

## Can Federalism Stabilize Iraq?

The United States devoted nine months to planning the war in Iraq and a mere 28 days to planning the peace, according to senior U.S. military officials. Much more time has to be invested in the peace, however, if the military achievements of the war are to be preserved and a stable democracy is to be created in Iraq. Establishing a governmental system that can accommodate Iraq's different ethnic and religious groups, previously kept in check by the political and military repression of the Saddam Hussein regime, is paramount to securing that peace. In the absence of a system uniquely designed toward this end, violent conflicts and demands for independence are likely to engulf the country. If not planned precisely to meet the specific ethnic and religious divisions at play, any democratic government to emerge in Iraq is bound to prove less capable of maintaining order than the brutal dictatorship that preceded it.

By dividing power between two levels of government—giving groups greater control over their own political, social, and economic affairs while making them feel less exploited as well as more secure—federalism offers the only viable possibility for preventing ethnic conflict and secessionism as well as establishing a stable democracy in Iraq. Yet, not just any kind of federal system can accomplish this. Rather, a federal system granting regional governments extensive political and financial powers with borders drawn along ethnic and religious lines that utilize institutionalized measures to prevent identity-based and regional parties from dominating the government is required. Equally critical to ensuring stability and sustainable de-

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mocracy in Iraq, the new federal system of government must secure the city of Kirkuk, coveted for its vast oil reserves and pipelines, in the Kurdish-controlled northern region to assure that the Kurds do not secede from Iraq altogether.

For its part, the United States must take a more active role in advising Iraqi leaders to adopt a federal system of government along these lines. Such a system will help the United States not only to build democracy in Iraq but also to prevent the emergence of a Shi'a-dominated government in the country. Without this form of federalism, an Iraq rife with internal conflict and dominated by one ethnic or religious group is more likely to emerge, undermining U.S. efforts toward establishing democracy in Iraq as well as the greater Middle East.

