted to see the conflict resolved one way or the other. Scowcroft also speculated that the USSR and Turkey would support the Iraqi government in response to Barzani announcing his government, it would also kill any chance of negotiation or compromise. Finally, Scowcroft recognised the severity of Barzani's situation regardless of his announcement of an alternative government. With the flow of refugees, the mobilisation of Iraqi forces, and the economic blockade, Barzani would require increased support which only the Shah practically could provide. Scowcroft suggested a symbolic contribution from the funds meant to cover the currency exchange and start delivery of the CIA weapons reserve that had been prepared. Scowcroft hoped that this would show Barzani that the US was sympathetic, but also that it could not contribute outside the bounds of secrecy.³²⁰

Escalating Conflict in April

Underscoring Kissinger's role in the decision-making, he would not inform President Nixon until 11 April. On 11 April, Kissinger informed Nixon of the developing situation in Iraq and their continued operation with the Iraqi Kurds. He also included that the Shah was willing to increase his support of the Iraqi Kurds in their current situation but would be reluctant to support an independent Kurdish government. The matter of increased support was also deeply linked with ensuring the secrecy of American involvement. Such a project would make secrecy impossible, and additionally, it seemed not to be in American interests that such a separatist government be established.³²¹

³¹⁹ Backchannel Message from Scowcroft to Ambassador Helms. Washington, March 26, 1974. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 244

³²⁰ Backchannel Message from Scowcroft to Ambassador Helms. Washington, March 26, 1974. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 244

³²¹ Memorandum from Kissinger to President Nixon. Washington, April 11, 1974. Subject: Further Support for the Kurds in Iraq. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 246

Kissinger, supported by Helms, included his suggestions on what measures could be taken, pending the President's approval. Firstly, granting an amount to cover the increased expenses of the increased population, the money would come from the funds already allocated to the operation. The second suggestion was to deliver the reserves of weapons and ammunition the CIA had been preparing. Nixon approved Kissinger's recommendations.³²² When Kissinger instructed Helms to inform the Shah, he suggested Helms relay that the operation in Iraq was meant to keep the Iraqi regime tied down, rather than an attempt to divide Iraq and permanently damage relations with Iraq. This signalled to the Shah that the Iraqi diplomatic efforts were complicating the US perception of Iraq, rather than adhering to his narrative of Iraq being a Soviet satellite.³²³

On 11 April, Lowrie also stated his impressions of the brewing conflict between the Iraqi government and the Iraqi Kurds. He saw both sides as reluctant to continue the war, nonetheless, the government was preparing for a confrontation. The Kurdish ministers who had not already left their posts to join Barzani were replaced with people considered more reliable. The amnesty for the Kurds to return to their jobs and position would expire on 26 April, which Lowrie assumed would then mark the beginning of the renewed conflict. Assuming no solution would be found by that time, government forces had already been gathering near the Kurdish areas.³²⁴

Lowrie also addressed the idea of foreign support for the Iraqi Kurds. Saddam Hussein had in an interview on 8 April referenced the Kurds being armed with American weapons and heavily accused the Iranians. In the interview, Saddam had also pushed for internal Kurdish divisions by criticising Barzani and pointing to even his family, likely his eldest son, abandoning him. Lowrie expressed his concern regarding the growing rumours of American support for the Iraqi Kurds. Again, he petitioned for official denunciation from the Nixon

³²² Memorandum from Kissinger to President Nixon. Washington, April 11, 1974. Subject: Further Support for the Kurds in Iraq. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 246

³²³ Nixon initialled his approval of the recommendation. The attached message was sent as backchannel message to Tehran, April 19. Memorandum from Kissinger to President Nixon. Washington, April 11, 1974. Subject: Further Support for the Kurds in Iraq. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 246

³²⁴ Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State. Baghdad, April 11, 1974. Subject: Kurdish Autonomy Conflict. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 245

administration on the issue, lest the situation deteriorate, and Saddam Hussein attack the US more directly and publicly.³²⁵

Increasingly, Kissinger's work for peace between Israel and the Arab states had an impact on the Iraqi Kurds. Not only did it lead to his frequent absence from Washington, delaying policy decisions on Iraq, but by using the Shah to stir up trouble along the Iraqi border, tensions were quickly rising. 11 April marked another example of the developing US policy on the Iraqi Kurds. The final suggestion of financial support to help with the refugees and delivery of the CIA weapon reserves were presented as a balanced response to Barzani's request. The support was, however, only taken from the funds allocated to support the Iraqi Kurds, and the reserve of weapons had been prepared for this very purpose. Even in the face of war breaking out between Barzani and the Iraqi government, no fundamental changes were made. The increased financial aid and delivery of weapons were planned for by Washington.³²⁶

Even though the message was delayed, there was a clear reluctance from Washington that the Iraqi conflict should escalate. Kissinger's instructions to Helms to inform the Kurds that Washington would provide financial and military aid would not be sent until 19 April. The delayed response from Washington or Tehran caused confusion, as Barzani had continued to prepare to declare autonomy. Barzani's declaration would effectively mean declaring independence from the Iraqi government. On 16 April, Barzani planned to publicly declare autonomy for the Iraqi Kurds on the Kurdish radio station. The same day, the Shah asked Helms to comment on the prepared statement of the Iraqi Kurds. The delayed response to Barzani's plan had led him down a path adverse to American interests. Helms quickly responded that there would be no going back from such a statement and urged caution. In Helms' presence, the Shah called SAVAK and told them that the statement had to be delayed by at least a few days. Informing Kissinger of this, Helms referred to Scowcroft's reasons for why Barzani should not declare an alternative government. Not only would it destroy negotiations between Barzani and the Iraqi government, but it would also give the Iraqi government a pretext under which to attack the Iraqi Kurds. The Shah or the US could not support such a government publicly, as they would be bound to support the Iraqi Kurds come

³²⁵ Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State. Baghdad, April 11, 1974. Subject: Kurdish Autonomy Conflict. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 245

³²⁶ Memorandum from Kissinger to President Nixon. Washington, April 11, 1974. Subject: Further Support for the Kurds in Iraq. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 246

what may. The Shah and the US were interested in supporting Barzani in his military efforts to subvert the Iraqi government, but not his political project for a Kurdish state.³²⁷

