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AN AMERICAN *ATRA*?
**BOUNDARIES OF DIASPORIC NATION-BUILDING AMONGST ASSYRIANS AND
CHALDEANS IN THE UNITED STATES**

ERIN E. HUGHES

**DOCTORATE IN SOCIOLOGY
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This is to certify that the work contained within has been composed by me and is entirely my own work. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Erin E. Hughes

ABSTRACT

Voluntary and forced migrations over the past century have given rise to the number of displaced peoples and nations who consider themselves diasporas. The resiliency of these extra-territorial nations after displacement is something of a paradox in nationalism studies. For diaspora, the nation is simultaneously local and transnational, divided and caged by the confines of state borders, often intermixed with other ethnic groups, nations, and cultures, and yet, undeniably, a singular community. Through a comparative examination of the Assyrian and Chaldean diaspora in the United States, this dissertation uses boundary theory to explore the role of diasporic elites in making and sustaining a diasporic nation, and the events, identities, and ideologies that shape diasporic action. It draws from twenty-nine interviews held with Assyrian and Chaldean leaders in Michigan, Illinois, and California, and with policy-makers, as well as research into congressional documents, policy papers, and press reports.

The multi-ethnic fabric of American society is formative to boundary-creation, and yet challenges its retention, providing an open society for ethnic expression and civic and political engagement, whilst at the same time facilitating assimilation and loss of diasporic culture and identity. Diasporic elites pursue institutional completeness to sustain diasporic presence in local societies, and cultivate national ideologies that in turn engender activism on behalf of the greater diasporic nation. The Iraq War served as a catalyst to nation-building, providing the first political opening in decades for diasporic actors to mobilize on behalf of Assyrians and Chaldeans in the homeland, seeking constitutional recognition as equal members of the Iraq state. However, the impermeable, exclusionary Iraqi national boundary wrought in conflict instead posed an existential crisis, forcing Assyrians and Chaldeans from Iraq and forcing diasporic leaders to confront questions of what will become of their nation if the homeland is lost. Revealed in the resulting political demands are two distinct strains of nationalism: that for resettlement into diaspora and continued integration into Iraq; and that for territorial autonomy within Iraq's Nineveh Plain.

This dissertation argues diaspora is a continuous, evolving product of boundary-making, often the result of diasporic elite mobilization. Diaspora is a nation not simply born of displacement, but formed through social boundaries encountered and made upon resettlement outside the homeland. Nationalism is a significant component of diasporic nation-building, offering insight into political goals, ideologies, and the dedication of diasporic elites to sustaining an Assyrian and Chaldean homeland, an *atra*, in diaspora.

LAY SUMMARY

This dissertation examines the Assyrian and Chaldean diaspora in the United States at a pivotal moment in Assyrian and Chaldean history. It considers specifically the role of diasporic leaders in working to create and sustain the diaspora within American society whilst sustaining ties to the diaspora's homeland and its global population. Political claims of the diaspora were significantly affected by the Iraq War, which offered an opportunity for diasporic activists to mobilize in demand of recognition and national rights within a democratic Iraq. Political and national goals remain affected by the ethno-sectarian conflict that followed and still persists, which caused mass displacement of Assyrians and Chaldeans in Iraq and compelled diasporic activists to mobilize in support of their co-ethnics, demanding refugee admissions and local autonomy over the homeland as a means to preserve their national existence in Iraq.

It is argued diaspora is not simply the byproduct of displacement, but made through interaction with the state and society of resettlement, shaped by the openness or exclusion the diaspora encounters and the desire of diasporic elites to build a diasporic nation. Boundary theory is therefore used to understand how cultural practices, language, religion, and historical memories are drawn upon to define who the diaspora is in relation to its surrounding society. It finds in contrast to the increasing exclusion experienced in Iraq, where Assyrians and Chaldeans were defined by their Christianity and unique ethnicity, upon arrival in the U.S. Assyrians and Chaldeans instead encountered relatively open borders and were able to integrate, often assimilating and losing the cultural attributes and identification with the diaspora. Such assimilation challenges diasporic retention, a challenge particularly concerning to elites in the context of the ongoing crisis in Iraq and the absence of an Assyrian and Chaldean state. Diasporic leaders thus work to find a way to balance integration with retaining enough cultural elements to stave off assimilation. This is aided by building organizations, making political claims, and finding ways to make membership in the diaspora relevant and lasting. To this end, diasporic elites aspire to build a measure of a diasporic nation integrated within their state of resettlement.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In June 2014, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) entered Mosul and served the city's remaining Christian residents with an ultimatum for noon on 19 June: 'We offer three choices: Islam; the dhimma contract - involving payment of jizya; if they refuse this they will have nothing but the sword' (BBC 2014). Christian homes and businesses were spray-painted with the Arabic letter nun – ن – representing *nasrani* or Christian. Most Christians, of course, chose the fourth, unstated option: to flee, most to the Kurdish region or neighbouring states. So effective was ISIL's cleansing campaign that by the following Sunday, no church service was held in Mosul for the first time in 1,600 years; Chaldean Patriarch Louis Sako observed, 'For the first time in the history of Iraq, Mosul is now empty of its Christians' (Vatican Radio 2014). Iraq's ancient Assyrian and Chaldean populations, the country's largest Christian communities, appeared effectively cleansed from northern Iraq, the empty churches a symbolic representation of a long trajectory of marginalization and displacement begun anew after the 2003 Iraq War. The events that have since followed represent a systematic ethno-sectarian cleansing not simply of Christianity in Iraq, but of the Assyrian-Chaldean people.

While media headlines captured the silent church bells and the destroyed ruins of Nimrud and the ancient Assyrian Empire to which Assyrians and Chaldeans claim lineage, missing was an understanding of how Iraq's democratic transition left a population of more than one million prior to the 2003 War now clinging to existence in their homeland. ISIL's eviction order presented a succinct embodiment of the waves of ethno-sectarian cleansing Iraq's minorities have endured following the removal of the Ba'ath regime, violence that too has emptied Baghdad and Basra of much of their Christian populations. A century of intermittent ethnic cleansing has forced Assyrians and Chaldeans into diaspora and decades of Arabization policies

sought to wash their identities as a unique ethnic group; as they now face a crisis point, many fear their long-term survival in diaspora is an impossibility, burdened by assimilation and disunity. As one diasporic activist described, this has come to be an existential crisis: 'Kurds are invading our lands from the north. They're forcing people to denounce their Assyrianism...In Baghdad, the south, Mosul, Muslims are religiously cleansing Assyrians and Chaldeans...And there's assimilation in the West: we are losing our language, our traditions faster than the speed of light' (Taimoorazy Interview 2013).

Assyrian and Chaldean hopes for a post-Hussein Iraq were not always so bleak. Democratization provided the first political opening in decades for Assyrians and Chaldeans to seek official recognition as unique ethnic and religious minorities and to secure equal, democratic rights within the new Iraqi political structure.

The Iraq War thus stands as a defining turning point for this nation. Lasting from March 2003 until the departure of American troops in December 2011, the U.S., the U.K., and their coalition partners predicated the war on Saddam Hussein's possession of weapons of mass destruction, and, failing proof thereof, that his overthrow would bring democracy to Iraq and perhaps serve as a lynchpin for the greater Middle East. The war itself was shrouded in controversy, undertaken despite the rejection of the United Nations.

Baghdad, and with it Hussein's regime, fell in April, less than three weeks after the war began. Attention turned to rebuilding Iraq's government, infrastructure, and economy, controversial processes marred by the controversial nature of the war, seen alternatively as an occupation or a liberation. As pressure grew from Iraqi leaders, the international community, and factions within American politics to hand over power and leave Iraq, the coalition-led government transitioned authority to an Iraqi-led caretaker government in June 2004, which in turn drafted a permanent

constitution that was approved by a popular vote in October 2005, effectively establishing electoral democracy. The constitution, for the first time in the history of Iraq, recognized Assyrians and Chaldeans as national groups and provided for their religious, linguistic, cultural, and administrative rights.

However, the six-year presence of American troops that followed the 2005 elections belies the success of state-building. The promises of democracy were effectively negated as Iraq's political and security institutions deteriorated and the state descended into civil war. The Sunni-Shia conflict for state power sidelined governance and minority protections, giving way to a climate of impunity. The resulting persecution of Christian populations forced questions of how - and if - Assyrians and Chaldeans see their future in their homeland.

In the north of Iraq, the Kurdish Regional Government's territorial claims expanded outside its region, eager to correct losses suffered under Hussein and to strengthen its own national development. The Assyrian and Chaldean ancestral homeland, the *atra*, in the Nineveh Plain, near Mosul, emerged as a strategic chessboard between competing Iraqi and Kurdish interests. The region's rich oil reserves, diverse population, and geographic placement created the conditions for an ongoing conflict that remains amongst the most deadly in Iraq.

The question facing the Assyrian and Chaldean nation during the past decade, and again today, is therefore threefold: how to maintain its population, including identity and culture, in diaspora; what to do in the short-term to help those displaced from Iraq; and what to do in the long-term to protect and preserve its presence in Iraq. Found herein are two contradictory objectives: the first to enable refugees to relocate, particularly to the West; the second to establish a form of local autonomy, which most recently has taken the form of a Christian province in the Nineveh Plain. Political debate is at times vitriolic, undoubtedly stressed by the urgency of the

humanitarian plight and the fact there really is no one right answer. Supporters of autonomy accuse those who support refugee admissions of bleeding Assyrians and Chaldeans from Iraq, of destroying the long-term existence of the nation; those who oppose autonomy fear it will create a 'Christian ghetto' by concentrating Christians into a single area, rendering the population vulnerable to further attacks.