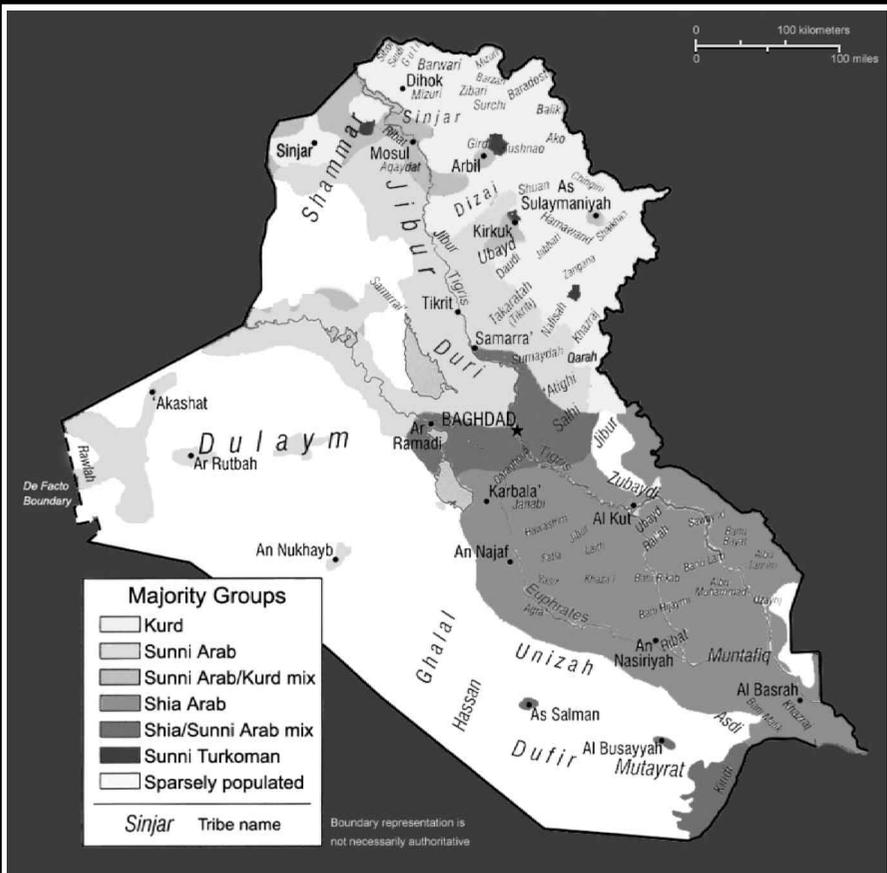
### **Dividing Lines in Iraq**

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By definition, democracy aims to provide representation and protection for the rights of everyone in society. Creating and sustaining such a system in Iraq, without opening the door to ethnic conflict, is no easy task. According to the former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations and chief negotiator of the 1995 Dayton accords, Richard Holbrooke, "To govern this country as a democracy would be very hard, since a true democracy would almost certainly lead to Shiite, Sunni, and Kurdish leaders who hold extreme positions. This would be worse than Bosnia, because the passions are much deeper, and the Bosnian war will not resume, whereas fighting between Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds could easily begin any day if we aren't there."<sup>1</sup>

Specifically, establishing a democratic government in Iraq risks empowering identity-based parties, which, as the name alludes, represent only one ethnic, linguistic, or religious group in a country, and may suppress the rights of other groups in the country. Three major identity groups are present in Iraq with a long history of strife among them. These groups are divided along ethnic and religious lines. Arabs are Iraq's largest ethnic group, comprising about 75 percent of Iraq's population and living primarily in the central and southern parts of the country, while Kurds comprise about 20 percent, living primarily in the north. Most Arabs are Muslims although they belong to two different sects of Islam: 55–65 percent of Iraqis are Shi'a Muslims, and 30–40 percent are Sunni Muslims.

The two sects' views of the Muslim leadership distinguish them from one another. Shi'as believe in the doctrine of the Imamate whereby leaders of the Muslim community should be descendants of the Prophet Muhammad and, thus, Ali ibn Abi Taleb, the son-in-law of the Prophet, should be the historical leader of the Muslim community. In contrast, Sunnis believe Muslims should choose their leaders based on their own attributes and do not

**Map I: Ethno-Linguistic Groups in Iraq**

Source: *Iraq: A Country Profile* (Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, 2003), [www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/iraq\\_ethno\\_2003.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/iraq_ethno_2003.jpg).

support Abi Taleb. Although many other differences distinguish these two sects of Islam, they are rooted primarily in this basic disagreement.

Kurds are the second-largest ethnic group in Iraq and live primarily in the northern part of the country. In Iraq, ethnic and religious lines crosscut each other because both Arabs and Kurds are Muslims. Most Kurds are Sunni although some subscribe to the Yazidi religion, which is composed of elements of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. Rounding out Iraq's ethnic map are Turkomans and Assyrians, with less than 5 percent of the country's population.

Relations between Arabs and Kurds have historically provided the greatest source of tension in Iraq. The Iraqi government has not only consistently excluded Kurds from positions of power but also tried to assimilate them into the country. As part of a program of Arabization, Saddam's government tried to assimilate non-Arabs by preventing them from publicly speaking in

their own languages or being schooled in them and by pressuring them to adopt Arab names and to declare themselves as Arabs in official government documents, including identification papers and national censuses.

Saddam's regime combined these methods with the use of military force. The government specifically tried to undermine the Kurds' strength in the north by expelling them from the region and, in the process, razed thou-

sands of Kurdish villages and killed hundreds of thousands of Kurds. More than 100,000 Kurds died in the infamous 1988 Anfal campaign alone, in which the Iraqi government used chemical weapons against them.<sup>2</sup>

Although ethnic tensions undoubtedly have been stronger, religious tensions have also been intense in Iraq, even beyond the Iran-Iraq War, when Iraqi Shi'as supported their Sunni-led government against Iran's

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Shi'a-controlled government. Even though the Shi'as are the country's largest religious group, the Sunnis have traditionally held more power. Even before Saddam came to power, Sunnis were favored in the country, with most Ba'th Party positions held by Sunnis as well as most of the top posts in the security forces. During his 24 years of power, Saddam deliberately favored the Sunnis and prevented Shi'as from practicing their own religion, arresting, expelling, or murdering clerics perceived as a threat to his power.