On 20 April Helms and the Shah met to discuss the decision of increased US support for the Kurds. While they agreed with Kissinger's assessment of establishing an alternative Kurdish government in Iraq, the Shah wanted to provide the Iraqi Kurds with more advanced weapons to handle the Iraqi military. The Shah further indicated he would increase his support to the Iraqi Kurds by 30 million USD, to a total of 75 million USD. It was also decided that the US station chief would inform Barzani of the decision made regarding his declaration. The US station chief met with Barzani the same day, as Barzani was still in Tehran waiting for a signal from the Shah and Washington. Upon learning that it was undesirable to declare autonomy at this time, Barzani expressed understanding and appreciation of the increased support. Aware that he had become dependent on foreign support, he would follow the call of his foreign allies. Helms saw the resolution as a positive development, both the Shah and the Kurds had accepted the US position and need for secrecy. It was clear that the ambition of Helms and Washington was a stalemate in Iraq.³²⁸

While Barzani was appealing for more support, tensions were rising in Iraq between Barzani and the Iraqi government. The stakes had been raised for Barzani on 14 April as 11 Kurds were executed. The Iraqi Kurds responded a week later by executing 19 Iraqi soldiers.³²⁹ On 22 April the skirmishes in the north of Iraq grew more serious as Iraqi forces began bombing Kurdish positions. This was a taste of the devastation to come, as a major offensive by the Iraqi forces began in late April.³³⁰ Lowrie reported his observations on the Ba'ath strategy on 1 May, which showed the prevalence of the pragmatic faction of the Iraqi Ba'ath. Rather than an all-out war against the Iraqi Kurds, the regime sought to isolate Barzani by exerting pressure on the Iraqi Kurds with the Iraqi military while promising economic growth and benefits for the Kurds and the autonomy law of 11 April. Saddam Hussein had even on 25

³²⁷ Backchannel Message from Ambassador Helms to Secretary of State Kissinger. Tehran, April 17, 1974. Subject: Barzani's letter to Secretary Kissinger. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 245

³²⁸ Backchannel Message from Ambassador Helms to Secretary of State Kissinger. Tehran, April 22, 1974. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 248

³²⁹ Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State. Baghdad, May 1, 1974. Subject: Baath Strategy Against Barzani. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 249

³³⁰ Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 171

April given another month for the Kurds to accept his offer of amnesty. Lowrie, however, considered the military pressure to be the most effective, as few Kurds had abandoned Barzani. Lowrie once again focused on the different elements vying for power within the Ba'ath, pointing to the fact that the opposition to the current strategy were those who only wanted to unleash the Iraqi military on Barzani and his Kurds. Lowrie identified Saddam Hussein as the mastermind behind the regime's strategy against the Kurds. He had also received information that indicated that Bakr preferred a military solution, but that his deteriorating health had stopped him from pushing the issue. Lowrie thought Saddam Hussein's strategy could work if Saddam could retain power, but the Kurdish attacks could force him to agree to a massive military operation.³³¹

Refreshed Considerations of Iraqi Relations

As the conflict continued into May, Barzani sought a meeting with Kissinger. On 15 May he appealed again for more heavy weaponry to handle the superior Iraqi forces. Continuing his habit of exaggeration, Barzani stated the Iraqi people were increasingly against the Ba'ath regime, and that the regime would fall if the Kurds could deal a serious defeat to the Iraqi forces, as had happened to previous Iraqi regimes.³³² The lack of weapons that could stop the Iraqi forces was a concern for all of Barzani's allies. Kissinger was made aware of Israeli concerns during a meeting with Israeli prime minister Golda Meir.³³³ The Israelis projected that the Iraqi Kurds would struggle to even defend themselves if the Iraqi conflict continued for a long time and needed more advanced weaponry. The situation had never seemed so dark for the Iraqi Kurds, as the considerable Soviet support had made the Iraqi military a significant threat. This was compounded by the fact that the four-year peace had allowed the Ba'ath to stabilise their regime.³³⁴

The skirmishes along the Iraq-Iran border instigated by Kissinger had more long-term consequences for the Iraqi Kurds, as it would lead to more serious Iraq-Iranian negotiations. The end of May marked an important milestone in Iraqi-Iranian relations, as the UN representative responsible for investigating the border trouble reported that both Iraq and Iran

³³¹ Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State. Baghdad, May 1, 1974. Subject: Baath Strategy Against Barzani. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 249

³³² Memorandum from Colby to Kissinger. Washington, May 23, 1974. Subject: Request by Mulla Mustafa Barzani to see Dr. Kissinger. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 250

³³³ As his work toward Israeli-Syrian disengagement continued.

³³⁴ Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 171-172

had agreed to a ceasefire. Furthermore, they would both withdraw from the border and resume the meetings to resolve their differences. This report was the basis for Security Council resolution 348 on 28 May, welcoming de-escalation and renewed negotiations.³³⁵

In 1974, people within the Iraqi regime gave indications that US-Iraqi relations could improve. This had a twofold effect as it deepened the divisions in the Nixon administration on Iraq, and it worried the Shah that improving US-Iraqi relations would leave him having gained little from his support of the Iraqi Kurds. In May, the Iraqi government contacted the US interests' section in Baghdad. They were asked to assist Saddam Hussein's wife in travelling to the US for medical treatment on 14 June. John Gatch, who was temporarily serving as the principal officer at the interests' section, saw this as an opportunity to expand talks on US-Iraqi relations.