This debate is consequential for those in Iraq and those in diaspora who seek to aide their co-ethnics and have the ability to lobby for help. The choices encountered are perhaps representative of those faced by a stateless people without any territory that is theirs alone - it is, as Ernest Gellner described, a choice to flee, assimilate, or pursue a nationalist option (Gellner 1983). He describes the challenges for those who pursue the latter as including acquiring territory, reviving culture, and coping with contestation from those who also hold claims to the territory. Thus, like the Jewish diaspora prior to Israel, present is a combination of all three choices happening at once, influenced by different national ideologies and pragmatic calculations. As the Jewish reform movement in particular feared Zionism, the Chaldean Church most vocally opposes an autonomous region; Church leadership has also transitioned in recent years from asking the West to increase refugee admissions to opposing the departure of Chaldeans from the Middle East, perhaps as the depth and enormity of displacement have become realized. The mainstream Chaldean diaspora in the U.S., however, remains the strongest supporter of refugee admissions.

Assyrian nationalists often feel the crisis has proven prescient the statehood goals of Assyrians who survived the Ottoman genocide and feared integration into the Iraq state. Theirs is, in part, an ardent, idealized nationalism for autonomy that until 2003 could only be claimed in diaspora, removed from the Hussein dictatorship. Yet notions of nationalism, integration, and self-rule remain contested within the diaspora, as well as between the diaspora and the Iraqi community. That the

diaspora became politically engaged on behalf of Iraq reveals both a national attachment to the homeland and a core, motivating fear that diaspora alone is not enough for the nation to survive.

The American diaspora is especially significant to the Assyrian and Chaldean population as its largest diaspora, including the largest Chaldean population outside the Middle East. It represents a rich diasporic history, one which began a century ago and was built and sustained through successive waves of immigration and refuge, hosting a variety of experiences, understandings of the homeland, and ideologies.¹ Yet over the past decades, migration has largely been from Iraq and homeland narratives have centralized on Iraq and the Nineveh region.² This diaspora therefore holds a unique composite of roots and routes, being both generations removed and weeks removed from the Middle East, and yet has built common narratives as to who Assyrians and Chaldeans are. Diasporic leaders have contemplated their nationalism, the diaspora's continuity, and deeply understand the challenges and safeguards that come from being in diaspora. It is the only diaspora where Chaldean-building has meaningfully occurred, reflecting the population's trajectory from Iraq to the U.S. as much as the space and permissiveness of American society for such ethnic expression. This latter point is central to this thesis: the social context of diaspora matters, and the American diasporic experience and its activism are unquestionably shaped by the multi-ethnic fabric of American society and the openness of its political systems. As a long-time Chaldean activist commented:

¹ Migrant/refugee terminology is used herein to distinguish between voluntary and involuntary displacement. Assyrians and Chaldeans arriving in the U.S. are generally described throughout as migrants or immigrants, whilst refugee is applied specifically to those displaced by conflict or ethno-sectarian cleansing (and who often hold UN or State Department designation as refugees).

² For this reason, the Nineveh region, and Iraq generally, will be referred to as the Assyrian/Chaldean homeland throughout this thesis. Recognizing the diaspora is comprised of members from Turkey, Syria, Iran, and Iraq, alternative terminology such as 'country of origin' risked being unclear. Homeland best reflects the ancestral and national understandings of this population and terminology used by diasporic leaders.

In the diaspora, everybody is sticking to its own ethnicity and nationality, when he or she is unable to do that in their own country. We come from a country...where freedom of religion, freedom of identity, is not very open...In Iraq itself, because people are being scrutinized, they are under pressure, they are persecuted, there's a lot of fear. These things do not surface that easy. But in the diaspora, we're more outspoken. We're more clear about what our causes are and how we should pursue our causes. So there is a difference. The environment itself is a deciding factor here. The conditions of what's going on, the circumstance itself, is a determining factor (Kassab Interview 2012).

The American diaspora is thus consequential to advocacy on behalf of the global diasporic nation; to advocacy on behalf of the Iraq community specifically; and is consequential for its ability to hold onto identity and culture as the homeland comes under increased threat.

Diaspora, then, is a nebulous concept, but one that it is rooted in and bounded by state borders; it is planned, built, sustained, and politicized by pragmatic elites as much as it is idealized and romanticized. This dissertation examines the work of diasporic elites to navigate social and political institutions in the United States and Iraq to secure an Assyrian and Chaldean national existence. It finds nation-building is simultaneously local and international, in pursuit of a diasporic nation in the U.S. and an autonomous, self-governed region within the homeland. It is argued that diaspora subverts traditional nationalism because it does not exclusively seek a territorial state, but rather seeks ways to nation-build within existing states amongst other nations, cultures, and identities. Yet diasporic existence is precariously vulnerable, confronted by disunity, assimilation, and persecution. The reality of statelessness in the face of crisis is consequential: there is no power to protect Assyrians and Chaldeans from marginalization, nor a haven to secure their existence. As Gabriel Sheffer observed, in contrast to diasporas with states, those without are fundamentally powerless and without means to protect and secure their language, culture, or identity (Sheffer 2007).

A core finding of this research, however, is that diasporic activism is not a constant pursuit of a state nor a sudden awakening of latent nationalism, but a product of shifting and changing boundaries. The focus herein is thus on elites as political actors. Boundary changes are formative to diasporic action: which boundaries, whether local, state, national, or of the homeland, have or can change; what criteria will define the boundary; how change affects the diaspora or its co-ethnics. For the Assyrian and Chaldean diaspora, the Iraq War stands as a definitive turning point: to the extent Assyrian and Chaldean nationalism became salient, it was in response to the impermeable, exclusionary boundary created in Iraq after the Iraq War, marginalizing their co-ethnics, and by extension the diasporic nation, from their ancestral homeland. To the American diaspora, renewed exclusion coupled with fear of assimilation produced an existential threat.

Thus, this work finds diaspora is a continuous, evolving product of boundary-making. As elaborated below, the landscape of diaspora theory is vast, yet its typologies tend to be insular, framed around a single paradigm that overlooks the rich complexities within a diasporic population. This thesis draws out a commonality of these frameworks, the socially-constructed nature of diaspora, to approach diaspora using boundary theory. This enables a better understanding of the array of ideologies, nationalisms, and political goals that comprise a diasporic community, and of why and how diasporic boundaries are made and sustained. Moreover, this work aims to better connect diaspora studies to nationalism studies by examining nationalism as a significant diasporic component.

A primary challenge in studying this diaspora is the choice of terminology, its proverbial elephant in the room. Assyrians and Chaldeans are one diaspora with two contentious names. There is much to learn about these communities, their resiliency and national hopes, to which the name issue often feels like a distraction, but failing

to address it often leads to conceptual confusion as to which population is being referenced and if assumptions and findings are equally applicable across the diaspora. Consequentially, undertaken here is a unique examination of the two branches of the diaspora, the Assyrian-identifying branch and the Chaldean-identifying branch, in a comparative context to examine the intra-ethnic boundaries that sustain two distinct identities. Recognizing that certainly nothing said herein applies to all Assyrians nor all Chaldeans, this thesis aims to understand what underlies these separate identities, and the perceptions and motivations of those who make political claims on their behalves.

The Assyrian-Chaldean divide, as understood here, is a product of boundary contraction from within the diaspora. This thesis takes the position Assyrians and Chaldeans continue to comprise one ethnic group whilst observing that Chaldeanness is both a uniquely Iraqi and uniquely American outcome of social, sectarian, and political factors. This internal boundary first built upon an ecclesiastical division was further shaped by Chaldean reactions against assimilation into America, Assyrianism, and Catholicism. Such changes are fluid and relational given the socially-constructed nature of ethnic identity, which may be 'tenacious and change only slowly, over the course of many generations, while in other contexts, substantial shifts in the ethnic landscape may occur during the lifespan of an individual' (Wimmer 2008: 984). In studying these groups in comparison, this thesis contributes to better understanding the Assyrian-Chaldean diaspora specifically, and how nation-building occurs and is politicized through elite leadership and social boundaries.

EXISTING ASSYRIAN AND CHALDEAN SCHOLARSHIP

Despite their complex and resilient history, Assyrians and Chaldeans are an understudied population. Scholarship regarding their modern experiences as ethno-religious minorities in the Middle East or as a diaspora is infrequent.³ Moreover, the contemporary Assyrian-Chaldean relationship has not been given meaningful scholarly attention as the communities are often approached as either one population or Chaldeans are considered in isolation. This research therefore provides a much-needed contemporary look at internal dynamics within a population whose plight is ongoing and the outcome of which is uncertain.

Most academic attention to date has focused on the Assyrian and Chaldean plight from the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire through the 1933 Simmele Massacre in Iraq, with detailed histories including William Wigram's *Our Smallest Ally* (1920), R.S. Stafford's *The Tragedy of the Assyrians* (1935), and J.G. Browne's *The Assyrians: A Debt of Honour* (1937). Studies by Hannibal Travis (2010, 2006), Sebastian de Courtois (2004), and Joseph Yacoub (1986) further incorporate the WWI genocide into literature and historiography on genocide studies, documenting the depth, cause, and lived experiences of this tragedy. Hirmis Aboona (2008) contextualized Assyrians under the Ottoman Empire, delving into the relationship between Assyrian tribes, the Ottoman State, and Kurds, noting a pattern of escalating violence prior to WWI. Sami Zubaida (2000) considered the events that led up to Simmele, the incompatibility of Assyrian nationalism with the nascent Iraq State, and how Simmele has been explained and appropriated in the tragedy's aftermath by

³ The term 'minority' is used to situate their ethnic, linguistic, and religious status as a numerically small percentage of the population of Iraq. Whilst there is contention within the Coptic community over the application of this term, such debate is arguably shaped by the context of political issues in Egypt; Assyrian and Chaldean leaders often use the term minority (El-Gawhary 1996). The intent is not to stigmatize, but to examine the challenges of nation-building and national existence against the political and social reality of being a small, unique ethno-sectarian population within the landscape of Iraq and the Middle East, a reality best captured by this term.