Following the Persian Gulf War in 1991, the Shi'as in the south, sometimes known as "the Marsh Arabs," tried to overthrow Saddam's regime. The Iraqi army retaliated, killing thousands of Shi'as as well as thousands of Kurds who separately rebelled against the regime. The government subsequently moved away from its secular foundation and attempted to nationalize religion, even establishing Sunni Islamic radio stations in Iraq, further increasing tensions between the two sects. When a prominent Shi'a cleric was executed by the regime in 1999, the Shi'as rose up again, this time in Basra. The government arrested and tortured thousands of Shi'as and even killed many—just how many remains unclear as the mass graves from the uprising are only now being uncovered.<sup>3</sup>

Although there are several different ethnic and religious groups in Iraq and a history of conflict among these groups, it is still possible to construct a stable democracy in Iraq for several reasons. Whatever their primary motivations, these groups have demonstrated support for federalism, and the fact that religious and ethnic cleavages in Iraq are indeed crosscutting could help moderate behavior and even help develop political parties across religious and ethnic lines—that is, as long as it is within the proper federal political structure.

## Common Ground

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Ethnically diverse countries such as Belgium, Canada, India, Spain, and Switzerland have all constructed stable democracies through federalism. Tensions among Iraq's different ethnic and religious groups are no stronger or more volatile than tensions have been at one time or another in many of those countries. These tensions have even erupted into violence at various times in India, Spain, and Switzerland. Moreover, within the correct political framework, Iraq's crosscutting cleavages may conspire to make people behave more moderately. They may provide the basis for parties to mobilize groups across ethnic and religious lines, focusing politics on issues that are not ethnic or religious in nature, and may thereby defuse tensions. They may also promote more moderate policies on ethnic and religious issues. Whether Iraq is able to establish a stable democracy ultimately depends on the design of its system of federalism.

The Kurds are federalism's most zealous supporters in Iraq. Although some, including those who endorse federalism, want independence, most Iraqi Kurds are pragmatic and recognize that independence is not feasible given Turkey's adamant opposition to it. Turkey opposes Kurdish independence, fearing that it may spark a similar movement among Kurds in Turkey. Federalism is thus the Kurds next-best option, as it will give them control over many political and social issues that affect their lives as well as the ability to protect their identities against onslaughts they have experienced in the past.

Iraq's two main Kurdish parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), have both endorsed federalism. According to Mas'ud Barzani, head of the KDP, federalism "will unite Iraq and solve its old and complicated problems" as well as "bolster Iraq's national unity and sovereignty."<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Jalal Talabani, PUK founder and secretary general, claims federalism will "protect the unity of Iraq" and ensure "the fulfillment of all the legitimate rights and demands of the people of Iraq."<sup>5</sup>

Federalism seems to be the system of choice for more than just the Kurds. In fact, all Iraqi leaders that opposed the regime before it collapsed have expressed their support for federalism in Iraq. The Iraqi opposition first voiced its support for federalism in December 2002 at the London conference of opposition leaders that included Kurds, Sunnis, and Shi'as. The members of the conference agreed that "[n]o future state of Iraq will be democratic if it is not federal at the same time in structure."<sup>6</sup> Federalism, they claim, is a necessary form of democracy because federalism protects the will of the minority against the will of the majority.

The U.S.-led coalition forces have voiced their support for federalism as well, allowing the Kurds to have their own semiautonomous region in the

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new Iraq while opposing independence for that region. The United States has not developed a concrete plan for federalism in Iraq, however, nor has it taken a position on the more controversial issues surrounding federalism, such as whether regional governments should have extensive power or whether Iraq should build the regional governments along or across ethnic

and religious lines (although the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has discussed this point some). The U.S. government has also declined to take a position on whether the Kurds should control Kirkuk and has insisted, more broadly, that the Iraqi people should determine for themselves what system of government to adopt. Its position, or lack thereof, may be partially informed by the desire to allow Iraqis to decide how to govern their country themselves.