Another indication that voices within the regime wished to renew US-Iraqi relations came on 5 June. The American ambassador to the UN, John Scali, met and discussed higher-level communications with the Iraqi ambassador to the UN, El-Shibib. This happened as a result of El-Shibib and Kissinger meeting on 15 April. At their meeting, Kissinger had assured him that the US did not support the separatist Kurds in Iraq. El-Shibib responded through Scali, stating that Iraq wanted to continue secret high-level communication and that Iraq was not a client state, but rather open to cooperation with all states. El-Shibib stated that Iraq desired a pragmatic economic relationship with American firms. The Iraqi ambassador also wanted to reassure Washington that despite the propaganda coming from Baghdad, Iraq did not intend to hinder the peace talks with Israel.³³⁶ In response, Kissinger expressed gratitude to El-Shibib for his efforts and invited him to Washington on 10 July for a secret meeting.³³⁷

These indications that parts of the Iraqi regime were friendly to the US, only strengthened the arguments from the interests' section in Baghdad and the State Department which argued for the consideration of improving US-Iraqi relations. Improving US-Iraqi relations would mean

³³⁵ Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 172. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/93501>

³³⁶ Telegram from the Mission at the United Nations to the Department of State. For the Secretary from Ambassador Scali. New York, June 5, 1974. Subject: Iraqi-US Relations. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 252

³³⁷ Telegram from the Department of State to the Mission at the United Nations. Washington, June 8, 1974. Subject: US-Iraqi Relations. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 253

reconsidering US support of the Iraqi Kurds. However, the Iraqi continued to demand that the United States confront Iran on their support of the Iraqi Kurds and that the United States stop their unconditional support of Israel, which was impossible for the United States to accept.

These were only the most recent of many arguments that Iraq was open to US cooperation but had no immediate effect on US policy on the Iraqi Kurds. On 24 June, Kissinger delivered his proposal to Nixon of continued support for the Iraqi Kurds, underscoring the growing struggle for the Iraqi Kurds. The CIA proposal was that 8.06 million USD were to be allocated for supporting the Iraqi Kurds in the fiscal year 1975. President Nixon approved the suggestion the same day.³³⁸

While the US support for the Iraqi Kurds was renewed, Kissinger gave indications that his perspective on Iraq was evolving. Perhaps swayed by the possibilities of improving US-Iraqi relations, as he suggested to Helms in a letter on 5 August that the US and Iranian views on Iraq differed. The letter mirrored the State Departments' ideas that Iraq genuinely wanted to improve its relations with the West. Even so, the Soviet influence in Iraq was still considerable and continued to colour Iraqi policies, which still worked contrary to US interests. Washington would follow the developing situation in Iraq closely. Helms was shocked by Kissinger's letter and wrote back to the State Department inquiring if the letter reflected Secretary Kissinger's view on the matter. In the response, Helms was encouraged to discuss the analysis with the Shah and his advisors, although he should consider and present it as tentative.³³⁹ This shift in the US view on Iraq disturbed Helms and the Shah and would have massive implications for the Shah's considerations on negotiating with Iraq.

The Shah's concerns about the changes in Washington and what it might mean for his ambitions would only grow. The political impact of the Watergate scandal had been increasing for a year, culminating in the first of three articles of impeachment against President Nixon being passed by the judiciary committee in the House of Representatives on 27 July.³⁴⁰ On 9 August, Richard Nixon resigned as President of the United States. Gerald

³³⁸ Memorandum from Kissinger to President Nixon. Washington, June 24, 1974. Subject: Fiscal Year 1975 Support for the Kurds. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 253

³³⁹ Telegram from the Department of State to the embassy in Iran. Washington, August 5, 1974. Subject: Iraqi-Arab States Relations. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 256

³⁴⁰ Roham Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*. 105

Ford assumed the office of President, only having been sworn in as vice-president in December 1973 after the former vice-president, Spiro Agnew, had resigned following criminal corruption charges.³⁴¹

Chapter Seven: Epilogue

The resignation of President Nixon did not signal a change in US strategy on the Iraqi Kurds. The most important person regarding the US policy on the Iraqi Kurds, Henry Kissinger, retained his position under the new President, Gerald Ford. The consequences of the American policy, however, would appear following Nixon's resignation. The developments in 1974 made the Shah realise that the Iraqi Kurds required far more far assistance than they had received if they were to keep the Iraqi forces at bay. At the same time as he was forced to deploy Iranian forces to engage with the Iraqi forces to maintain the stalemate, the Shah was also forced to consider negotiations with Iraq. The Iraqi diplomatic campaign to sway the West had made the Shah nervous that he would be left having gained nothing. However, the lack of trust between Iran and Iraq made negotiations between the foreign ministers difficult. It would take Arab intervention and a personal meeting between the Shah and Saddam Hussein to settle their issues, the Iraqi Kurds and the Shatt al-Arab. The meeting would prove apocalyptic for the Iraqi Kurds.³⁴²

The Ba'ath regime in Iraq was still unstable, with competing solutions to the Kurdish problem. While Saddam Hussein was increasingly being pushed towards finding a solution quickly, the division in the regime damaged the prospect of improving US-Iraqi relations as well.³⁴³ The continued division within the Ba'ath regime in Iraq had a two-pronged effect as it damaged the ambitions of improving US-Iraqi relations and emphasised how unstable the regime was. It was clear Saddam Hussein needed to resolve the Kurdish problem quickly, lest it cause his downfall. When Lowrie met with the new Iraqi foreign minister Shathel Taqa in late August,

³⁴¹ Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 176

³⁴² Defense Intelligence Notice Prepared in the Defense Intelligence Agency. Washington, March 7, 1975. Subject: Iran-Iraq. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 273. Marion Farouk-Sluglett & Peter Sluglett. *Iraq Since 1958. From Revolution to Dictatorship*. 170

³⁴³ Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State. Baghdad, August 9, 1974. Subject: U.S.-Iraqi relations. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 257

Taqa recanted many of the impressions of improving US-Iraqi relations, like El-Shabib's interaction with Secretary Kissinger. While Taqa accidentally died two months later, his elevated position and anxious need to denigrate US-Iraqi relations showed the continued difficulties of a divided Iraqi government.³⁴⁴ This internal complexity contributed to Saddam Hussein seeking a resolution with the Shah. Over the next months, Iraqi and Iranian representatives would have several meetings in an attempt to resolve their differences.³⁴⁵

