

Iraq, Kurdistan, and the Institute for Global Leadership: A Retrospective

Since the very inception of the Educational for Public Inquiry and International Citizenship (EPIIC) program – the foundation program of the Institute for Global Leadership at Tufts University – Iraq and in specific, Iraqi Kurdistan, have been areas of great concern.

In 1986, our students studied state-sponsored terrorism and the Iran-Iraq War and sought to understand the infamous 1983 handshake between Saddam Hussein and Donald Rumsfeld, then President Ronald Reagan’s Special Envoy. In 1988, they probed the details of the notorious Iran-Contra imbroglio in our forum on covert action and democracy.

We continued our inquiry with forums on the Iran-Iraq War during EPIIC’s 1990 forum on The Militarization of the Third World, and worked with Dr. Jonathan Fine, then founding director of Physicians for Human Rights, to examine the violence of the Iran-Iraq war and the proliferation of small arms and land mines in the region, helping to create thinking that led ultimately Human Right Watch’s program, ArmsWatch.

Our concerns with Iraq deepened with Iraq’s 1990 invasion of Kuwait. In 1991, we looked at the violence and its long-range implications with Sami al-Faraj of Kuwait, an intelligence and security expert who served Kuwait on the Gulf Coordinating Committee. Pursuing a Master’s at Tufts’ Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, he was an invaluable teaching assistant for EPIIC’s 1987 “The West Bank and Gaza” year. We also looked at the societal dimensions and welcomed into our discussions Vera Saeedpour, the noted scholar and archivist of Kurdish culture, and gave special consideration to the environmental impact of the war.

Also in 1991, Laith Kubba, a former member of the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq and Secretary-General of the then London-based Democratic Reform Movement of Iraq, participated in EPIIC’s symposium on “Confronting Political and Social Evil.” The students read *The Republic of Fear* and had the opportunity to interact with its author, Samir al-Khalil (the pseudonym chosen by the controversial scholar Kanan Makiya to avoid endangering his family), to better

understand the atrocities of the Saddam Hussein regime, its Al-Anfal campaign, and Hussein's poison gas attack on the Iraqi Kurdish town of Halabja on March 16, 1988.

The students subsequently worked with Makiya to try to bring his Iraqi Documentary Project to Tufts, discussed his later book, *Cruelty and Silence: War, Tyranny, and Uprising in the Arab World* and argued with him over the wisdom and efficacy of the deep “deBa’athification” of Iraq’s army and other Hussein era institutions.

Iraq continued to figure prominently in successive EPIIC years, where we looked at *Sovereignty and Intervention* (2003) and *The US Role in the World* (2004). In one unique instance, we were able to secure a then relatively restricted document, the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Legislative Affairs report on “The Future of Iraq” project. It was an extensive pre-invasion study of potential U.S. and Iraqi joint administrative governance -- a hopeful blueprint to avoid the excesses of occupation. It was also a document that the Pentagon had willfully dismissed and ignored, which allowed us to understand how the debacle inside Iraq in the aftermath of the intervention occurred.

These issues deepened in intensity for us with the creation of our ALLIES (Alliance Linking Leaders in Education and the Services) civil-military program in 2006, especially when some of our students became close friends with the young officers of our U.S. military academies who were deployed to the front lines throughout the war in Iraq.

In 2007, the Institute supported former EPIIC student and current teaching assistant Matan Chorev to travel to Iraqi Kurdistan for his Fletcher thesis research on “The International Dynamics and State-Craft of a Semi-State.” Matan was one of the founders of NIMEP as an undergraduate. That year, the IGL also awarded the Institute’s Dr. Jean Mayer Global Citizenship Award to Dr. Mohammed Ihsan, Minister for Extra-Regional Affairs and later Minister of Human Rights in Iraqi Kurdistan, who was devoted to the reintegration of originally Kurdish areas confiscated and “Arabized” by the Saddam Hussein regime, including Kirkuk and Mosul.

Also that year, with the support, ingenuity, and creativity of the IGL’s External Advisory Board Co-Chair Robert Bendetson, we created a specific public diplomacy initiative: *Iraq: Moving Forward*. It began with a conference the Institute sponsored at Tufts with senior Iraqi ministers, government officials, and generals who came together in public and private sessions with such people as Ambassador John

Shattuck, Ambassador Peter Galbraith (an adviser to the Kurdistan Regional Government), Col. Isaiah Williams, one of General David Petraeus' senior officers, and other leaders and negotiators from other bitter and protracted conflicts such as Bosnia and Israel and Palestine. We were aided in this by the participation of the Project on Justice In Times of Transition, a strategic ally of the Institute.

The conference led to a Track Two mediation initiative over the next several years. The senior Iraqi participants at the forum accepted the challenge for further discourse to consider a road map to peace, and together with the skill and negotiation experience of Padraig O'Malley, the Moakley Professor of Peace and Reconciliation at the McCormack Institute at the University of Massachusetts Boston, we convened over several years in Helsinki, under the aegis of the Conflict Management Initiative, the Finnish NGO founded by Finland's President Martti Ahtasaari.