Clear opposition to federalism both within Iraq and in the Middle East region is also significant. Turkey, for example, fears that a federal system of government in Iraq that entitles the Kurds to their own regional government within Iraq and to control over Kirkuk's oil fields will encourage Iraqi Kurds to seek an independent state and, subsequently, lead the Kurds in Turkey to follow suit. Turkey's foreign minister, Abdullah Gul, has stated that Turkey will intervene militarily to prevent Kirkuk from becoming the capital of Iraq's Kurdish region.<sup>7</sup> When Kurdish forces entered the cities of Kirkuk and Mosul last March, Turkey even sent troops into northern Iraq to guarantee, according to Gul, "Iraq's territorial integrity."<sup>8</sup>

Iraqi minority groups in the northern part of the country also have reservations about establishing federalism in Iraq out of fear that the Kurds will discriminate against them in any Kurdish-dominated region that is created. Although the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), which was established under the protection of the no-fly zone created by the United States following the Persian Gulf War and is comprised of the two main Kurdish parties and a coalition of Christians and Assyrians, has promised to respect all people's rights, some minorities such as the Turkomans and Assyrians fear that a Kurdish regional government would harm their minority rights by protecting Kurdish identities and passing laws prohibiting non-Kurds from using their own language, practicing their own religion, or gaining rightful employment. The president of the Iraqi Turkoman Front, San'an Ahmad Agha, has warned, "If one group tries to favor itself over another ... it will lead to civil war. If there is a division, there will be an ethnic war."<sup>9</sup>

Despite their reservations, minority groups generally recognize the futility of opposing a federal government for Iraq, should the parliament adopt one. According to Agha, "Citizens have to comply with and accept whatever is ratified by the future parliament. If an act gains 99 percent of the votes, but there is a minority in the parliament with different opinions ... those with an opinion that falls into a minority have to comply with and accept the opinion of the majority."<sup>10</sup>

Its legitimate fear of imposing any form of government rather than allowing the Iraqis to choose a new government for themselves notwithstanding, the United States must actively promote federalism in the country. The failure to do so will prevent the United States from achieving its goal of creating a stable and democratic government in Iraq and may make Iraq more of a threat to U.S. security than it was before the war. Although what form of government to adopt ultimately will and should be the decision of the Iraqi people, U.S. officials must advise the Iraqi Governing Council to adopt federalism and must continue to assure Turkey that the United States does not support, and is willing to use political and economic incentives to discourage, Kurdish independence, should the Kurds decide to secede. By reassuring Turkey that the Kurds will not secede, the United States can make a federal system of government possible in Iraq.

The climbing number of casualties the United States has suffered since President George W. Bush declared major combat operations in Iraq over in early May 2003 has clearly enhanced the U.S. interest in turning Iraq over to the Iraqi people as soon as possible. Yet, a hasty turnover would be a grave mistake. The United States cannot transfer authority in Iraq until a new federal system of government has been established and until more than one democratic election has occurred without violence.

## **Empowering the Positive, Eliminating the Negative**

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The most effective kind of federalism to ensure a stable, self-sustainable democracy in Iraq must be developed along the following lines.

### **THE DIVISION OF POLITICAL AND FINANCIAL POWERS**

First and foremost, federalism must be extensive in Iraq to ensure that the regional governments have considerable political and financial powers—an essential component for ensuring governmental protection for Iraq's various ethnic and religious groups and for preventing ethnic conflict and secessionism. Federalism has failed in countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Nigeria precisely because it did not go far enough in granting re-

gional autonomy. If regional governments are granted certain powers in principal but denied these powers in practice or given only modest powers in the first place, federalism is guaranteed to fail.

At a minimum, Iraq's regional governments should control language policy and education to enable the Shi'as and Kurds to protect their identities, which have been eroded in the past by the Iraqi government. The regional governments may also control other social, economic, and political issues such as health, unemployment, and intraregional trade, depending on the specific demands of different groups for autonomy, which are not yet ap-

parent. The federal government should retain control, however, over issues affecting the entire country such as defense, foreign affairs, currency, citizenship, and infrastructure. Individual ethnic and religious groups in Iraq should also be integrated within a national military force with fair representation of all groups; allowing each region to have its own military force would make secession and ethnic conflict all the more likely.

