The Kurds: Elusive Dreams of Independence

Middle East:

Current Events Reflect 100 years of history

Before World War 1

A Crossroads in the Middle East

Courtesy Jill Derby

Where Kurds Live

Turkey: 14m

Iran: 6m

Iraq: 6m

Syria: 2m

Armenia - 2m

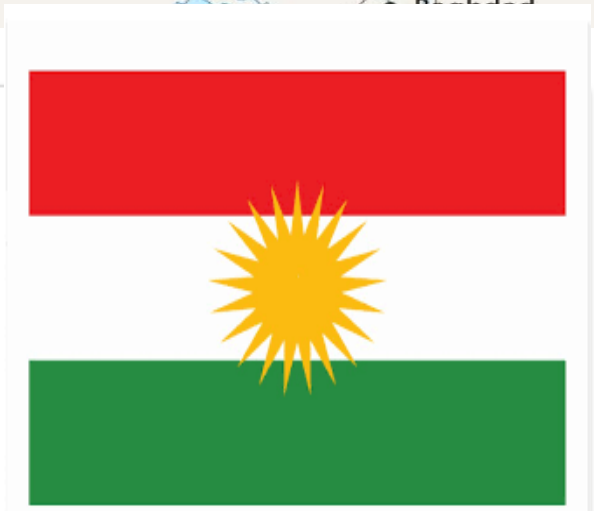
Iraq: Ethnic/ Sectarian Divisions

Iraqi Kurdistan: Mountainous North

Sulaimani is the cultural capital of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), nestled along the mountains bordering Turkey and Iran.

ZANIST INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
REGISTRATION
DeFacto
halabjagroup

Kurdish Regional Government



Who Are the Kurds

- Long ethnic history in the Middle East – 2400 BC
- Largest ethnic group without a country of their own
- Largely Sunni Muslim
- Have their own language (Persian related)
- Live in a mountainous region
- Between 25 and 30 million
- Peshmerga

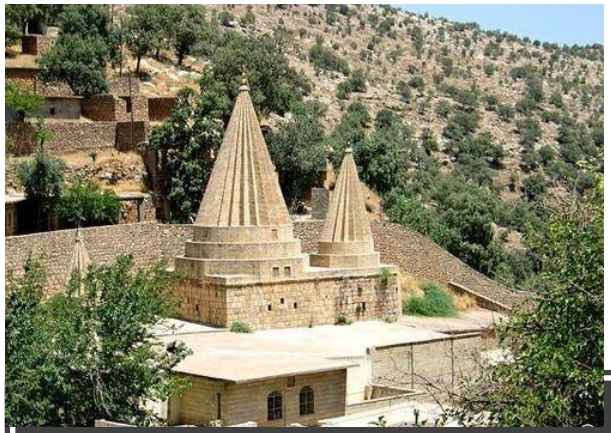
Pesmerga, ISIS, Yazidis

Culture: Women's Roles

Women Peshmerga fighters

Food, Family, Hospitality

Respect for Elders



Kurdish Culture: Religion

100 Years of Middle Eastern History

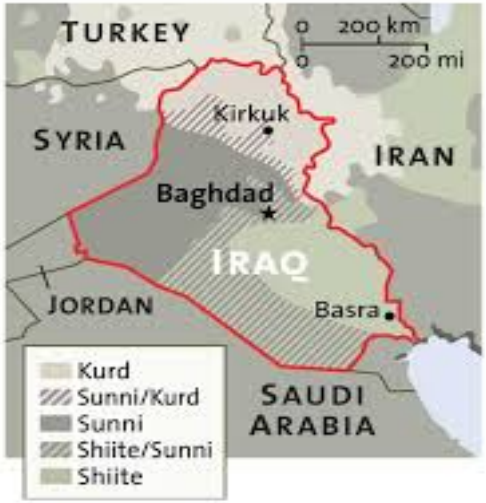
World War 1 Alliances

Britain and France Divided up the Ottoman Empire (Sykes-Picot treaty)

Promised the Kurds a homeland : Later reneged

History: Iraq is Created

- A British Mandate 1917 post WW1
- 1921 Kingdom of Iraq declared
  - British imported/imposed a Heshmite King: Faisal, a Sunni
  - Of Lawrence of Arabia fame
  - Resistance widespread: Iraq made no sense as a nation: “There is no Iraqi people inside Iraq”
- Lack of national cohesion, turbulence, divisions continued



