

Imperialists treat Kurds as expendable

by Joseph Brewda

The current use of the "Kurdish card" as a means of destabilizing the Middle East and fostering mass murder has a long history. The Kurds, who are non-Arab, Indo-European language-speaking Sunni Muslims, reside in an impoverished mountainous region straddling Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Syria. Prior to World War I, this region, with the exception of the Kurdish districts in Iran, was under the control of the Ottoman Empire.

Beginning in the mid-19th century, and especially after the 1878 Treaty of Berlin, the European imperialist powers began increasing their competing efforts to dismantle the Ottoman Empire, largely through aiding or sponsoring the resistance of non-Turkish subject peoples. The Russians patronized the Christian Armenians; the French focused on detaching Catholic Lebanon from the empire, while also patronizing the Armenians; the British invented Zionism as means of detaching Palestine, and also promoted the Arab cause. During this same period, the Kurds, who had embittered relations with the Arabs and Armenians, were also championed.

The Anglo-French conspiracy to dismantle the Ottoman Empire along national lines which culminated in the 1916 Sykes-Picot treaty, was only partially successful, due to the rise of the Turkish revolutionary Mustapha Kemal Ataturk. While most of the non-Turkish Ottoman lands were broken off and put under European control, Turkey proper was preserved. The largely Kurdish Mosul region of what is now northern Iraq became part of British-run Iraq in a typical double-cross, as this oil-rich area had earlier been promised to the French. A plot to create an independent Kurdistan—made up of large areas of modern Turkey—as demanded by the 1920 World War I peace treaty of Sevres, failed, after Ataturk defeated the postwar invading European imperial armies. Continuing efforts by the Europeans to aid Kurdish revolts were regularly crushed by the Turks in the post-World War I period.

Following World War II, the Soviet Union, which had occupied and divided up neutral Iran with the British during the war, sponsored the formation of a Kurdish republic in Iran. As a result of several post-World War II deals, the Soviets pulled out of the region, and the Kurdish republic was crushed.

In 1958, the British puppet Hashemite kingdom of Iraq was overthrown by various Iraqi political groupings led by Gen. Abed al-Karim Kassem. Kassem immediately ordered

the two British Army and air bases in Iraq shut down, executed the king, and pulled out of the Anglo-American sponsored Baghdad Pact (later known as CENTO). Kassem, who was backed by the Soviets to a degree, also began to move toward the nationalization of the Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC). The IPC, which produced all Iraqi oil, was a Euro-American consortium dominated by the British.

Timely revolts

In direct response to this threat to their interests, the British fostered another Kurdish revolt. This revolt gained strength in 1961 under the leadership of Mullah Mustafa Barzani, whose sons are among the key leaders of the revolt today. Barzani was an Anglo-American agent who was financed and armed by the CIA, but directed by the Israeli Mossad. His sons, who are leading the current revolt, are financed by the CIA.

In 1963, the Baathist Party took over Iraq, killed Kassem, and moved more aggressively to nationalize the Iraqi Petroleum Company. The Kurdish revolt naturally expanded. In 1972, Iraq nationalized IPC, the first Arab state after Algeria to nationalize its oil fields. Henry Kissinger personally ordered a renewed Kurdish revolt, to the degree that the senior Barzani was considered a Kissinger agent.

A large part of this effort to destabilize Iraq was run out of Iran, then ruled by the Shah. British intelligence had earlier overthrown Iranian nationalist leader Musadegh who, in 1955, had briefly nationalized British Petroleum. The Shah was dependent on the British and Americans for his throne. One major Kurdish operative of the Kissingerians and the Iranian Savak (intelligence) at the time was Jalal Talabani, who continued his relations with the Iranians even after the overthrow of the Shah. Talabani is playing a key role for the CIA today.

In 1975, Iraq agreed to share control over the lower Tigris (Shatt al Arab) waterway, in return for Iran's halting its aid to the insurgent Kurds. This agreement virtually made Iraq a land-locked country, and set the conditions for the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war.

During the Iran-Iraq war, the Iranians, with the aid of the U.S. and the Israelis, fostered Kurdish revolts with varying degrees of success. Several of the key U.S. operatives active in supplying the Iranians were also deeply involved in aiding the Kurdish revolt. These Iran-Contra figures include: then-State Department intelligence head Morton Abramowitz, today the U.S. ambassador to Turkey; former Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle, who today advises the Turkish government; and former U.S. Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, who has been the most important and earliest advocate of detaching Mosul province from Iraq and granting it to Turkey.

There is no evidence that the European or American imperialists ever really wanted to establish an independent Kurdistan. Rather, the Kurds are simply expendable pawns.