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Under the new federal system, Iraq's regional governments should also have considerable financial powers that allow them to legislate on economic policies that address needs specific to their region and to raise their own revenue so that they can pursue them. Without independent sources of revenue, the regional governments will remain dependent on the central government for funding. This will not only undermine their political autonomy but also prevent them from implementing the policies they create.

With most of Iraqi revenue coming from oil sales, the entire country should share in that revenue. If not, large disparities in wealth will develop across the country. The oil-rich regions, however, should receive a greater share of the oil revenue generated in Iraq because they produce more of this revenue in the first place and have incurred many externalities in the production of the oil, including the destruction of their local environment. Failure to compensate oil-rich regions for their oil could just as easily lead to future resentment as wealth inequalities might. Although it may be a fine line between the two extremes of regional control and national equitable distribution, some formula splitting the difference should be developed at the national level of government.

This kind of policy is consistent with the Kurds' demands. The Kurds want each of the country's regions to receive a portion of all the revenue in Iraq, including oil revenue, according to the size of its population. The

Kurds' plan may not go far enough, however, to prevent the secession of Kurds from Iraq in the long term. If the Kurds do not receive a larger share of the oil revenue generated in Iraq than the size of their population warrants, they may decide to secede from the country in the future, should they find they do not have the money to finance the new policies and projects they devise.

The situation in Nigeria, also with abundant oil reserves, illustrates the potential problems the division of oil revenue could pose in a federal Iraq. Oil-rich regions in Nigeria have complained vociferously that they have incurred various economic and environmental costs in producing oil and, thus, deserve a greater share of the oil revenue. These demands have erupted into violence, with guerrilla groups even sabotaging oil pipelines to draw the attention of the national government. In response, the Nigerian government promised the oil-rich regions at least 13 percent more of the country's oil revenue than the oil-poor regions. Unfortunately, there are no checks in Nigeria on how this revenue is spent. So, intense and often violent competition for control of this revenue has occurred in the oil-rich region of the Delta as well as for control of the illegal bunkering of oil in the region.

Again, for its part, Turkey's opinion on just how much power should be allotted for the Iraqi regional governments centers around its fears of Kurdish attempts at secession. Turkey fears that giving the regional governments in Iraq too much political and financial power will bolster Kurdish interest in independence, even though the Kurds have expressed their support for staying within Iraq. Conflict is more likely to result, however, if the Kurds feel they are not given enough political and financial autonomy. When Iraq agreed to cede some autonomy to the Kurds in 1970, the Kurds rejected the plan because it did not give their regional government enough political power and did not include Kirkuk within their fold. Intense fighting ensued between the government and the Kurds when the government tried to impose its policy over the objections of the Kurds.

### **REGIONAL BORDERS ALONG, NOT ACROSS, ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS LINES**

Although additional precautions will have to be taken to prevent identity-based parties from dominating the government, the borders of the regional governments in Iraq should be drawn along ethnic and/or religious lines so that the three major groups in the country have significant control over their own political, social, and economic affairs. Drawing Iraq's regional borders along, rather than across, ethnic and religious lines would create three distinct regional governments in Iraq in which the Kurds, Shi'as, and Sunnis each have a majority. The Kurds are particularly supportive of drawing Iraq's

regional borders this way, as establishing a federal system of government divided along purely religious lines would divide the greater Iraqi Kurdish population into separate regions. The Sunnis would also benefit from such a scenario because they are outnumbered by Shi'as in the country and would be unrepresented in a centralized system of government where the largest groups in the country would have the most power.