Assyrians and Iraqi officials. The studies situate Assyrians as a unique national minority in search of security, a situation not dissimilar from the population today.

Less is written about these populations under an independent Iraq, leaving unanswered questions of what happened to these nationalists after Simmele, if the population agreeably integrated, fled, or remained in isolation (See for example Tripp 2007, Polk 2005, Dodge 2005). In part, this reflects barriers within Iraq throughout much of the 20th century in which Iraqi Assyrians and Chaldeans could not tell their stories. John Joseph's *The Modern Assyrians of the Middle East* (2000) is amongst the more comprehensive accounts of Assyrian and Chaldean history from the founding of the Church of the East and Chaldean Church through the population's experience under the Ba'ath regime, stressing the generations of insecurity the population faced from land contestation with neighbouring tribes through state-sponsored oppression within Iraq. More contentiously, Joseph argued Nestorians came to be Assyrians through the influence of Western missionaries by drawing upon missionary accounts of their interaction with Nestorians, an argument other Assyrian scholars question by drawing upon missionary accounts which found Nestorians describing themselves as Assyrian or Chaldean upon their first encounters – thereby perpetuating the cyclic nature of this debate (for such counter-claims, see Parpola 2004, Frye 1997). Sargon Donabed's recent publication (2015) brings much-needed focus to Assyrians as a core component of the Iraqi state throughout the 20th century, illuminating how political and social events in Iraq affected Assyrians, inserting Assyrians into events like Anfal, where he articulates the losses endured therein. Aryo Makko (2010) addressed identity and nomenclature amongst Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Syriacs, arguing the salience of the latter two is a by-product of the failure of a secular Assyrian national revival under the Ottoman Empire and following the genocide. Vahram Petrosian (2006) studied the rise of Assyrian political movements within Iraq, charting the political environment that spurred their formation and the difficulty of acting from within Iraq during this time.

Increasingly, there is effort amongst young Assyrian scholars to make Assyrian studies visible in academia. The formation of the Modern Assyrian Research Archive at Cambridge University is one example of such efforts to contribute to expanding scholarship by building an online database of resources. Likewise, the former *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies* contributed research regarding a diverse array of Assyrian-related issues, with particular focus on linguistic heritage and ancient histories.

Academic focus on the modern Chaldean experience in Iraq is more rare. Ray Mouawad (2001) briefly contextualized the experience of Iraq's Christians, including Chaldeans, in Iraqi society under the Ba'ath regime, finding emigration persisted despite decent relationships between the Church and the state and a somewhat favourable economic status of Chaldeans. Anthony O'Mahony (2004a, 2004b) looked at the growth of the Chaldean Church in Iraq under the Ba'ath regime and the essential role of the Chaldean Patriarchs in facilitating comparative security therein. John Healey (2010) likewise considered the history of the Church of the East and the Chaldean Church, highlighting the role of Western missionaries in accelerating conversions to the Chaldean Church and establishing educational institutions that served to benefit the Chaldean population long-term after Iraq became independent.

Regarding diasporic studies, research on the European diaspora is receiving recent attention in response to increased migration. Notable is an ongoing project funded by the Humanities in the European Research Area, 'Defining and Identifying Middle East Christian Communities in Europe', which explores Coptic, Assyrian/Syriac, and Iraqi Christian communities in the UK, Denmark, and Sweden. The Swedish community is a particular focus of new literature given it represents the largest European diaspora. Naures Atto's doctoral thesis (2011) offers a valuable examination of the migratory routes of Assyrians and Syriacs from Turkey and Syria to Europe, and observes the experience of the Swedish diaspora as one of a

'Hostages' and Orphans' dilemma'. She found the Assyrian-Syriac identity division permeates all levels of Swedish diasporic institutions, becoming representative of the competition between parties on both sides for hegemony – a case that offers an intriguing area of future comparison with the Assyrian-Chaldean experience in America. Marta Wozniak (2015) looked at identity construction and contestation in the wider diaspora, as well as in Sweden specifically, where she likewise found significant polarization between Assyrian/Syriac identity despite common worries of assimilation as migrants integrate and the role of the ethnic churches stands to lose hold in such a highly secular society. Önver Cetrez (2011) likewise noted a declining role of the Assyrian churches in Sweden amongst later generations, for whom the church became perceived more negatively compared to its role as an essential institution for first generation Assyrians. As Atto outlines, there is also a variety of non-English works on Assyrians/Syriacs in Germany and the Netherlands (Atto 25-30).

Within the British diaspora, Madawi Al-Rasheed contributed several studies to the construction of ethnic and homeland narratives of Iraqi Assyrians in London, here defined as members of the Church of the East and numbering only 3,000 to 4,000 individuals at the time of her research in the early 1990s (Al-Rasheed 1998; 1995; 1994). Finding increased Assyrian refugee admissions in the UK following the Iran-Iraq and Gulf wars prompted first-wave migrants who settled in the 1950s to reconstruct their narratives as 'refugees' rather than 'immigrants', Al-Rasheed theorized the refugees represented a link to the existing community's past and served as a memory-trigger for their own traumatic displacements (Al-Rasheed 1995). She found, however, a contrast between Iraqi Arab refugees in London who possess a myth of return and Iraqi Assyrian refugees who possess a permanent sense of alienation – what scholars might today classify as a quintessential diasporic mentality (Al-Rasheed 1994).

The American diasporic population, whilst larger than its European counterparts, has received comparatively little scholarly attention. Chaldeans are the specific focus of two studies: *Chaldean Americans* by Mary Sengstock (1999) and *The Politics of Minority: Chaldeans between Iraq and America*, the doctoral dissertation of Yasmeen Hanoosh (2008). The former examined social structures and behaviours, drawing special attention to the role of family, religion, and ethnic occupation as essential ethnic networks; the latter interrogated ‘who the Chaldeans are’ by exploring the presence and revival of Chaldean identity in the Middle East and how contemporary understandings of Chaldeanness are depicted by Chaldean activists and authors in the nascent field of Chaldean literature. Natalie Henrich and Joseph Henrich (2007) examined human cooperation utilizing a case study amongst Detroit-area Chaldeans, citing the high level of civic engagement amongst the community. These studies leave unstated or underdeveloped how Chaldeans understand the relationship with the Assyrian community; however, that Chaldean identity is accepted unquestioningly underscores the successful integration of Chaldean identity into Detroit’s ethnic fabric. The San Diego community’s relative absence in scholarship underscores its much smaller size until recent years.

The Assyrian diaspora in America is also the subject of several studies. Arianne Ishaya’s research presents an historical perspective of Assyrian migration and integration in America, with particular focus on the Urmia Assyrians to California, examining why immigration occurred and the ethnic institutions created after arrival (Ishaya 2010; 2006; 2003). Similarly, Yoab Benjamin (1996) charted the waves of Assyrian migrations to Chicago as pushed by factors in the Middle East, noting the institutions and cultural celebrations that became and remained prevalent within the community. Edward Odisho (1999) examined the erosion of Aramaic amongst Assyrian migrants arriving after WWI, contending such language usage follows what he cites to be a standard pattern of loss within three generations. Erica McClure (2001), however, studying recent Assyrian language usage within the diaspora,

found Assyrian has become a defining national element, and thus language classes have become more available; nationalists increasingly use code-switching, or interspersing English-based communication with random Assyrian words, to mark their shared nationhood. Sargon Donabed and Shamiran Mako (2009) looked at identity formation amongst Syriac Orthodox Christians, finding linguistic variance and religious leadership have cultivated a unique identity that precluded the small American Syriac diaspora from uniformly assuming an Assyrian identity. They also tracked the immigration of Turkish Assyrians belonging to the Syriac Orthodox Church to New England after WWI, noting the role of community organizations and writings of community members undertaken in effort to retain Assyrian identity against the distinct Syriac identity that was emerging (Donabed and Mako 2011).

A common thread amongst these diasporic narratives is the work of local populations to establish churches and civic institutions, and the coming together of the community around special events. They reinforce the important role of a few dedicated individuals in creating such opportunities to sustain a community network and make diasporic membership salient. Indeed, shared throughout both Iraqi- and diasporic-focused scholarship is that ‘who’ modern Assyrians and Chaldeans are, to borrow Hanoosh’s language, is a constant, evolving effort in which elites construct official narratives of identity and belonging. The role of local populations and events in the Middle East alike in making and remaking diasporic narratives is an unsurprising but important commonality throughout this literature, as this local-transnational duality underlies the complexity of diasporic existence.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A core challenge of diaspora studies lies within the definition and use of the term itself. Diaspora, as understood here, to borrow from Khachig Tölölyan, represents ‘a special category of ethnicized dispersion’ shaped by a ‘paradoxical combination of

localism and transnationalism' (Tölölyan 2012: 7, 13). Over the past years, however, diaspora became an increasingly ubiquitous label, having stretched in application from the narrow parameters of a forcibly displaced people to perhaps any 'segment of people living outside their homeland' (Connor 1986: 16). Traditional notions thus often paint pictures of nations-in-exile which maintain a national consciousness in spite of distance and dispersal from the homeland; by contrast, recent scholarship ventures to expand the concept to consider the possibility of, amongst others, religious diasporas, labour diasporas, gender-specific diasporas, and LGBT diasporas: in essence, any sort of imagined community which possesses an element of transnationalism (See Braziel 2008; Tölölyan 2007; Braziel and Mannur 2003; Vertovec 2000b).