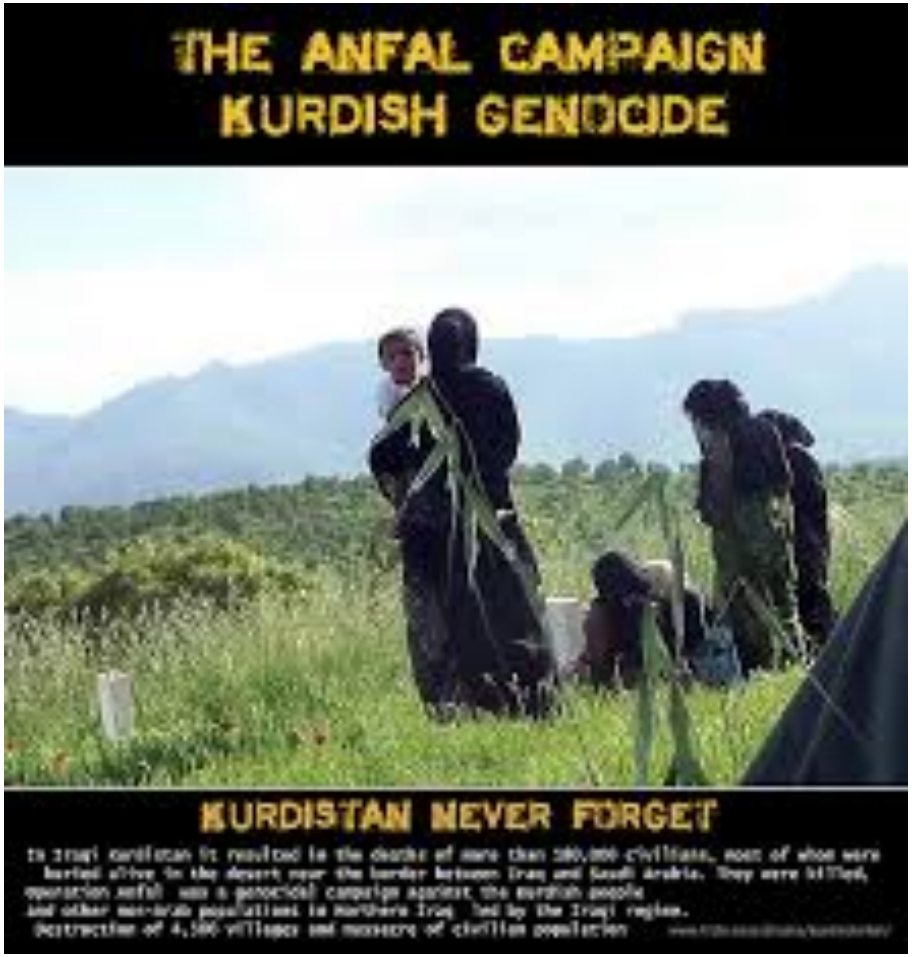
Modern History of Iraq & Kurds

- 1941: Iraqis fought for independence: failed; Kurds were again promised a homeland after WW11
- **1945: Mustafa Barzani organizes the Kurds: KDP**
- 1958: Military coup – British dispatched; Iraq declares itself a republic. Military rule. Secular
- **Kurds continued to fight for their independence**
- **1970 –Kurds granted autonomous region in the north by the Iraqi government - after 5 years of fighting – 100,000 killed.**
- **1975 Jalal Talabani (& others) form the PUK**
- 1979 – Saddam Hussein came to power

Iranian Revolution: 1979

Iran Iraq War
1980 - 1988

Kurdish Anfal Campaign 1988-89



Kurdish Peshmerga

Iraqi Kurdistan: 1992 – 2005 U.S. No fly zone

- 1992 The Kurdish Regional Government established
- KDP and PUK 50/50 representation

Where Turkey's Kurds Fit Into This

- The Turks fought a National Liberation War following WW1
- Formed the the Independent Republic of Turkey in 1923