Involved in this initiative were not only the leaders and representatives of the warring factions of Iraq, but also the former armed resistance and government leaders of apartheid-era South Africa and the Catholic and Protestant leaders of the of Northern Ireland. The leaders from South Africa and Northern Ireland shared how they had learned the value and imperative of peace and how they began the process of, if not reconciliation, then the transition from armed struggle to political struggle. They talked about how to consider when to give up their arms, amnesty, how to negotiate entering the political fray, and how, as they ruefully admitted, did this far too late, with far too many innocent people killed unnecessarily.

This effort ultimately produced The Helsinki Accords, signed in a conference we convened in Baghdad, which were principles for political participation and for laying the groundwork for an Iraqi electoral process. The details of this can be found at: <http://www.tuftsgloballeadership.org/programs/bendetson/the-iraq-project>.

The Institute for Global Leadership subsequently hosted President Ahtisaari at Tufts, where we acknowledged his many peacemaking efforts with our the Mayer Global Citizenship Award, this immediately prior to his being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

The Institute has also hosted Iraqi delegations of Kurdish, Shi'a, and Sunni students over the last three years at our EPIIC symposia. During their week at Tufts, they have had the opportunity to interact with other students delegations not only from such disparate countries as Israel and China but also with the cadets and midshipmen of the U.S. military academies, in both public and private meetings.

We recently had the honor of hosting Dr. Zuhair A.G. Humadi, the executive director of Iraq's Higher Committee for Education Development that prepares Iraqi students to travel to the United States. We look forward to the students he will be sending us for this year's EPIIC symposium on Conflict in the 21st Century.

We will persist in our efforts to understand Iraq. We will have the honor of presenting this *Insights* issue to the Speaker of the Kurdish Parliament, Dr. Kemal Kirkuki, when he comes to Tufts this year. He was one of NIMEP's formal hosts in Iraq. And we will be welcoming Dr. Mowaffak Al-Rubaie, the Iraqi National Security Advisor and former Member of Parliament in Iraq's Council of Representatives, to our campus as an Institute and Fletcher visiting lecturer. Among the Dr. Jean Mayer Global Citizenship Award recipients this year are also Zainab Salbi, the author of *Between Two Worlds: Escape from Tyranny: Growing Up in the Shadow of Saddam* and the founding director of Women for Women International, and Hania Mufti, the London director for the Middle East and North Africa Division of Human Rights Watch. We will also continue our efforts to think about the future of the divided city of Kirkuk, situated in a highly contested oil-rich region of Iraq.

The essence of the Institute's programs is direct and respectful communication and the search for common ground. It is this ethos that led to the creation of NIMEP. In that spirit, it is typical that the group leaders of the Kurdistan trip documented in this issue, are of Lebanese, Kuwaiti and Israeli identities. To Patricia, Khaled, and Amit, accept our deepest appreciation for your diligent and sensitive efforts to understand the complexities of Iraq and the intricacies of Kurdish internal and external dynamics.

To Rana, an Iraqi-American who participated as an undergraduate in the Institute's TILIP program and who is now a Tufts faculty member and the coordinator of the university's Arabic Studies Program, our heartfelt thanks for escorting the NIMEP delegation to your native homeland and for translating and deciphering during the trip. We remember very well Rana's admonitions and forebodings about the likely devastating consequences of a U.S. invasion of Iraq, regardless of its human rights pretensions, and of her vivid anti-war poetry.

To Shahla, we owe an incalculable debt for her interventions and extraordinary preparations on the ground, but even more for her openness and tolerance. We were first introduced to her by one of her friends and fellow students at The Fletcher School, Dahlia Shaham, an Israeli lawyer and former EPIIC T.A. These two women, indispensable to our community, are now engaged in a project on Jewish-Muslim reconciliation.

To Zachary, our NIMEP INSPIRE Fellow, introduced to us by the PJTT, accept our sincere gratitude. As a U.S. marine, now also deeply committed to the search for alternatives to coercion, he exemplifies the transformative education that we try to inculcate in our students.

To Bobby Bendetson goes our great thanks and admiration for his bold vision and courage to help us enact the important and expect the unexpected. Most recently he traveled to Iraqi Kurdistan to present the President of Iraqi Kurdistan, Masoud Barzani, with the Robert and Joanne Bendetson Public Diplomacy Award.

To Howard Finkelstein, we owe a great acknowledgment of his extraordinary generosity in support of NIMEP all these year, and for nurturing a son who will pursue peace in the Middle East.

This publication is an enterprise of a number of different constituent Institute groups, including Exposure, our photographic documentary human rights program, represented by Ian's superb photography. To Patricia, also goes our debt of gratitude for being so decisive in the creation of this issue.

And to Heather Barry, our associate director, our deep gratitude who as always, was so wonderfully instrumental in the student's excellent mentoring and preparation prior to their trip and to this publication taking final form.

Our commitment is to continue to do our best to educate our students in the global vision of reconciliation and understanding.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sherman Teichman". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Sherman Teichman
Director
Institute for Global Leadership
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