Such expansion, however, risks over-stretching diaspora as a meaningful social concept, blurring distinctions amongst any migrant populations so that the national consciousness which formerly defined diaspora, and the struggle of diasporic actors to build and sustain such consciousness, risks being lost. Tölölyan worries the term diaspora is consequentially 'in danger of becoming a promiscuously capacious category that is taken to include all the adjacent phenomena to which it is linked' (Tölölyan 1996: 8). William Safran asserts that minority status 'is not *ipso facto* sufficient for labeling a community a diaspora' (Safran 1999: 261-265). Steven Vertovec argues overuse 'sees the term become a loose reference conflating categories such as immigrants, guest-workers, ethnic and 'racial' minorities, refugees, expatriates and travelers' (Vertovec 1997: 1). Robin Cohen quipped that 'one does not announce the formation of the diaspora the moment the representatives of a people first get off the boat at Ellis Island' (Cohen 1997: 24). This challenge, of course, is not unique to diaspora studies: studies of ethnicity, race, and nations face similar definitional challenges. However, defining diaspora is further challenged by first framing who constitutes a diaspora (an ethnic group? a stateless nation? any minority?) and the nature of displacement (must it be traumatic? to how many states

must a diaspora be spread?) to questions of defining a diaspora after displacement - the longevity of diasporic identity (after how long does an emigrant population become a diaspora? when does a diaspora cease being?), ongoing relationships with the states of resettlement and displacement (can an assimilated population become a diaspora?), and what separates diasporas from any other migrant or transnational group (must there be political activity towards a homeland?).

At the same time, thinking of diaspora more broadly has shed light on modern experiences of displacement and marginalization. Convincing arguments have been made for diasporas that transcend a simple nation-displaced people dynamic, for example a Hindu diaspora (Vertovec 2000a), a Shia diaspora (Contractor 2014), and an African diaspora (Gilroy 1993; Butler 1998). Considering diaspora through such cases focuses attention upon the diasporic experience within the countries of resettlement as a formative mechanism as significant as displacement: here, barriers to integration and acceptance make diasporas as much as dispersion. In this light, the group and boundary theories of Rogers Brubaker (2004) and Andreas Wimmer (2013) originally applied to the formation of ethnic and national groups can similarly aid diaspora studies. Diaspora formation is an elite-driven process of boundary formation characterized by multilayered, changing boundaries within and against which diasporas persist. Understanding how diasporic identity, nationalism, and activism are formed within those boundaries provides insight into the complicated dynamics of diasporas.

Building upon Frederick Barth's work, boundaries are understood as social constructs, the products of interaction between two groups that create 'us' and 'them' distinctions, thereby creating social classifications as well as everyday social networks in which diasporic members are bound (Barth 1969). Boundary theory thus offers a useful approach to consider the complexity of the diasporic experience, an experience which is not static but made and unmade by the permeability of state, local, and

transnational boundaries, changes therein, and the choices of diasporic actors. Some dispersed populations work to become or remain a diaspora, creating boundaries against an open society to sustain diasporic identity and culture, and others have diaspora thrust upon them by unwelcoming immigration policies or exclusive national memberships; examples are found in the remnants of the Irish, Greek, and other European diasporas in America in the former, and Palestinians in Israel and Kurds in Germany in the latter.⁴ Some populations witness a political change in the homeland which opens formerly closed boundaries, most famously with the creation of Israel in 1948 and the liberation of Armenia in 1991; yet most diasporic individuals remain permanently removed, unable or unwilling to go home again. By understanding these factors, we can gain insight into the choices and actions of diasporic elites. Such an approach also highlights the different localized experiences of individual diasporic groups and the internal boundaries and tensions which result. In this case, boundary theory offers significant insight into the Assyrian and Chaldean experience in the U.S., its mobilization towards Iraq, and the Assyrian-Chaldean boundary within the greater diaspora.

This section first examines prevailing concepts of diaspora and addresses ways in which boundary theory offers a useful analytical approach. It then considers diaspora formation after resettlement, examining ways in which diasporic elites work as boundary-makers to develop diasporic identity and cultural boundaries, capture members, and sustain diasporic consciousness. It lastly addresses how elites work as nation-builders, cultivating a diaspora-as-nation within the state of resettlement and developing long-distance nationalism towards a homeland. The following chapters will build upon these concepts through analysis of the activism of Assyrian and Chaldean diasporic elites.

⁴ For more on these diasporas, see Kanaaneh 2009; Argun 2003; Wahlbeck 1999; Rabinowitz 1998; Gans 1979.

Defining Diaspora: Class, Criteria, and Consciousness

While diasporic definitions are myriad, several key framings by which diaspora is often understood are examined here: diaspora as a middleman minority; diaspora as a triadic relationship with the home and host states; and diaspora as a hybridized third space.

Ernest Gellner, in his seminal work on nationalism, offers a specific, narrow categorization of 'diaspora nationalism' (1983). Here, diaspora begins with a distinct minority that despite an absence of land or power is more educated and often economically more prosperous than the surrounding society, and in turn develops a niche social or economic role. Such an arrangement lasts until the general population begins to resent the diaspora's special status, and one of Gellner's consequences of nationalism typically results: assimilation, expulsion, or violence. Suggested here are the archetypical Jewish clerks and bankers, the Lebanese merchants, the Chinese traders. This parallels a similar concept of 'middleman minorities' developed by Hubert Blalock (1967) and Edna Bonacich (1973). They found minority groups with a 'high adaptive capacity' historically tended to occupy a middle status role in society, one with little power but relatively better income than the mass population (Blalock 83).

In essence, middleman diasporas are a classist approach to diaspora. In pre-modern societies, middleman minorities occupied the socio-economic space between the ruling class and the mass population; in modern, capitalist societies, such social stratification is often not as insular, and middleman minorities instead may assume a role in trade and commerce or dominance in a particular retail industry or occupation. Bonacich observed, 'They play the role of middleman between producer and consumer, employer and employee, owner and renter, elite and masses' (Bonacich 583). For example, Korean immigrants in the U.S. have acted as

middleman minorities by filling a gap between mainstream society and inner-cities, focusing on retail goods and services lacking from inner-city markets; similarly, Chinese migrants in Eastern Europe and Russia found a niche economic role in the post-communism environment in response to an underdeveloped retail network and unmet consumer demand for retail goods (Min and Kolodny 1994; Nyiri 2007). Gellner attributes the continuation of the middleman role in modernity to its 'marked advantage' derived from 'urban style of life, habits of rational calculation, commercial probity, higher rates of literacy and possibly a scriptural religion' (Gellner 103).

Blalock finds those who hold middleman status are a 'natural scapegoat' in times of social stress; Bonacich finds hostility is not contingent just on stress, but simply the nature of the economic role. Middleman groups tend to resist assimilation to retain their culture and connection to their ethnic community, aided by social exclusion and tightly-knit ethnic networks. However, social and economic resentment can increase social exclusion, of which the Jewish experience in Europe is perhaps a pinnacle example, and may lead to further displacement. In Gellner's theory, this leaves the diaspora with few desirable options. As he outlined:

The problems of social transformation, cultural revivification, acquisition of territory, and coping with the natural enmity of those with previous claims on the terrain in question, illustrate the quite special and acute problems faced by diaspora nationalisms. Those of them which retain some residue of an ancient territory may face problems which are correspondingly less acute. But the problems which face a diaspora culture which does not take the nationalist option may be as grave and tragic as those which face it if it does adopt nationalism (Gellner 108).

Thus, without territory, the diaspora faces a choice of seeking a state of its own or assimilating somewhere. Gellner's theory does not continue to what happens beyond this, other than to note the tragedy of either option. However, the potential for inclusion whilst retaining enough diasporic culture exists in some plural societies because the threat of diasporic identity and cultural practices is negated by a state

emphasis on multiculturalism (See Kymlicka 1995). The utility of Gellner's theory is in finding choices are made by diasporic actors and are often shaped by their own political and ideological understandings. Each option can be pursued simultaneously from within the same diaspora, as seen within the Jewish diaspora prior to the creation of Israel and as seen within the Assyrian and Chaldean diaspora today.

Niche economic roles therefore suggest ways in which diasporas can approach integration strategically, as well as ways social exclusion can produce diaspora. Tight ethnic commercial networks enable a diaspora to position itself in a niche role whilst sustaining intra-ethnic ties. However, rarely does the entirety of the diaspora's membership occupy the same socio-economic stratum. Chinese emigrants were coolies and labourers as much as they were shopkeepers and business-owners; Japanese immigrants in the U.S. were highly represented in the agricultural sector as well as skilled trades; European Jews were skilled professionals and destitute farmers (Hu-Dehart 2007, 1989; McKeown 1999; Chun 1989; O'Brien and Fugita 1982; Urofsky 1976). Middleman diasporas are thus shaped by social and political conditions in the states of immigration and emigration more than an ethnic drive for entrepreneurship, by overrepresentation in an economic role as much as social perception of such overrepresentation (Chun 1989). The shortcoming of the middlemen approach is thus its overemphasis on class: it is applicable only to a specific diasporic experience, thereby overlooking both the diversity within a single ethnic minority group as well as diasporas which never held a niche socio-economic role.