By August the conflict between the Iraqi government and Barzani's Kurds had escalated, and the Iraqi forces had begun their offensive. The Iraqi objective mirrored former attempts at separating Barzani from the Iranian border, stopping the supplies from Iran which Barzani depended on. The strategy would also leave Barzani with a growing population that would eat at his supplies rather than escape across the border. The objective was the same, but the Iraqi tactics were improved thanks to Soviet advisors, quickly pushing the Iraqi Kurds back and fortifying taken positions.³⁴⁶ While the Iraqi Kurds tried to hold back the Iraqi forces, the Iraqi superiority in military equipment became apparent. The Iraqi capabilities had been significantly upgraded since the last conflict by Soviet airplanes, T-22 bombers, and new T-55 tanks.³⁴⁷ Reacting to the increased hostilities, Barzani again requested more support from Iran and the United States. Wanting to take the initiative in the battle, Barzani planned to attack oil installations in Kirkuk to hurt the Iraqi government. As his foreign benefactors denied Barzani's plan, it became increasingly clear that he had become beholden to their will.³⁴⁸ Washington was also increasingly aware of how the Kurdish struggle forced the Iraqi government to depend on Soviet support.³⁴⁹

The Iraqi offensive in August was a success, pushing the Kurds back and taking important Kurdish positions. Both the Iranians and the Israelis were realising they had to do more if the

³⁴⁴ Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State. Baghdad, August 29, 1974. Subject: U.S.-Iraqi Dialogue. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 260

³⁴⁵ Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 179-180

³⁴⁶ Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 177

³⁴⁷ Telegram from the Consulate in Tabriz to the Department of State. Tabriz, September 4, 1974. Subject: The Kurdish War in Iraq. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 261

³⁴⁸ Memorandum from Scowcroft to Director Colby. Washington, September 18, 1974. Subject: Response to September 7 Message to [of] the Shah. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc.262. Marion Farouk-Sluglett & Peter Sluglett. *Iraq Since 1958. From Revolution to Dictatorship*. 170

³⁴⁹ Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State. Baghdad, October 24, 1974. Subject: Resurgence of Soviet Activity in Iraq. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 263

Iraqi Kurds were to continue their struggle.³⁵⁰ The Shah had deployed Iranian forces wearing Kurdish uniforms since July but now wanted to escalate the use of Iranian forces to support the Iraqi Kurds in battle. The CIA was opposed, but Kissinger supported it, stating it would be the Shah's decision.³⁵¹ In September the Israelis agreed to provide the Iraqi Kurds with some anti-aircraft missiles and anti-tank missiles which they hoped would help even the playing field against the Iraqi forces.³⁵²

The developments in the conflict would contribute to the Shah starting to again consider negotiating with Iraq to resolve their differences. The hopelessness of the Kurdish situation was underscored as Barzani petitioned for more support again in November. It was becoming clear that he could not compete with Iraqi planes, artillery, and tanks, which caused 95 percent of the Kurdish casualties. The conflict had worsened for the Kurds, as the Iraqis had started to concentrate their attacks on the area containing his headquarters and his last major supply line. Washington, however, was not swayed by the severity of the conflict.³⁵³ The cost of supporting the Iraqi Kurds was growing for the Shah. In addition to the Iranian forces the Shah had begun using to support the Kurds in combat, he was increasingly concerned about the 100 000 refugee Kurds that had moved into Iran.³⁵⁴

The Shah's realisation of the worsening situation would push him towards negotiations with Iraq. While the Shah had offered a deal on the Iraqi Kurds before, Iraq had never been willing, a fact that would soon change. In Iraq, Saddam Hussein, who favoured negotiations with the Shah, was striving for control within the Iraqi regime. On 11 November, Saddam Hussein consolidated his power by replacing several ministers with men loyal to himself.³⁵⁵ The Iraqi government was also pushed to find a solution by the escalation of the Shah providing troops to support the Kurds. The Shah made a significant contribution, deploying multiple artillery battalions, and several mortar teams, in addition to air defences and surface-

³⁵⁰ Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 177

³⁵¹ Memorandum of Conversation. Washington, August 26, 1974. Participants: President Ford, Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, and Lt. General Brent Scowcroft. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 259

³⁵² Roham Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*. 108

³⁵³ Memorandum from Director Colby to the Kissinger. Washington, November 2, 1974. Subject: Text of General Mulla Mustafa Barzani's Letter to Secretary Kissinger. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 264

³⁵⁴ Message from Secretary of State Kissinger to Scowcroft. Isfahan, November 3, 1974. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 89

³⁵⁵ Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State. Baghdad, November 13, 1974. Subject: Major Cabinet Reshuffle in Iraq. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc.265

to-air missile units.³⁵⁶ The Shah's support had a devastating effect on the Iraqi offensive, shooting down multiple Iraqi aircraft in November and December.³⁵⁷ While this was helping the Iraqi Kurds to hold back the Iraqi forces, it also signalled to the Iraqis that negotiating with the Shah was an easier way to end the conflict.

Foreign involvement in Iraq would be pivotal for finding a resolution. While the effort towards finding a solution between Iraq and Iran was making the Israelis nervous, several nations were attempting to influence the situation. There were Egyptian and French efforts to convince the Shah that Iraq could be trusted in negotiations, and king Hussein of Jordan had served as an intermediary for months.³⁵⁸ The Israelis were growing concerned about the Shah's intentions and feared he might abandon the Iraqi Kurds.³⁵⁹

The Iraqi Kurds, who had used the winter to regain territory in the past, were incapable of doing so in early 1975. The mild winter and the new Iraqi tactic of making fortified positions as they advanced, made it impossible for the Iraqi Kurds.³⁶⁰ Growing nervous about losing his Kurdish card without gaining anything, the Shah told Kissinger in February that he would meet with Saddam Hussein and was willing to make a deal regarding the Iraqi Kurds.³⁶¹

The Algiers Accord

The Algiers accord, as it became known, would have a devastating effect on the Iraqi Kurds' struggle, as the agreement resulted in the Shah ceasing all support to Barzani and his Kurds.

³⁵⁶ Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 183. Briefing Memorandum from the Hyland (Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research) to Sisco. Washington, December 16, 1974. Subject: Iraqi Charge of Use of US Missiles in Iraq. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 267

³⁵⁷ Briefing Memorandum from Hyland to Sisco. Washington, December 16, 1974. Subject: Iraqi Charge of Use of US Missiles in Iraq. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 267

³⁵⁸ Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 184. Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State. Baghdad, February 1, 1975. Subject: Iraqi-Iranian Relations. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 271. Marion Farouk-Sluglett & Peter Sluglett. *Iraq Since 1958. From Revolution to Dictatorship*. 170

³⁵⁹ Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 186

³⁶⁰ Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 188

³⁶¹ Memorandum from Scowcroft to President Ford. Washington, February 19, 1975. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc.