**Banning identity-based parties outright may jeopardize the democratic system as a whole.**

Many scholars fear that drawing Iraq's regional borders along ethnic or religious lines will increase the likelihood of ethnic conflict and secessionism by strengthening ethnic and religious identities in the country. They point to cases of failed federations in the former Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia as examples of what could result from drawing borders along ethnic and religious lines in Iraq. Yet, drawing regional borders along these lines

in and of itself will not promote ethnic conflict or secessionism. Regional borders drawn along these lines in Belgium and Switzerland, for example, as well as others did not experience such misfortune. Rather, ethnic conflict and secessionism only become a real threat when identity-based parties dominate national and regional governments, as was the case in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, and are able to reinforce ethnic and religious identities; use incendiary language to elevate tensions among groups; and turn all issues, even those only remotely related to ethnicity or religion, such as infrastructure and the environment, into questions of ethnicity and religion as well as autonomy from the federal government.

Banning identity-based parties outright is not the best way to rid Iraq of identity-based parties, as such an effort may jeopardize the democratic system as a whole. Instead, to prevent the emergence of identity-based parties effectively, the designers of the new federal system should construct the rest of Iraq's political system to encourage parties to widen their support bases. For example, adopting cross-regional voting laws would accomplish this by requiring parties to compete in a certain number of regions and to win a certain percentage of the vote in these regions to be elected to the federal government. Russia, Indonesia, and Nigeria have such cross-regional voting laws that have prevented identity-based parties from forming.

Iraq might also adopt a presidential system of government, a step currently supported by the Kurds and the Iraqi National Congress. Presidential systems of government are less favorable to regional parties because directly elected presidents need more cross-regional support to get elected than do

prime ministers who are chosen by a parliament. Such design features would help prevent identity-based parties from forming in a national government even when each of the regions is comprised principally of one ethnic or religious group. Under a presidential system, parties would have to represent more than one ethnic and religious group if they are to have a certain amount of support in more than one region of the country.

Drawing Iraq's borders along ethnic and religious lines, however, may promote ethnic conflict by creating regional minorities within the subnational governments. As map 1 shows, creating completely homogenous regions in Iraq is impossible because Iraq's different ethnic and religious groups are intermixed in some areas of the country. Relocating these groups to different regions would also foster ethnic conflict or secessionism, as the partitioning of India did following World War II. By passing laws that discriminated against or ignored the demands of regional minorities, parties in regional governments such as Assam, Nagaland, and Mizoram have instigated ethnic conflict and demands by these minorities for separate regional governments in India.

In Nigeria as well, identity-based parties have attempted to expand the shari'a, a body of Islamic law, leading to conflict between Muslims and Christian Igbos in the north. To prevent the occurrence of such situations in Iraq, the national government must prohibit any laws that discriminate against other groups in the regional governments and allow grievances relating to discrimination to be brought before the constitutional court for redress.

The most often preferred alternative to drawing borders along ethnic and religious lines is to draw regional government borders across ethnic and religious lines in the hopes of weakening Iraqis' ethnic and religious identities.<sup>11</sup> Some have even suggested using the country's 18 administrative districts as the borders of these new regional governments. Many Arabs, who support federalism, support this proposal. The Iraqi National Congress also supports dividing Iraq into several regions but not along its current administrative borders, which would underrepresent the Shi'a majority.

The greatest advantage in drawing Iraq's borders along ethnic and religious lines rather than across them is that this design is much more likely to prevent the dominance of identity-based parties. When regional borders are drawn along ethnic and religious lines, other institutions in a country, such as cross-regional voting laws and presidential systems of government, can prevent identity-based parties from dominating the government. With re-

**Cross-regional voting laws or a presidential system can help avoid ethnic conflict.**

**Map 2: Ethno-Linguistic Groups in Iraq's 18 Administrative Districts**



Source: *Iraq: A Country Profile* (Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, 2003), [www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/iraq\\_ethno\\_2003.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/iraq_ethno_2003.jpg). Note: The ethnographic and administrative maps of Iraq are transposed on one another.

gional borders drawn across ethnic and religious lines, however, identity-based parties can arise because parties could compete throughout the country and represent only one ethnic or religious group in the country. The only way to prevent identity-based parties from dominating the government under this plan would be to ban them outright or to require parties to meet certain ethnic or religious quotas. Not only are both of these mechanisms undemocratic, they are also likely to meet strong opposition from the parties themselves.