Another prevailing tradition in diaspora studies approaches diaspora as a triadic relationship: a diasporic population's relationship with the homeland, the host country, and the diasporic collective. William Safran suggested diasporas imagine themselves as distinct from their host-land, distinct from the homeland to which they cannot yet return, and perhaps only linked to each other (Safran 1991). He offered a

six-point criteria to determine if an expatriate minority community is indeed a diaspora, including a belief the ancestral homeland is the true ideal to which the diaspora or its descendants will eventually return; a commitment to the restoration, safety, and prosperity of the homeland; and a belief the diaspora cannot be fully accepted into the host society (Safran 83-84). Homeland is understood here as either real or imagined, the country of origin or national lore, whilst a host society is the state or area of resettlement, a usage reinforcing the diaspora's outsider status and impermanence. The Jewish experience is again demonstrative, with the 'next year in Jerusalem' of Passover Seder a reinforcement of diasporic linkage to Jerusalem as a physical and spiritual homeland that has endured for generations. Safran further contended diasporas are different from other transnational groups because they are formed from unique, often traumatic, circumstances and bear 'the political obligation, or the moral burden, of reconstituting a lost homeland or maintaining an endangered culture' (Safran 85). Tölölyan similarly has suggested diasporas typically, although not necessarily, result from catastrophe, which becomes essential to collective memory and mourning (Tölölyan 2007).

Robin Cohen expanded upon Safran's criteria, adding three points to emphasize cross-diasporic relationships, make allowances for diasporas which maintain diasporic identity in friendly, plural host states, and incorporate alternate causes of displacement (Cohen 1997). Cohen introduced four typologies to develop how diaspora is thought of beyond an exclusively traumatic homeland exodus: he suggests victim diasporas arise from a traumatic dispersal from the homeland; trade diasporas arise from those who leave their homeland for economic circumstances; imperial diasporas from those who relocated abroad to administer or settle their country's territories; and cultural diasporas serve as a catch-all for migrants who do not fit into the above categories but display some diasporic character. Cohen's justification for each classification underscores the marked complexity of displacement; however, as Cohen himself observed, the character of particular

diasporas often evolve, and such typologies are perhaps more useful to think about the origins and routes of a particular diaspora than to serve as a finite classification. Difficulty arises in categorizing the multiple migration paths that often comprise a single diaspora. Some waves of diaspora may be forced refugees, others voluntarily migrants: different experiences can produce a cleavage within the diaspora itself, rendering such typologies also prone to overlooking internal dynamics and erroneously treating diaspora as a single, definite entity. Assyrians fleeing genocide represent a markedly different cause for dispersion than those seeking economic opportunity. Moreover, not all groups that are traumatically displaced become a diaspora, and instead fully integrate into their state of refuge.

Gabriel Sheffer instead found it is not the cause of displacement but the status of the homeland, whether the diaspora possesses a kin state or is stateless, which is consequential to diasporic behavior (Sheffer 2007). He suggests stateless diasporas are more likely to support secessionist or national liberation movements, often aspiring to a nation-state, whilst state-linked diasporas behave more pragmatically, working within the bounds of the state and seeking mitigation of any conflict that could damage the homeland. Here, it is within the nation-state framework that diasporas make claims, and are themselves made by changing state boundaries.

The shortcomings of the triadic framing is that while it is less limiting than the middleman approach, it is still an overly-strict criteria better reflecting an idealized theory of diaspora than the complicated realities of many diasporic experiences. Finding such typologies oversimplified by the homeland-host-diaspora framework, other scholars have reimagined diaspora as occupying a space between state boundaries or occupying a consciousness shaped by the roots and routes of the diasporic journey. In this sense, it enables consideration of racial diasporas, those populations who cannot disappear into mainstream society because of national or social barriers in the state of resettlement towards racial minorities. Explorations of

diaspora as existing between homelands have moved the field to look at transnational networks and global space, or the concept of 'third space' as coined by Homi Bhabha. Bhabha sees diaspora as a negotiation of culture and community taking place between nationalist boundaries, thereby positioning diasporas as subversions to the nation-state (Bhabha 1994). Here, diaspora is a rejection of the homogeneity of nationalism and a byproduct of globalization's increased movement of peoples across borders.

This approach brings focus to the African diaspora as an archetype, allowing a rethinking of diaspora removed from Jewish paradigm (Dufoix 2008). Formative are the complex multitudes of migration and cultural production, which approach diaspora by its roots, where its history began, and its routes, the paths and movements it took to arrive at its current destination. Paul Gilroy (1993) termed the diasporic experience a 'double consciousness', the being neither fully of the place one lives nor of the place of one's ancestry, of a culture that is not white but not African either. Diaspora, here, is the hybridity of cultures and identities, a byproduct of multiple origins and movements of people, that exists in a transnational, diasporic space above state and national borders.

Stuart Hall (1996, 1990) similarly approached diaspora as a fluid concept forged by blendings of cultures and people. He argued that routes are significant because identity evolves: diasporas cannot go home again, or to the home they imagine, and so routes 'creolize' diasporic identity, culture, and histories. Hall, contextualizing his definition as 'uniquely - "essentially" - Caribbean', defined diaspora by its 'necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of "identity" which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity' (Hall 1990: 235). In this sense, diaspora is not a fight against assimilation - in some cases individuals cannot fully assimilate - and is not construed in relation to a single culture, homeland, or point of reference.

James Clifford observed that as of 'the late 20th century, all or most communities have diasporic dimensions' because of the mass migrations of people that have taken place over the previous centuries (Clifford 1994: 310). Roots and routes matter in increasingly complicated forms. He proposed looking at a diaspora's borders, 'what it defines itself against', to understand its nature: diasporas have a stronger sense of difference, of being outside the host country, than ethnic communities; have lost the rootedness in the land held by indigenous societies; and yet have a sense of connection to the homeland that is 'strong enough to resist erasure through the normalizing processes of forgetting, assimilating, and distancing' that befalls most immigrant groups within a few generations (Clifford 307, 310-311). Overemphasis on the homeland risks overlooking the influence of the routes taken, and the role of local interactions during those routes, in shaping the diaspora.

Captured in this transnational approach is the reality that not all diasporic experiences are the same, and a consciousness of being of several places shapes the individual experience of diaspora. An individual's consciousness alone does not make a diaspora, of course, but enables awareness of others who share the feeling of belonging and disbelonging to the same places. Diaspora is a 'way of imposing an imaginary coherence on the experience of dispersal and fragmentation' (Hall 1990: 224). In this sense, the idea of diasporic consciousness is predicated on Benedict Anderson's theory of imagined communities and the ability of individuals to imagine themselves as part of a group beyond one's own immediate geography (Anderson 1991). The imagined community is a 'deep horizontal comradeship' but it is also a nation 'imagined as both inherently limited and inherently sovereign' (Anderson 6-7). Yet whereas Anderson sees imagined communities as breeding nationalism, nationalism is generally antithetical to the hybridization approach.

The challenge of such theories that view diaspora as transcending the state or operating in a negative space is that diasporas nonetheless still operate in world organized by states and state boundaries that in turn shape diasporic integration and action. As populations flee or are expelled from one state, they become caged by the new state or states to which they flee, per Michael Mann's theory that populations are caged by states out of the necessity of state-building (Mann 1993: 250-252). The caged population turned its attention to state politics, caring 'more about the conditions within their cages than about the cages themselves' (Mann 252). Claims that diasporas and globalization weaken the state or transcend the nation-state framework overlook that global networks remain dominated by state interests (Mann 1997). Diasporas may behave transnationally or cultivate a global consciousness amongst its membership, but they do so from the confines of state boundaries. The difference made by state boundaries and citizenship policies is evident in the Palestinian diaspora, as Palestinians in Jordan largely integrated as naturalized citizens, versus those in Lebanon who were precluded from many types of employment and from naturalization opportunities, and Syria, where Palestinians accessed the same rights as Syrians except for citizenship, a factor that made life in Syria comparatively better until the recent civil war rendered those forced to flee officially stateless (Erakat 2014; Peteet 2007). State borders are consequential to diaspora and the rights and opportunities granted to diasporic members.

The above theoretical approaches underscore why diaspora is such a complicated concept: there is not a universalized diasporic experience. The middleman experience as a privileged but loathed diaspora differs from those diasporas whose roots were borne of enslavement. Differences are not just in how the diasporas came to be but the barriers which compel their persistence. In typologizing the Chinese diaspora, for example, a middleman minority carries as much justification as a forced diaspora of indentured labourers; its status as a racial minority may prompt social exclusion of Chinese migrants in some states, compelling a dual consciousness of

belonging and disbelonging. In essence, these frameworks serve almost as typologies of a pariah economic class, a traumatically displaced people in search of a homeland, and a racial minority precluded from integration: collectively they offer a fuller picture of why and how diaspora is experienced.

However, underlying these theories is an implicit but essential interaction between diasporas and state and social boundaries. The location of diaspora matters, in terms of the state in which it lands and the surrounding community in which it settles. Middleman minorities confront exclusionary social boundaries that keep them as outsiders, yet they also create boundaries to retain their own cultural elements and ethnic ties. Triadic relationships are made by state boundaries that separate populations from their homelands and each other, and through boundaries that limit integration into places of resettlement. Transnational hybridity, although purporting to transcend state borders, more accurately is itself the product of blurring and changing boundaries. Clifford's consideration of what diasporas define themselves against echoes boundary theory's emphasis on social construction: roots and routes are, in essence, the cultural, ethnic, class, and historical experiences that mold diasporic narratives and the diacritica upon which social boundaries are built. Boundary theory therefore offers a useful approach to diaspora studies because it brings into consideration when and why certain identities or cultural traits become salient, illuminating differences and similarities in how societies create diasporas and how diasporas create themselves.