As the US and Israeli support was provided through Iran, it effectively stopped their support as well.

In early March 1975, Saddam Hussein and the Shah met in Algiers during an OPEC summit. The resulting agreement was announced on 6 March and had apocalyptic consequences for the Iraqi Kurds. The Shah agreed to cease his support of the Iraqi Kurds, and in exchange, the border in the Shatt Al-Arab would be realigned.³⁶²

The agreement was met with mixed opinions in the Ford administration. Both Helms and Lowrie supported the deal as a step towards regional stability, while Kissinger was upset. Kissinger had not expected the agreement to be signed in early March, and further thought the deal itself was a bad result of the Shah's effort.³⁶³ The Shah argued that he would have had to start an open war to stop the Iraqi onslaught of the Iraqi Kurds.³⁶⁴ Furthermore, he argued that the Soviets, with the Kurdish problem resolved, would lose their influence in Iraq.³⁶⁵

While scholars differ on the Shah's motives in abandoning the Iraqi Kurds, much of their reasoning works in harmony to explain the Shah's decision, excluding American influence and giving the Shah agency. According to Gibson, the Shah's actions were pressured by the Cold War through the Soviet support of the Iraqi government. Gibson contends that the Shah was pressured to make a deal while he could. Similarly, Alvandi points to the decision being taken as a stalemate in Iraq was impossible. Also pointing out that the deal finally achieved the Shah's goal of concessions in the Shatt, proud to finally correct the deal his father was forced to sign in 1937.³⁶⁶ However, the Shah had attempted to play his Kurdish card several times in the past for concessions in the Shatt Al-Arab. What was different and pivotal in 1975 was the rise of Saddam Hussein. The political advance of Saddam Hussein and his pragmatic faction within the Iraqi Ba'ath regime was essential for the Algiers accord. The Kurdish

³⁶² Defense Intelligence Notice Prepared in the Defense Intelligence Agency. Washington, March 7, 1975. Subject: Iran-Iraq. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 273. Marion Farouk-Sluglett & Peter Sluglett. *Iraq Since 1958. From Revolution to Dictatorship*. 170

³⁶³ Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 191

³⁶⁴ Backchannel Message from Ambassador Helms to Scowcroft. Tehran, March 19, 1975. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 282

³⁶⁵ Backchannel Message from Ambassador Helms to Scowcroft. Tehran, March 8, 1975. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 276

³⁶⁶ Roham Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger and the Shah*. 114

struggle had toppled previous Iraqi governments, and the Shah was willing to push back to ensure that the Iraqi Kurds survive even in the face of Soviet armaments. With Saddam realising the Kurdish problem needed to be solved while having the position to negotiate was the key to making a deal. Saddam Hussein's diplomatic efforts had contributed to establishing trust as the negotiations were developing.

Iraq had promised not to attack the Iraqi Kurds while Iraq withdrew their support and troops but started attacking the Kurds the day after the agreement. The Shah would only convince the Iraqis to stop their attack on 13 March, giving Barzani a month to either flee or submit to the Iraqi government.³⁶⁷ Realising his position, Barzani travelled to Tehran to desperately petition his benefactors not to abandon him.³⁶⁸ Alvandi and Gibson are divided in their interpretation of Kissinger's response to the Algiers accord.³⁶⁹ In his response, Kissinger reassured the Shah of the Nixon administration's position as a staunch ally to Iran. Alvandi reads this as Kissinger's resignation over not being unable to sway the Shah. While Gibson interprets Kissinger's tone as not condoning the Shah's action. Gibson's interpretations hold true when looking at Kissinger's later questions to the Shah about the consequences if the Iraqi Kurds were massacred and Barzani revealed their schemes.³⁷⁰ While Kissinger opposed the deal, both CIA director Colby and Helms supported it. Colby argued that American support could not possibly continue without the Iranians, and feared Barzani would reveal US involvement after being betrayed.³⁷¹ Kissinger was left with no choice and conveyed his sympathies to Barzani.³⁷² With no hope of regaining support in Teheran, Barzani returned to his base in Iraq on 18 March and informed the Iraqi Kurds of their impending doom.³⁷³ Barzani and his family quickly fled into Iran, along with over 100 000 Iraqi Kurdish soldiers and their families. The remaining Iraqi Kurds either surrendered to the Iraqi government or

³⁶⁷ Telegram from the Embassy in Iran to the Department of State. Tehran, March 13, 1975. Subject: Iran/Iraq Relations. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 279

³⁶⁸ Backchannel Message from Scowcroft to Secretary of State Kissinger. Washington, March 10, 1975. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 278

³⁶⁹ Backchannel Message from Scowcroft to Ambassador Helms. Washington, March 10, 1975. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 277

³⁷⁰ Backchannel Message from Scowcroft to Ambassador Helms. Washington, March 16, 1975. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 281

³⁷¹ Message from the Central Intelligence Agency to Scowcroft. Washington, March 13, 1975. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc.280

³⁷² Backchannel Message from Scowcroft to Ambassador Helms. Washington, March 16, 1975. *FRUS*, Vol. XXVII, Doc. 281

³⁷³ Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out?* 194

were crushed as the Iraqis continued their offensive to finish off the conflict and destroy the last remnants of the Kurdish struggle in Iraq.³⁷⁴

The American support of the Iraqi Kurds was revealed following congressional enquiries into CIA activities. Two reports were produced, the Pike report and the Church report, named after the chairmen, Senator Frank Pike and Representative Otis Church, of the congressional committees which investigated. The Pike report placed special blame on the US in the support of the Iraqi Kurds and was leaked to the media.³⁷⁵

³⁷⁴ Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold out?* 195

³⁷⁵ Mari Salberg, “*Conventional Wisdom*”, 165-166, <https://archive.org/details/PikeCommitteeReportFull>

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

Non-Intervention and Internal Divisions

From the beginning, it was clear that the Nixon administration would struggle with internal divisions. This was most clearly shown by Henry Kissinger's prominent position, side-lining the State Department in deciding the US foreign policy in his favour. Yet for the first three years of Nixon's presidency, the State Department handled Iraq, deemed not significant enough to warrant Kissinger's attention. The State Department held to the established policy of non-intervention in the conflict between the Iraqi government and the Iraqi Kurds. Any attempts by the Iraqi Kurds themselves or US allies, such as the Shah, to change US policy on the conflict were stopped as long as the State Department oversaw the issue. There were, however, several emerging tensions that raised Iraq's importance for the Nixon administration, ultimately resulting in the issue reaching the higher echelons of the administration and changing the US policy on Iraq and the Iraqi Kurds. The increased Soviet influence, the Shah's narrative, and the actions of the Iraqi government all worked to change the US perception of Iraq.