Mustafa Kemal – Ataturk. Founded a secular, progressive nation

- Joined NATO in 1951

Turkey's Kurds

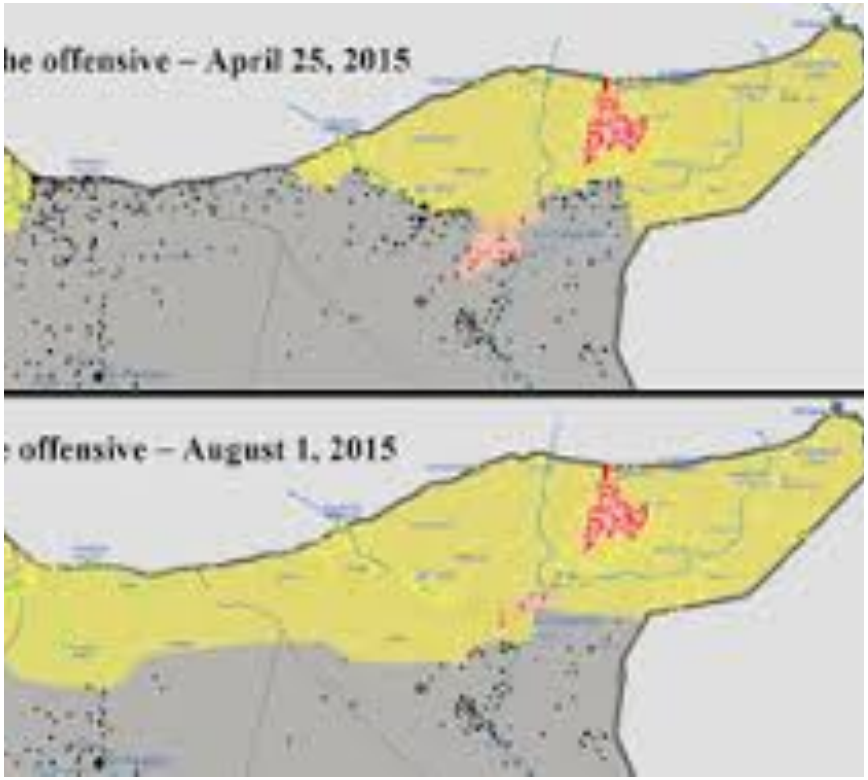
Turkey's Kurds

1978: Ocelan establishes the PKK

Designated a terrorist group by the U.S and Europe.