Boundary Theory as an Alternative Framework

Boundary theory emerged as a constructivist response to primordial or essentialist approaches to ethnicity. Wimmer critiqued the shortcomings of prevailing approaches to ethnicity as unsuccessfully attempting to define what ethnicity *is* rather than to understand *why* it is so variable (Wimmer 2008: 971-972). Among

such variants left unexplained is why ethnicity is politically salient in some cases but not others; why some ethnic groups display tighter in-group mentalities than others; and why some ethnic groups have higher degrees of longevity and stability: in this sense, it is a direct reaction to theorists like Johann Herder, who conceptualized ethnicity as 'self-evident' and 'self-explanatory' (Wimmer 2008; 2009: 245). In approaching ethnicity as a solitary unit, Wimmer argues, phenomena like assimilation is erroneously thought to occur as a standardized process by which acculturation in turn diminishes ethnic solidarity and ultimately ethnic identity, or, alternatively, a process that does not occur because social boundaries and discrimination are thought to be permanent. Assimilation was treated as a group-level process rather than an individual-level process affected by social, economic, occupational, and other factors. Boundary theory instead recognizes that ethnic communities are not insular groups across which culture, solidarity, and ethnic narratives are consistent, thereby explaining its variance. In seeking to address the shortcomings of ethnic theory, boundary theory likewise addresses shortcomings of diaspora theory and similar variations in the diasporic experience.

Boundary theory maintains ethnic groups are not inevitable or permanent constructs, but made through interaction between populations who then determine themselves to be different from one another (Wimmer 2013; Brubaker 2004; Barth 1969). For such distinctions to occur, groups must have some contact with each other; yet boundaries do not emerge spontaneously: they result from social distancing and closure reinforced by marking the ethnic boundary with 'cultural diacritica' now given social relevance (Wimmer 2009: 254). In this sense, ethnicity is the product of 'the application of systematic distinctions between insiders and outsiders; between Us and Them', with such distinctions drawn from differences, whether cultural, physical, linguistic, or religious, that correspondingly establish where the ethnic boundary is located and who will be included within its bounds (Eriksen 1993: 18, 18-35). Wimmer found four factors which influence the nature of the resulting boundary: its

political salience; the level of social exclusion the boundary produces; the degree of cultural differences between the groups; and its stability over time (Wimmer 2013: 79). The ethnic groups may have equal or imbalanced power, may be tightly-bound or porous, and may be partial or rigid, all of which determine who can cross the boundary and what circumstances and stigma are associated with doing so. Underscored here is the role of elites in defining what is politically salient, negotiating boundaries and the criteria upon which membership comes to lie.

Thus, to the extent that ‘ethnicity, race and nationhood exist only in and through our perceptions, interpretations, representations, categorizations and identifications’, as Brubaker observed, the same is applicable to diaspora (Brubaker 2004: 17).

Diasporas likewise are not predetermined but made, the product of a boundary built upon the diaspora’s cultural differences in relation to its surrounding society, and established through exclusion by the new society, construction by diasporic elites themselves, or a combination thereof. A diaspora’s experience is therefore heavily shaped by its state of resettlement: the boundaries encountered by a displaced group entering a diverse, immigrant-friendly society are often porous and crossable; the boundaries encountered entering an homogenous society with strict national membership are often rigid and difficult to cross.

Not all boundaries, of course, possess the same permeability. As Wimmer notes, ‘the degree of social closure along ethnic lines varies across contexts’ (2009: 252). He found ‘ethnic distinctions may be fuzzy and boundaries soft, with unclear demarcations and few social consequences, allowing individuals to maintain membership in several categories or switch identities situationally’ (Wimmer 2008: 975). As hybridity and creolization theory stress, there are distinctions between diasporas that can assimilate and those which cannot because of racial exclusions from the state or society of resettlement. Race is thus a determinative factor in boundary salience: such boundaries are often impermeable, requiring social change

to erode. Diasporic leaders representing racial diasporas play a significant role in establishing political goals and enacting social pressure on the diaspora's behalf. The ease of bringing about such change is contingent on the nature of the boundaries and the degree of exclusion put forth by society. By contrast, in societies with porous boundaries into which diasporic members could easily cross, diasporic elites must instead work against acculturation. Without establishing criteria differentiating diasporic members from local society, there is no social boundary for diaspora to exist.

Cultural distinctions upon which boundaries are based may change over time, as do the actors who claim their political and social relevance (Barth 1969). Social context, receptiveness of the state of resettlement, and ability to integrate influence the degree to which diasporic identity is prioritized as one of the many identities its members possess. Diasporic groups are not necessarily omnipresent: in addition to said external factors, there are internal dynamics that witness 'phases of extraordinary cohesion and moments of intensely felt collective solidarity' and dynamics which witness the opposite (Brubaker 2004: 12). This again underscores the agency of diasporic actors in working to construct and sustain a diaspora, much in the same way a nation or ethnic group is created.

Brubaker observed that an emphasis on boundary-maintenance is a core pillar of diaspora theories that focus on the groupness of diaspora, an emphasis fundamentally at odds with hybridity and creolization, resulting in 'a tension in the literature between *boundary-maintenance* and *boundary-erosion*' (Brubaker 2005: 6). His point aptly characterizes the either-or dichotomy of these approaches: either diaspora is the result of social exclusion or it is produced by social intermixing. Yet diasporas are created through both frameworks. Brubaker sought to address such contradictions by challenging the field's approach to diasporas as groups entirely. He instead suggested, 'we should think of diaspora not in substantialist terms as a

bounded entity, but rather as an idiom, a stance, a claim... “diaspora” is used to make claims, to articulate projects, to formulate expectations, to mobilize energies, to appeal to loyalties’ (Brubaker 2005:12). He captures a significant element of diaspora, one likewise stated by Tölölyan that diasporas must include an element of ‘doing’: a diaspora must act to support its religious or community institutions, its language, anything that reinforces its unique identity, a ‘doing’ which is organized and reinforced by committed diasporic activists and leaders (Tölölyan 1996: 15).

However, the shortcoming of Brubaker’s approach is that any diasporic project, by virtue of seeking to distinguish itself as a diaspora or by being distinguished as an outside, transnational minority, is a product of state and social boundaries and presents itself as representing a defined group. Diasporic actors make political claims on behalf of their bounded group, a group which actors themselves aid in constructing and maintaining. Rather than overlooking boundaries, examining the nature of those boundaries - the cultural criteria perceived as salient to determining membership, the nature of those boundaries over time, the social and political situations in which boundaries become salient, and the presence of internal boundaries - can help provide a more comprehensive understanding of diaspora, and why and when activism occurs.

The utility of boundary theory is therefore apparent. A better understanding of diaspora is gained through examining why and under what conditions boundaries change, and why diasporas experience boundaries differently, than to dismiss diasporas as groups. To Brubaker’s boundary-maintenance/boundary-erosion dichotomy critique, it is suggested boundary changes are better understood through Wimmer’s typology, which finds five types of changes (Wimmer 2013: 49-63). In the first type of change, expansion, topographical boundaries move to be more inclusive, most typically under nation-building, delineating national majorities and minorities. An example of boundary expansion that ‘makes’ minorities was the

institutionalization of the Ottoman millet system that made certain religious minorities members, but less equal members, of the Ottoman state. In the second boundary change, contraction, boundaries are drawn more narrowly to exclude members. This can occur through fission, which splits a category in two, or through redefining group membership along more narrow criteria. This may cause exclusion of a specific minority, but can also be used by a minority to distance itself from a broader category, such as Iraqi-Americans distancing from a broader 'Arab' ethnic label. The third change, transvaluation, changes the hierarchy of ethnic categories. This may equalize a formerly disadvantaged group or bring a formerly excluded group to power, such as the assumption of Shia political control following the removal of the Sunni-dominated Ba'ath regime.

The last two changes are perhaps the most relevant to diaspora: boundary crossing and repositioning, and boundary blurring. Crossing and repositioning occur when an individual changes his or her own ethnic membership by crossing from one group to another, often through assimilation, or an entire ethnic group is repositioned into another category, often through a shift in the boundary criteria, as found in Hussein's redefinition of Assyrians and Chaldeans as Arab Christians. Both types of border crossing are dependent on the acceptance of the group into which crossing occurs. Wimmer notes boundary shifting in this context differs from expansion because it represents a normative change in the meaning of the boundary rather than a change in topography; this distinction is not entirely clear-cut because creating national boundaries and minorities therein often accompanies changes in normative criteria. Lastly, a blurring of boundaries occurs when the importance of one boundary-defining category, such as ethnicity, is reduced as other factors, such as culture, economic status, or religion, increase in importance. Blurring occurred when Assyrian guerrilla forces fought alongside Kurdish forces in the 1990s against Hussein, brought together by shared persecution.

Therefore, creolization does not so much erode boundaries as blur them, or perhaps create new, malleable boundaries around a diasporic 'third space'. A 'third space' is not an absence of boundaries or a gap between them, but a form of boundary itself. Boundaries do not disappear with creolization because insiders and outsiders, determinations of us and them, still exist even as they, and the identity and culture they represent, are reshaped.

The intent in this analysis is not to fall into what Brubaker critiques as groupism, treating ethnic groups or nations as homogenous, unified entities possessing agency and attributable interests (Brubaker 2004: 8). However, ethnic actors themselves politicize and frame ethnic groups as a single entity on behalf of which political claims are staked: as Brubaker also observed, treating ethnic groups as groups 'is precisely what ethnopolitical entrepreneurs are in the business of doing...we should certainly try to *account* for the ways in which - and conditions under which - this practice of reification, this powerful crystallization of group feeling, can work' (Brubaker 10). This is likewise captured by Paul Brass's observation that 'cultural forms, values, and practices of ethnic groups become political resources for elites in competition for political power and economic advantage', and any ethnic or national group formation can change 'because of both the dynamics of external competition and the internal divisions and contradictions that exist within all groups of people, however defined' (Brass 1991: 15-16). The notion of elite competition in making diasporas is central to this thesis: leaders work to shape boundaries, sometimes forming competing boundaries, and compete as its political and ideological representatives.

Diasporas Are Not Borne from Displacement

As noted earlier, Cohen remarked that migrants, even those bearing all the criteria of victim diasporas, do not arrive on foreign soil and proclaim themselves as such.