US-Iraqi relations had deteriorated for some time, most significantly resulting in the Iraqi government cutting off diplomatic relations with the United States after the Six-days War of 1967. The resumption of diplomatic ties was dependent on the United States reducing its significant support of Israel. The Iraqi government thus positioned itself as adverse to US-Israeli relations, practically destroying any hopes of improving US-Iraqi relations. This lack of diplomatic contact would reinforce the idea of Iraq being averse to American interests and allies, and the Shah worked to cement this narrative within the Nixon administration. This idea was reinforced by the Shah by painting Iraq as quickly becoming a Soviet puppet. While the State Department argued that the gloomy picture of Iraq was exaggerated, the government of Iraq would also contribute to this narrative.

The actions of the Iraqi government showed how poor US-Iraqi relations had become. The limits of US influence in Iraq became apparent as Iraqi Jews were publicly executed despite American protests. The deterioration of US-Iraqi relations was further exemplified by the failure to negotiate to compensate the US government for its embassy, ending in the Iraqi

government expropriating the property without compensating the US government. This development would continue to hinder improving US-Iraqi relations, in addition to the Iraqi demand for reducing US support for Israel. Further worsening US-Iraqi relations, the Ba'ath regime in Iraq used anti-American propaganda while brutally solidifying its power in Iraq. When the Ba'ath regime in Iraq announced its ceasefire with Barzani in March 1970, it had several consequences for Iraq and the American perception of Iraq. While it gave the Ba'ath regime respite to consolidate its position, the Shah quickly used this as an argument that the Soviets were gaining greater influence in Iraq. Compounding this was the increased Soviet activity, marked especially by the arms agreement in late 1971.

Changing Directions in a Cold War

The increased Soviet activity in Iraq continued in 1972, supported by the Shah, convincing Nixon and Kissinger that the situation required US action, against the advice from within the administration. With the signing of the friendship agreement of April 1972, the Shah's narrative of Soviet influence in Iraq was confirmed. While the State Department downplayed the significance of the Soviet activity, parts of the Nixon administration were increasingly favouring disturbing the developing regime in Iraq. The solution came from the Shah as he met with President Nixon and Henry Kissinger in May 1972. The terms of the ceasefire of 1970 between the Iraqi government and the Iraqi Kurds had not progressed, and the Iraqi Kurds had continued their cooperation with foreign benefactors like Iran and Israel. By joining the Shah in supporting the Iraqi Kurds, it would keep Iraq unstable, stopping the USSR from solidifying its hold on Iraq and forcing Iraq to focus on its internal problems rather than harassing neighbouring states. This would benefit both American interests and their regional allies. The Shah had connected supporting the Iraqi Kurds with Iranian security, using the Nixon doctrine's promise of US support for regional allies. The American contribution was dwarfed by the Iranian contribution, largely serving as moral support, giving Barzani confidence that he would not be abandoned.

The actions of the Iraqi government and the bad state of US-Iraqi relations also continued to influence the American perception of Iraq. After a lengthy conflict with the Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC), partly owned by American companies, the Iraqi government nationalised the

IPC on 1 June 1972. By removing the last significant American investment in Iraq, it also removed the last significant argument against interfering in Iraq.

The US perception of Soviet activity in Iraq was reinforced on 18 July 1972 as a large number of Soviet troops were expelled from Egypt, the deteriorating Soviet relations with Egypt signalling that the Soviets would focus more on Iraq.

Dual Perception of Iraq

As the Nixon administration began their covert support of the Iraqi Kurds through Iran in August 1972, it was kept secret even within the administration, leading to separate parts of the administration applying differing policies on US-Iraqi relations. Also, as a reaction to the developments in Iraq, the State Department established a US interests' section in Iraq in 1972. This was in part done to gain a better understanding of Iraq, but Arthur Lowrie, the principal officer at the section quickly became the voice for improving US-Iraqi relations within the Nixon administration. Oblivious to the covert US support of the Iraqi Kurds, Lowrie clashed with other parts of the administration who saw Iraq as a Soviet satellite.

The instability in Iraq also contributed to the divided US perception of Iraq. Early 1973 was marked by the Iraqi government aggressively moving against other states in the Middle East. These aggressive actions were interpreted differently by the Nixon administration, the State Department saw it as a response to the Shah's aggressive behaviour, moving ships through Iraqi-controlled Shatt Al-Arab. Kissinger, however, was convinced the developments underscored the importance of dealing with Iraq, contributing to the decision in March 1973 to continue the covert support of the Iraqi Kurds. The Ba'ath regime in Iraq had two factions struggling for control. While the extremist faction championed aggressive action in the region to show Iraq's strength, it contributed to the emerging idea within the Nixon administration that keeping the Iraqi regime unstable was necessary. The pragmatic faction of the Ba'ath regime was seeking to stabilise Iraq, in part of this, they negotiated a settlement with the IPC for the nationalisation of the company. Lowrie and the State Department viewed the pragmatic faction, led by Saddam Hussein, as an opportunity to re-establish US-Iraqi relations. Unbeknownst to Lowrie, his advice to consider improvements in US-Iraqi relations was largely overlooked because the Nixon administration was actively attempting to subvert

the Iraqi government. Despite Lowrie being the highest US representative in Iraq, the Shah and the parts of the Nixon administration which agreed with his perception of Iraq had the ear of Kissinger.