Such is the situation in India, where the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) competes throughout India but only draws support from Hindus in the country. The BJP's pro-Hindu policies, which have included the razing of the Muslim mosque in Ayodyha and demands for a uniform civil code that

eliminates special provisions for Muslims, have spawned significant conflict between Hindus and Muslims. Drawing regional lines across ethnic and religious lines might similarly lead to identity-based parties that represent Sunni Muslims, Shi'a Muslims, and Kurds in the country and that promote policies favoring their own groups and harming others. On the other hand, regional borders drawn along ethnic and religious lines, in conjunction with mechanisms such as cross-regional voting laws or presidentialism, can avoid such devastating consequences.

## KIRKUK

Finally, to diminish the likelihood of ethnic conflict and secessionism in Iraq, Kirkuk must be included in the Kurdish-controlled region that is created. The Kurds have a legitimate claim to this city. Kurds predominantly comprise the population of Kirkuk and would even more so had Saddam Hussein's regime not expelled them from the city and forced Arabs to take their place as part of its Arabization campaign. Moreover, Kurdish leaders have pledged to respect the rights of minorities in the city, which should allay the fears of minorities in the region. According to PUK leader Talabani, "We consider this city, Kirkuk, as a city of multinational fraternity because it is the city of Kurds, Turkomans, Arabs, and Chaldo-Assyrians. This city must be the symbol of fraternity of peoples of Iraq and of real Iraqi citizenship based on equality."<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, the Kurds are unlikely to accept any agreement in which Kirkuk is not included as part of a Kurdish-controlled region, as demonstrated by their inclusion of Kirkuk in the Constitution of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, which was adopted by the KRG following the Gulf War and has governed the region ever since. The strength of the Kurds' attachment to the city was also demonstrated in their rejection of the 1970 autonomy agreement offered by the Iraqi government because it did not include Kirkuk in their region. If the Kurds are not given control over Kirkuk, they may not only reject any agreement that is presented to them but also may attempt to secede from the country and take Kirkuk with them.

Afraid that control of Kirkuk will avail the Kurds of the financial strength to declare an independent state, however, Turkey has indicated its intention to invade Iraq should the Kurds receive control over the city. Securing Kirkuk in the Kurdish territory will require assuring Turkey that the Kurds will not secede. In the short term, the United States may provide such a guarantee to Turkey based on the U.S. military presence in Iraq and opposition to the Kurds' independence. Another way to assure Turkey that the

**Kirkuk must be included in the Kurdish-controlled region that is created.**

Kurds will not secede in the short term, or the long term for that matter, is to prevent the Kurds from controlling all the oil revenue generated in Kirkuk, which would greatly diminish the Kurds' apparent financial strength and thus lessen the likelihood of their declaring an independent state. As discussed earlier, such an arrangement would likely meet the approval of the Kurds as well; they have only requested a share of the oil revenue commensurate with the Kurdish proportion of Kirkuk's population.

## **Not Just Any Federal System**

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The potential consequences of failing to design federalism properly and to establish a stable democracy in Iraq extend far beyond Iraqi borders. Civil war in Iraq may draw in neighboring countries such as Turkey and Iran, further destabilizing the Middle East in the process. It may also discourage foreign investment in the region, bolster Islamic extremists, and exacerbate tensions between Palestinians and Israelis. A civil war in Iraq may even undermine support for the concept of federalism more generally, which is significant given the number of countries also considering federalism, such as Afghanistan and Sri Lanka, to name just two. Finally, the failure to design and implement the kind of federalism that can establish a stable democracy in Iraq might undermine international support for other U.S. initiatives in the region, including negotiations for Arab-Israeli peace. Iraq's federal government must therefore be designed carefully so as to give regional governments extensive political and financial autonomy, to include Kirkuk in the Kurdish region that is created, and to limit the influence of identity-based political parties. The short- and long-term stability of Iraq and the greater Middle East depend on it.

## **Notes**

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