Diasporas are instead made through social interactions and elite leadership after resettlement, not as the axiomatic byproduct of displacement. At a fundamental level, diaspora-building is a parochial task. Boundaries are formed in relation to society. This process displays a tension of wanting to integrate into the new society but wanting to maintain enough of a boundary to keep the nation alive, in some capacity, within that society. This latter point is particularly resonant with the fear an absence of social boundaries will bring disappearance: within the Assyrian and Chaldean diaspora, the pull of assimilation serves as a driving force for diasporic formation and activism.

This section unpacks that which builds a diaspora after displacement and resettlement. The focus herein, as it is relevant to the Assyrian and Chaldean experience in America, is primarily upon those diasporas with few barriers to boundary crossing in the state of resettlement. It looks first at the necessity of crafting identity, and the role of individual actors who work to create boundaries and shape the diasporic nation therein. Diasporic actors seek means, particularly by institution-building, that will reinforce membership through successive generations. It then looks to the role nationalism can play in providing ideological and political purpose.

Identity and Institutions: Building Diasporic Membership

As noted above, diasporic identity is not stagnant. Such identity ‘may be lost entirely, may ebb and flow, be hot or cold, switched on or off, remain active or dormant. The degree of attachment - and mobilization around it - often depends upon events affecting the purported homeland’ (Vertovec 2005: 3). Yet identity is, per Charles Tilly, a ‘blurred but indispensable’ concept; as Kim Butler observed, identity is ‘a vital component of diasporas; it transforms them from the physical reality of dispersal into the psychosocial reality of diasporas’ (Tilly 1996: 7; Butler 2001: 207). Diasporic

identity, particularly as tied to an ethnic, religious, or national identity, takes on social implications, assumptions about culture and behaviour, and that which represents the boundary between those who hold the identity and those who do not.

Cultivating a diaspora is complicated because diasporas encompass a host of internal and external factors that promote divisions along socioeconomic status, areas of origin, areas of resettlement, generations removed from the homeland, competing political allegiances, and competing non-diasporic identities. Diasporic actors must create narratives that transcend these divisions and can be bought into by members across social cleavages: per Andrew Wachtel, 'ultimately, those nations will form whose elites present well-articulated, well-chosen national visions. And they will continue to succeed until either some other group provides a better-articulated and better-chosen vision or the initial vision discredits itself' (Wachtel 1998: 3).

Diasporic identity formation consequentially is intertwined with border formation: it reflects the ethnic or cultural boundary upon which membership criteria are established.

The first task of diasporic elites, then, is negotiating the markers that define membership. Although diasporic actors represent a minority and typically possess little power, they, like any immigrants settling in a new society, 'do not only passively react to host decisions about structures of most relevance to them, but their views of how boundaries should be drawn, crossed, shifted, or blurred are part of the negotiations about boundaries' (Zolberg and Woon 1999: 10). Integration subsequently centers on two core questions: 'how different can we afford to be, and how alike must we be?' (Zolberg and Woon: 8). The social context that creates diaspora influences its boundary-defining characteristics. Chaldeans found their Catholicism, the distinguishing component of their identity in Iraq, was no longer unique upon arrival in the U.S. and therefore no longer served as the primary boundary against the rest of society. Chaldean elites instead drew upon other

cultural elements, including entrepreneurship, ties to Mesopotamia, and language, and the Chaldean Church positioned itself as different from other Catholic Churches because of its unique entwinement with Chaldean identity. Assyrian leaders, by contrast, found an identity too tied to the Church of the East was overly limiting. Instead, Assyrian ethnicity was built as all-encompassing of the multiple churches and countries of origin that comprised the Assyrian population.

Diasporic actors thus pursue narratives and boundaries they believe will be lasting and forestall assimilation. Wimmer considers assimilation a boundary shift that is the 'result of a power-driven political struggle' and not the 'quasi-natural outcome of decreasing cultural differences' that previous ethnic theory described (Wimmer 2013: 29). Individuals do not assimilate simply because they come to possess the right cultural markers, fading into mainstream society as the next generations become more culturally homogenized until only symbolic remnants of the original ethnicity remain (Wimmer 18-20). Instead, the majority population accepts such incorporation, either through allowing porous boundaries in the first place or shifting existing ones. Studies examining changes in racial composition in Brazil and Puerto Rico, for example, support Wimmer's point. Changes in social understandings of who is 'white' sparked a rapid statistical demographic shift, 'whitening' both societies in a way that could not be explained by simple population growth or immigration (Schwartzman 2007; Loveman and Muniz 2007). In Puerto Rico, the social boundary surrounding white identity shifted to include mixed-race individuals previously considered coloured; in Brazil, upper-class, nonwhite Brazilians were able to cross ethnic boundaries in a way lower-class, nonwhite Brazilians could not. The difference between boundary-crossing and boundary-shifting represents an individual versus social level of assimilation, in which an individual can develop social criteria needed to pass, or cross, into a different category, such as possessing wealth in Brazil, whereas a society shifts its boundaries to redefine and expand membership

criteria, such as incorporating a formerly distinct racial group in Puerto Rico (Wimmer 59-63).

Social and political contexts of identity matter because they may change social boundaries and influence individual identity usage. A recent push to reclaim black identity in Brazil, for example, led to an uptick in educated nonwhite men reversing earlier trends and classifying their children as nonwhite (Schwartzman 960). A similar experience was observed amongst Native Americans in the U.S. when a changing political climate saw Native American identification increase by more than 1.5 million individuals in two decades, primarily driven by white Americans reclaiming their ethnic heritage (Nagel 1996). Consequentially, whereas social acceptance enables assimilation, in-group pressure can influence individual choice to retain a minority identity by making the identity socially relevant.

Assimilation, then, is a product of individual choices permitted by social acceptance. This is significant to the Assyrian and Chaldean diaspora in the U.S. because of the ease of Assyrian and Chaldean assimilation. Naturalization laws provide a path to citizenship, legalizing membership; social acceptance, however, is often based on racial, religious, and linguistic factors (Wimmer 2013; Zolberg and Woon 1999; Hall and Lindholm 1999). A main hindrance to Assyrian and Chaldean integration typically reflects anti-Arab and anti-Muslim stigma, which is often negated by learning English and by their Christianity. Consequentially, there are few barriers that preclude crossing the boundary from Middle Eastern immigrants to members of American society. It is for this reason the fear of assimilation is pervasive amongst diasporic actors: as Wimmer noted, 'if all members of a particular ethnic category pursue a strategy of boundary crossing into another group, and if members of this second group pursue a strategy of boundary expansion and allow such assimilation, the first ethnic group will slowly disappear over time' (Wimmer 107).

This consequence draws out the particular challenge presented to the diaspora: the want for Assyrians and Chaldeans to integrate, to be accepted as part of society and have opportunity, but to do so without disappearing. The U.S., in this diaspora's experience, is not a host society but a permanent home. Thus, elites appear to pursue a strategy of boundary shifting, the expansion of American social and national boundaries. As opposed to individual crossing, this enables a collective repositioning in which boundary criteria is redefined to recognize Assyrians and Chaldeans, and the cultural diacritica which define them, as part of society. As an integration strategy, it enables the diaspora to retain cultural elements without facing marginalization; however, it still presents a challenge to retain such cultural elements - and diasporic boundaries - over time as it increases the voluntariness of diasporic association: there is no marginalization or external reinforcement of being Assyrian and Chaldean.

Such a strategy perhaps has the best chance in multicultural or immigrant societies that enable ethnic and cultural pluralism. This recalls John Hall and Charles Lindholm's observation that multiculturalism in America is celebrated as long as it is 'nice' and non-disruptive; ethnicity in America 'is in fact chosen, at least amongst whites' (Hall and Lindholm 1999: 133). All diasporas endure assimilation, including the pinnacle Jewish and Armenian examples, but it is perhaps the degree to which assimilation is counteracted by thriving institutions and a salient identity that sustains the diaspora.

Diasporic elites, in a sense, attempt to build a nation absent a territory, within the social space and institutional structures where they reside. In their study on culture, Jonas Frykman and Orvar Löfgren (1987) find culture-building is rarely a conscious, mapped strategy; instead, 'people seldom view themselves as culture builders' because culture is rather a product of everyday, banal tasks. By contrast, diasporic actors are often highly conscious of their role. They create institutions, events, art,

literature, and cultural programs to engage members, reinforce identity and diasporic consciousness, and reinforce boundaries, however porous, between the diaspora and mainstream society. Sheffer (2003: 53) and Yossi Shain and Aharon Barth (2003: 452) identified core members, the organizing elite, who are regularly and actively engaged, and orchestrate the direction of diasporic activities; this action is undertaken on behalf of the wider diaspora who possess varying levels of engagement and consciousness.

Tölölyan similarly emphasized that diasporas are as much organized as they are imagined; they are a product of, and kept alive by, collective memory and collective action (Tölölyan 1996). Sheffer proposed diasporic organizations act in three primary functions: maintenance of the diaspora's social, religious, and financial aspects; promotion of cultural, social, and political issues amongst members of the diaspora; and the legal and physical defense of the diaspora and homeland (Sheffer 2007: 71). Organizations are particularly consequential as diasporas integrate into new states. Because institutions are visible and interactive, they become part of daily life, through churches, schools, newspapers, and stores: cultural reinforcement is transmitted 'more effectively through trivial everyday routines than through cultural preaching and normative statements' (Frykman and Löfgren 1987: 271).