Iraqi-Iranian Negotiations

Beginning in April 1973, representatives of Iraq and Iran would meet in an effort to resolve their differences. Iraq was fully aware of the Shah's support of the Iraqi Kurds and that he desired concessions in the waterway Shatt Al-Arab. While the negotiations had no immediate results, owing to the considerable lack of trust between Iraq and Iran, they signalled the Shah's willingness to abandon the Iraqi Kurds. In part working against the Nixon administration, whose goal was combating the Soviet influence in Iraq. While the truce of March 1970 had temporarily put a halt to hostilities between the Iraqi government and the Iraqi Kurds, the Shah needed the conflict to continue as a means of leveraging the Iraqi-Iranian negotiations. The Iraqi government was motivated to resolve the issue, knowing that the truce would expire in March 1974 if the promises of Kurdish rights and autonomy had not been implemented. While the Ba'ath regime in Iraq had used the truce to stabilise its hold of Iraq, it was aware that the Iraqi Kurds had toppled several Iraqi governments in the past and had no wish to join them.

If the negotiations had no definitive results, they served to raise various tensions. In Iraq, tensions flared between Iraq and the Iraqi Kurds as Barzani publicly lashed out against the Iraqi government in response to the negotiations. Within the Nixon administration, it served to highlight how different the various parts of the administration perceived Iraq. Kissinger did not consider the possibility of détente between Iraq and Iran significant enough to give up the Iraqi Kurds who in his eyes kept the Soviet influence at bay. Lowrie, on the other hand, applauded the negotiations as a step towards regional stability. The State Department began discussions of the growing signs of Iraq opening to Western interests.

The Shah's visit to Washington in late July 1973 revealed the commitment to the US support of the Iraqi Kurds, as the support only increased following the Shah's visit, again against advice from within the administration. Elaborating on the US position, Kissinger's expressed his desire for the Iraqi Kurds to serve as an open wound for the Soviet Union. With the US

administration still being divided on how to react to Iraq's apparent move towards the West, October 1973 would change the discussion entirely.

October War in US-Iraqi Relations

After Israel was attacked on 6 October by Egypt and Syria, the Iraqi government denounced the US support of Israel. The Iraqi government nationalised the American parts of the Basra Petroleum Company (BPC) and publicly stated it would cease exporting petroleum to the US. While this was in line with Iraq's policy of publicly denouncing the US, in practice, Iraq continued to award contracts to American companies and refused to join the boycott on exporting oil. This highlighted the rampant division within the Ba'ath regime in Iraq, but also the poor state of US-Iraqi relations. Only Lowrie continued to see hope for improving US-Iraqi relations. The outbreak of the War also led the Iraqi government to re-establish official diplomatic ties with Iran, securing its border which allowed Iraq to contribute forces to the Arab coalition against Israel. This again would signal the increased willingness to resolve the differences with Iran.

As the war continued, it also served to reveal how important the Iraqi Kurds were considered by Kissinger and the Shah. Barzani had been asked by an Israeli officer to engage the Iraqi forces to distract them from the war. Relying on the Shah's advice, Kissinger told Barzani not to engage the Iraqi forces. While Israel was considered militarily superior in the conflict, it still highlighted how valuable the Iraqi Kurds were to Kissinger and the Shah.

After the war, Lowrie reasoned that the Iraqi response had been in self-interest, more so than to support the Arab coalition or against the US. In Lowrie's estimation, this was a signal of Saddam Hussein and his pragmatic factions' growing power in Iraq. As the Iraqis had not followed through with cutting oil production or exporting to the US, Lowrie still argued for improving US-Iraqi relations. Kissinger, however, was convinced of Iraq was fast becoming the next Soviet Satellite in the Middle East.

After the war, Kissinger began his diplomatic efforts for peace between Israel, Egypt, and Syria. With Iraq opposing establishing a truce with Israel and still having troops in Syria,

Kissinger asked the Shah to distract Iraq by stirring trouble at the Iran-Iraq border in late December 1973. Continuing into 1974, the incursion had the desired effect of distracting Iraq. The matter grew so serious that Iraq took the matter to the UN Security Council, which decided to send a special representative to report. The conflict reinvigorated efforts of resolving the differences between Iraq and Iran. The two countries resumed their diplomatic negotiations.

Reality Setting in

Entering 1974 and approaching the end of the truce from 1970, it was clear that the Ba'ath had gained most from the ceasefire. Supported by Soviet military aid and increased oil revenues, the Ba'ath regime in Iraq had stabilised its position, with Saddam Hussein's pragmatic faction increasingly calling the shots. While it was still careful of pushing the Iraqi Kurds, the skirmishes on the Iraq-Iran border had contributed to increased tensions between the Iraqi forces and the Iraqi Kurds. The final signal for a resumption of the conflict came on 11 March 1974. On the deadline for implementing the agreement of 1970, the Iraqi government passed a law of autonomy, giving Barzani 15 days to accept it. The law of autonomy did not fulfil the promises of 1970, in essence creating a Kurdish area subservient to the Iraqi government. Saddam Hussein promised amnesty for Iraqi Kurds who would surrender to the Iraqi government while pressuring Barzani with troops and an economic blockade. The measures proved fruitless, with the military solution increasingly becoming the most likely outcome.

Barzani continued to push his foreign benefactors for support and was held back from being overly aggressive against the Iraqi forces. The benefit of the Iraqi Kurds had been the instability in Iraq brought by the stalemate, an open war did not serve anyone. On 24 June, President Nixon approved the budget for US support of the Iraqi Kurds for 1975. While the support was increased in anticipation of a new war, the skirmishes between the Iraqi forces and the Iraqi Kurds continued. The Americans, Israelis, and Iranians were acutely aware of the military inferiority of the Iraqi Kurds in a fight against the Iraqi forces. Improved by Soviet arms and instructors, the new Iraqi army was impossible for the Iraqi Kurds to match. While the Iranian and US support to the Iraqi Kurds had increased, the Shah was informed

that the Iraqi diplomatic efforts had complicated the US perception of Iraq. Washington had no interest in permanently damaging US-Iraqi relations.