Syrian Kurds

Syrian Kurds captured territory from ISIS and set up their own government

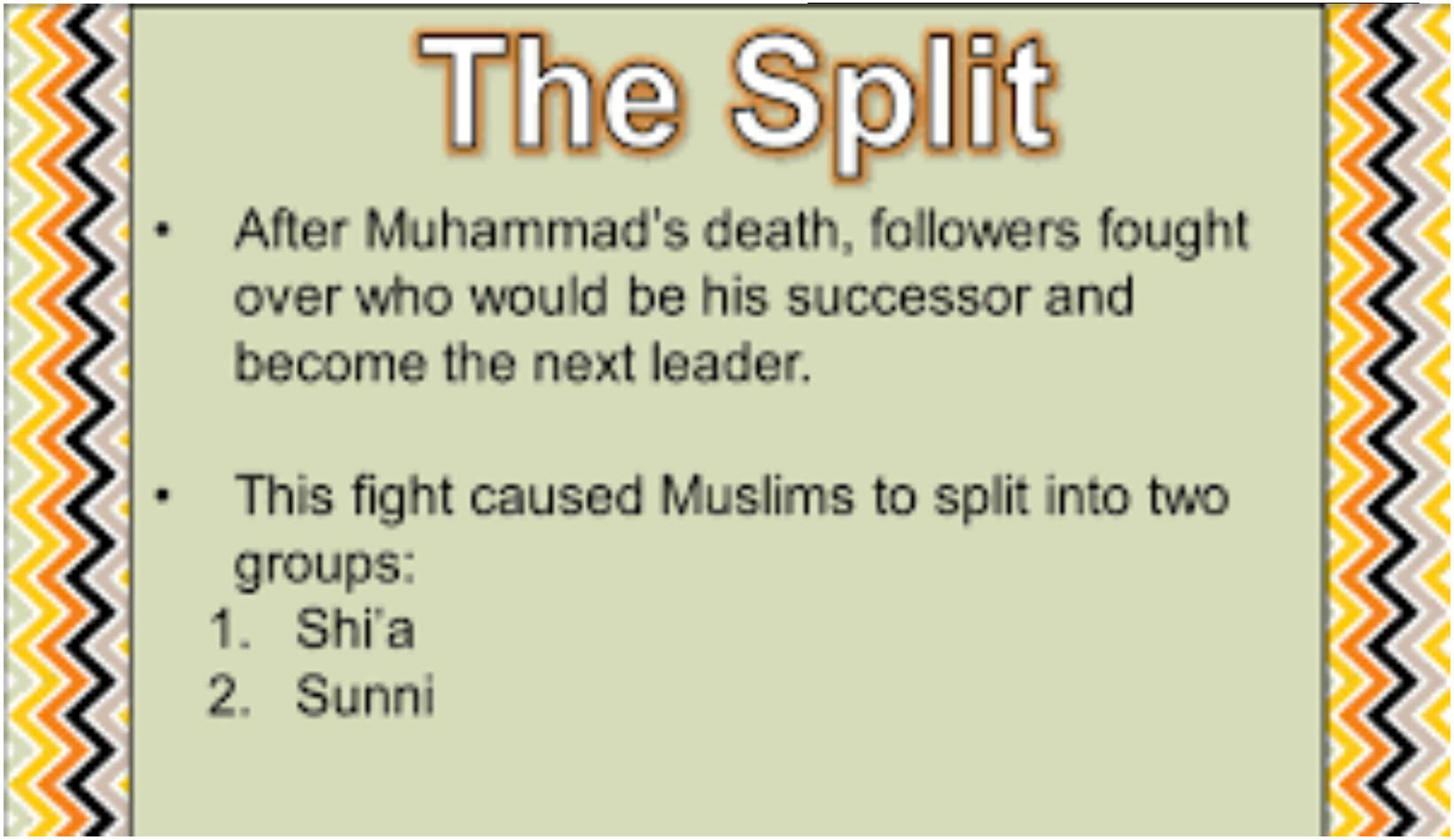


Turkey Desired Buffer

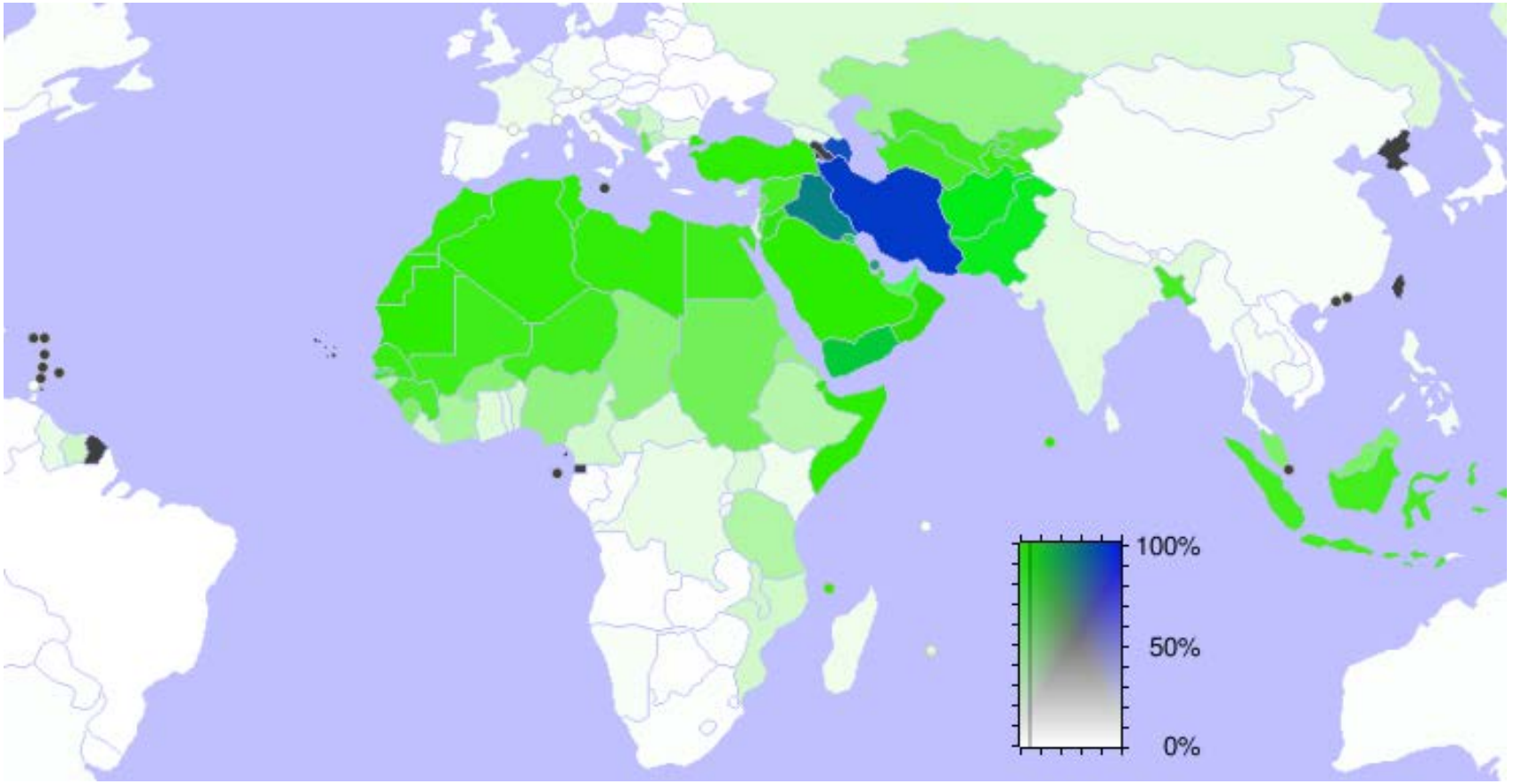
Islamic History Note

Islamic History

Islamic History: Sunni/Shia Divide



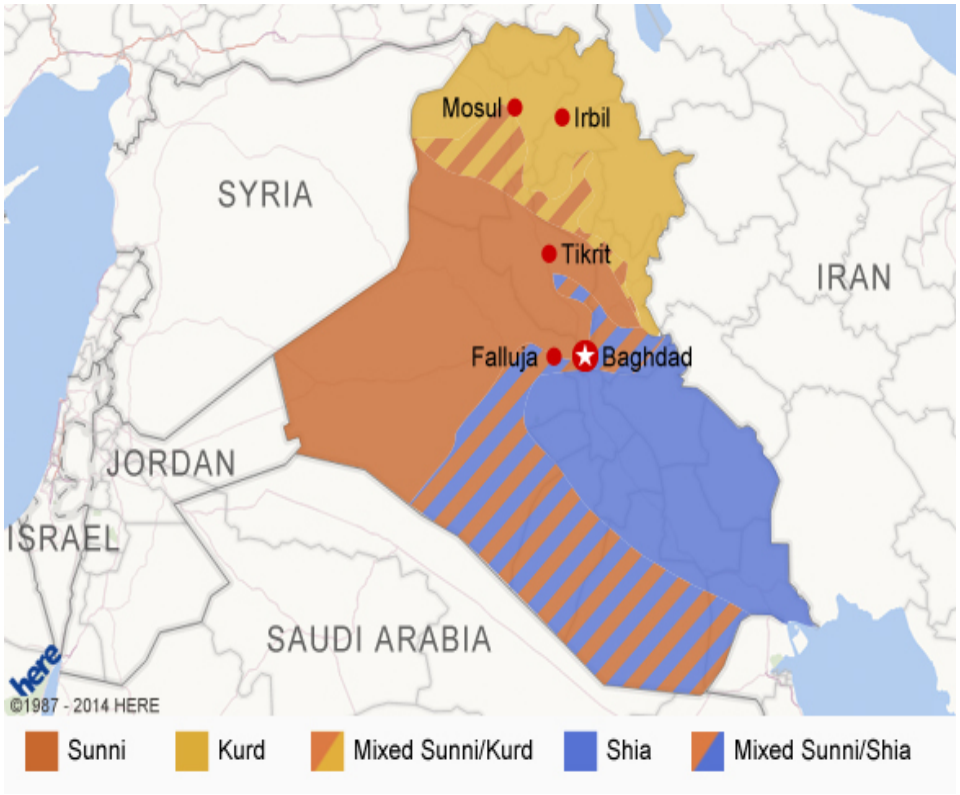
Islam: The Sunni/Shia Divide



1.6 billion Muslims; the great majority are Sunni Muslims

Iraq: Ethnic/ Sectarian Divisions
65 % Shia

Shia religious shrines in Iraq



- Donations and businesses associated with these shines bring in huge revenue
- Shia clerics and Ayatollahs control the richest institutions in Iraq
- These shrines have assumed many functions of the state
- These wealthy shrines has its own militias

Shia shrines in Southern Iraq

20 Million people annually walk to this shrine in Kabala commemorating Iman Hussain's death

U.S Invades Iraq : 2003

- Iraqi Kurds support
- U.S. catastrophically dismisses the Sunni Baathists
- Toppling Saddam Hussein, and dismissing an entire government dramatically affects regional power balance
- Shia dominance, Iranian influence follow
- Sunni's become a persecuted minority – Al-Qaida and ISIS result

Points of Light

40

- American Education
- Refugee Scholarships

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF IRAQ SULAIMANI

A Liberal Arts University

Developing the Region's Future Leaders

Founded in 2007, the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani seeks to "win the peace" by educating the future leaders of a stable and prosperous Iraq.

Arbat Brighter Future Project

- Arbat Syrian Refugee Camp

Rabat Refugee Camp Murals

- A Brighter Future Campaign is raising scholarship funds for Refugee students to attend the American University in Sulaimani

Transposing murals

The Need

- **“Refugee education is a major casualty in conflict. At the higher education level, just one per cent of refugees attend university, compared to a global average of 34 per cent.” Bruno Geddo, the UNHCR (UN Refugee Agency) representative in Iraq.**

U.N. – 1,151 applied; 13% awarded

One student = rescues whole family

Refugee Murals