US-Iraqi relations contributed to both the start and end of US support of the Iraqi Kurds. The hope of improving US-Iraqi relations played a part in the end of the US support. The actions of the pragmatic faction of the Ba'ath continued to give the impression that Iraq was not closed off from the West. While this did not convince Kissinger to stop the US support of the Iraqi Kurds, even after Kissinger was made Secretary of State in August 1973, he started suggesting that the Iraqi attempts at opening to the West should be seriously considered. This slight hint of a change in the US perception of Iraq made the Shah nervous that the conflict in Iraq would be resolved without improving his regional position, contributing to his decision to negotiate with the Iraqi government.

As tensions were rising in Iraq, President Nixon resigned on 9 August 1974 following impeachment after a long investigation into the Watergate scandal. While his resignation did not herald a change in US policy on Iraq and Iraqi Kurds, The Shah would conclude that the affair had left his American partner weaker and less dependable.

The Aftermath

The Kurdish issue in Iraq would be resolved seven months after Nixon's resignation.

The renewed conflict between the Iraqi forces and the Iraqi Kurds had devastating results for the Iraqi Kurds. The Iraqi forces made such advances that the Shah had to deploy Iranian troops to halt their advancement. This motivated the Shah to take the negotiations with Iraq more seriously, fearful that his Kurdish card would be useless or result in a war between Iran and Iraq. The trust between the two neighbours was worn thin, forcing Arab allies to work as intermediates. While the Shah had offered a deal on the Iraqi Kurds before, it was Saddam Hussein's solidified position that allowed him to meet the Shah's terms, realising the danger the Shah's increased support could have for the Ba'ath's hold on power. The negotiations resulted in the Algiers accord of March 1975, after a personal meeting between the Shah and Saddam Hussein at an OPEC meeting. For ceasing his support of the Iraqi Kurds, the Shah

was granted concessions in the Shatt Al-Arab, as he had long wished for. This effectively ended the US support for the Iraqi Kurds as it had worked through Iran.

Thesis and Thoughts

This thesis confirms, in agreement with Salberg and Alvandi, that the Shah was pivotal in both starting the US support of the Iraqi Kurds and ending it.³⁷⁶ The Shah was the one with agency, both in gaining US support but also indirectly by provoking the Iraqis, whose response served to confirm the American perception that Iraq was a hostile regime averse to US interests and allies. Yet, this thesis has also focused on the Cold War as being a decisive factor in US perception of the Iraqi regime. Certainly before 1972, even though the Nixon administration was divided on a solution in Iraq, the State Department held the reigns. The State Department's Cold War interpretation of Iraq, still hoping to sway radical Arab counties, shaped the US policy on the Iraqi Kurds. In 1972, the Shah and the Soviet activity in Iraq contributed to making Iraq a Cold War battleground. While the Iraqi government's relationship with the Soviet Union was strained, on account of its persecution of Iraqi communist elements to solidify its power in Iraq, it still moved towards the Soviet Union in American eyes. This perception of Iraq, as this thesis has shown already existed in Washington, allowed the Shah to gain US acceptance for subverting the Iraqi government in 1972.

While US perception of Iraq was dominated by Cold War considerations, US support of the Iraqi Kurds was a result of the Shah's efforts. This was not just because of his position as a regional partner to the United States, but also the emphasis the Nixon administration put on supporting him. Subverting the Iraqi government and supporting the Shah could both be achieved by supporting the Iraqi Kurds. The idea that supporting the Iraqi Kurds was a means of supporting the Shah is evident by examining the American support for the Iraqi Kurds. The US support was not significant, especially compared to the Shah's contribution. The Nixon administration was also not equally engaged in the support of the Iraqi Kurds, preferring to funnel the support through the Shah.

³⁷⁶ Mari Salberg, "*Conventional Wisdom*"167

Gibson's analysis served to contradict the narrative established by the Pike committee, highlighting that the US had in fact provided humanitarian assistance to the Iraqi Kurds, and had attempted to stop the Iraqi-Kurdish conflict from escalating further. While the US provided humanitarian support to the Iraqi Kurds, it was apparent that they did not support the political ambitions of the Iraqi Kurds. The Nixon administration only supported the Kurdish military ambitions to benefit from the stalemate in Iraq. Gibson's Cold War framework also provides nuance to the idea that the US support of the Iraqi Kurds was solely a result of the Shah. In line with Salberg's analysis, this thesis focused on the fact that these ideas were not mutually exclusive but coalesced to influence the US policy on Iraq and the Iraqi Kurds.³⁷⁷

This thesis has further examined the clear divisions within the Nixon administration, which serves to underscore Alvandi- and Gibson's opposing arguments. Not only highlighting how American ambassadors became advocates for the Shah, which gave more credence to his efforts to sway the Nixon administration. This was especially apparent when Richard Helms, with the authority of a former CIA director, became ambassador in early 1973. The US support was kept secret even within the administration, but Helms still met vocal opposition internally from Lowrie on the subject of Iraq and Iran. The CIA also showed opposition to the Shah's narrative of Iraq. CIA director Colby attempted to restrain the US support of the Iraqi Kurds, and the CIA tried to oppose the Shah using his own troops in the Iraqi-Kurdish conflict, which served to escalate the conflict.

Salberg does, however, differ from Alvandi in his view of Kissinger. Asserting that Alvandi exonerates Kissinger of guilt in his effort to show the Shah's agency.³⁷⁸ Salberg points to Kissinger being informed by the Shah of his intentions to make a deal with Saddam Hussein weeks before the Algiers accord was struck, which Alvandi fails to note. Salberg contends that Kissinger was equally culpable in the US support of the Iraqi Kurds. According to Salberg, even if Kissinger knew of the Algiers accord, he was more concerned with supporting the Shah.³⁷⁹ Kissinger's response to the Algiers accord reveals his dissatisfaction with the Shah's decision. This thesis has examined Kissinger's motivations, showing a clear personal interest in subverting the Iraqi government in an effort to combat the Soviet influence in Iraq and the Middle East. It was, however, impossible to continue American

³⁷⁷ Mari Salberg, "Conventional Wisdom" 166

³⁷⁸ Mari Salberg, "Conventional Wisdom" 167

³⁷⁹ Mari Salberg, "Conventional Wisdom" 168

support following the Algiers accord. This thesis, therefore, finds following the Algiers, that while Kissinger wanted to support the Shah whenever possible, he was also forced to support the Shah in his decision.

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