A common theme thus emerges amongst diasporic actors: a quest to achieve some measure of institutional completeness with the intent of serving and sustaining the diaspora. The concept of institutional completeness was developed by Raymond Breton (1964) and Arthur Stinchcombe (1965). Breton argued the degree to which an immigrant is absorbed or assimilates into his or her new society is influenced by three different communities and the social organizations therein: 'the community of his ethnicity, the native (i.e., receiving) community, and the other ethnic communities' (Breton 1964). An institutionally-complete ethnic community 'at its extreme' is able to provide all services to all community members, negating the need

to use native institutions for any measure of daily life from education to commerce to social assistance: this measure of completeness, he finds, is improbable in contemporary North American cities; rather, ethnic organizations seek to develop a structure as close to this as possible that possesses the capacity to absorb and integrate new members, thereby reinforcing and expanding the structure itself (Breton 194, 199). Stinchcombe further found the presence of formal organizations is significant to ethnic group solidarity, that 'the greater the number and variety of organizations, the greater the solidarity is likely to be' (Stinchcombe 185).

Organizations can play an additional role in capturing latent members. Safran suggested organizations are capable of reviving latent diasporas should traumatic events in the host country or homeland compel a diasporic response (Safran 1999). Such revival, he observed, requires a sufficient concentration of population who still possess some diasporic identity, as well as charismatic leaders, entrepreneurial backing, and a cohesive internal structure. The role of organizations in making diasporic membership salient is not just political activism in times of crisis, but also mundane doings. Successful organizations may reengage diasporic identity because they offer a benefit to membership and engagement: they make the diaspora socially relevant. A successful ethnic chamber of commerce, for example, may encourage latent group members to rediscover their ethnic identity to support their own business or personal interests. Individual calculi drive membership and identification, and a variety of organizations aide in casting a wide diasporic net. The ability of a diverse array of organizations to operate is contingent on the presence and openness of civil society within the state of resettlement: location is again formative to diaspora-building.

Of note to the Assyrian and Chaldean experiences is the significance of religion as a unique marker of identity and ethnicity. While Sheffer argued there is a contrast between religious communities and diaspora, he allowed both share a common

ideology produced by a unified belief system and cultural symbols, and share a territorial focus, a spiritual center (Sheffer 2003: 66). Cohen likewise found religion mimics features of diaspora and 'can provide additional cement to bind a diasporic consciousness' (Cohen 1997: 189). Vertovec affirmed religious institutions can fill an important role in the creation and endurance of diaspora; the overlap of religion and ethnicity contributes significantly to their endurance, as found with Hindus, Jews, Sikhs and Armenians (Vertovec 2000a: 2-3).

Akin to aiding diasporic fusion, Breton found the presence of religious institutions has the single greatest effect in attracting an immigrant to ethnic institution: 'religious leaders frequently become advocates and preachers of a national ideology providing a *raison d'être* for the ethnic community and a motivation for identification with it' (Breton 200-201). Religious leaders are naturally positioned, in unfamiliar society, to serve as de facto community leaders, a trusted source that can communicate diasporic ideals and transmit cultural markers from within an institutional structure that offers services and aide to community members. This overlap is significant with the Assyrian and Chaldean diaspora: religious institutions assist in shaping continuity, but do so atop a unique ethnicity. In the Middle East, being a Christian population created immediate boundaries, leaving ethnic differences less consequential to boundary formation. In the U.S., it was instead geographic and unfamiliar ethnic origins that created boundaries; Christianity provided an immediate source of familiarity and facilitated boundary crossing. For this to occur, diasporic institutions were essential to establishing social understandings of 'who' Assyrians and Chaldeans are.

In some cases, the effect of cultivating stringent group boundaries can create tense relationships with the surrounding community. In states with an omnipresent risk of insecurity, diasporas may cultivate an in-group mentality; however, this bears risk the wider community may become hostile towards the un-assimilating population

(Cohen 1996: 512). For example, Cohen observed the Jewish diaspora's modern history is 'one of endurance and achievement but also of anxiety and distrust' (Cohen 511). Although the Assyrian and Chaldean experience in Iraq cultivated similar anxiety, this has generally not been the diasporic experience in the U.S. Underscored here is that social contexts and boundaries affect not just the existence of a diaspora, but the dynamics therein. Through day-to-day experiences, local interaction shapes security and insecurity, and forestalls or enables integration.

Nationalism and Political Activism

Multiple layers of boundary formation build a diasporic nation in some form, one which is unrooted but shaped by the state of residence and the nationalism of diasporic elites. Nationalism, in a way, embodies the diaspora: it understands the diasporic nation as a political community rather than just a byproduct of dispersal. The extra-territorial diasporic nation subsequently challenges traditional nationalism theory because its focus is not necessarily to territorial attainment or a nation-state.

The ethnic roots of diaspora underlie diasporic nationalism. Anthony Smith proposed ethnic communities are founded upon *ethnies*, 'named human populations with shared ancestry myths, histories and cultures, having an association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity' (Smith 1986: 32). Here, *ethnies* are bounded groups whose memories, symbols, and religious traditions allow diasporas to endure despite the 'double loss' of their homeland and autonomy. In immigrant societies, ethnic migrants can develop a political loyalty to the state and a cultural loyalty to the *ethnie*. This likewise serves as a foundation to Sheffer's theory, where he found ties to antiquity, the role of symbols and myths, and shared ethnic roots make diaspora a perennial and lasting phenomena (Sheffer 2003). Smith attributed the ability of *ethnies* to remain *ethnies* in the face of displacement and migration to 'vicarious nationalism', in which minorities still desire a nation for their co-ethnics in

the ancestral homeland and consequentially support national agendas on behalf of their greater *ethnie*; he argues this is done to compensate for the pain of their lost heritage and the loss of ties to their ethnic community. Smith later framed vicarious nationalism specifically as diasporic nationalism, a modern form of nationalism held by diasporic members that is an 'ideological movement to secure...collective autonomy, unity and identity by restoring its members to their historic homeland' (Smith 2010: 4).

Similarly, Benedict Anderson, in applying his theory of imagined communities to the migrant experience, observed migrants may exercise a 'long-distance nationalism' through which they continue to imagine themselves as part of their home community. Long-distance nationalism emerged with modernity: migration occurs in a world where the nation-state is the international norm, and every migrant, save a few rare circumstances, hails from a nation-state and holds a national identity. Anderson notes, 'The internet, electronic banking and cheap international travel are allowing such people to have a powerful influence on the politics of their country of origin, even if they have no intention any longer of living there'; the 'meditated imagery of home' is now perpetually available (Anderson 2001; 1992: 8). Migrants are able to continue imagining themselves as part of a community despite their physical, and perhaps permanent, absence.

Both vicarious nationalism and long-distance nationalism capture a key element of diasporic behavior: the longing for the homeland even in cases of resettlement and integration into friendly societies. Nationalism, however, is more than an ideology or consciousness. It is a political demand; it is a choice; it can be reactionary or foresighted. Nationalism, per Gellner's lasting definition, is the 'belief that the political and the national unit should be congruent', that the boundaries of a state should align with a people who believe themselves to belong together (Gellner 1983: 1). He contends:

It follows that a territorial political unit can only become ethnically homogeneous, in such cases, if it either kills, or expels, or assimilates all non-nationals. Their unwillingness to suffer such fates may make the peaceful implementation of the nationalist principle difficult (Gellner 2).

Forced displacement is the cornerstone acutely known to many diasporas. Gellner's succinct pronouncement of the outcomes of nationalism is highly applicable to the Assyrian and Chaldean experience, both to understanding the changes in Iraqi nationalism that continue to marginalize their population and the choices they and their diasporic populations face as a result. Their dilemma has become greater with renewed flight from the homeland: each wave of displacement underscores the particular difficulty of possessing no solitary claim to land, of being indigenous people around whom modern states were built. The choices Gellner presents are thus shared by displaced people everywhere: flee, assimilate, or pursue some measure of autonomy. The reality of the diasporic experience is that all three choices may happen simultaneously. National ideologies may take several forms because they too are created by individual actors. The Jewish diaspora is not just made of Zionists; rather, prior to the formation of Israel, the rise of Zionism coincided more with increasing anti-Semitism and marginalization in Europe, and faced a significant backlash from, amongst others, movements within reform Judaism that rejected territorial nationalism (Herzl 1989; Shlaim 2001).

To John Breuilly, political motivation similarly underlies any national demand:

To focus upon culture, ideology, identity, class or modernisation is to neglect the fundamental point that nationalism is, above and beyond all else, about politics and politics is about power. Power, in the modern world, is principally about control of the state. The central task is to relate nationalism to the objectives of obtaining and using state power (Breuilly 1993: 1-2).

Diasporic leaders, through claiming representation of the diaspora, act as national leaders: echoing Brubaker's theory, they bridge together popular beliefs, practices, and culture; frame them as the ideal of the community; and channel them into a political claim (Breuilly 69-70). Nationalism requires political demands and activism; in short, 'one cannot merely equate the rise in nationalism with the rise in national consciousness' (Breuilly 174). Indeed, the presence of political demands on behalf of the nation is a useful measure: it is the difference between imagining Nineveh as the ancient homeland and demanding legislation making Nineveh an autonomous region for the Assyrian and Chaldean people.

Yet if traditional nationalism is ultimately a political project seeking control of the state as Gellner and Breuilly find, the challenge diaspora poses to this nation-state framework becomes apparent. For diaspora, the nation is extra-territorial, simultaneously local and transnational, divided and caged by the confines of state borders and often intermixed with other ethnic groups, nations, and cultures. Small, powerless, minority diasporas with no meaningful claims to statehood, such as the Assyrians and Chaldeans, or racial diasporas without a singular homeland, may instead pursue tempered political claims for liberal democratic rights and protections from discrimination in lieu of state power itself.

A distinction in terminology, as understood in this thesis, is thus necessary: the difference between diasporic nationalism and long-distance nationalism. Diasporic nationalism is a form of nationalism toward the diaspora itself, toward this extra-territorial nation. It is an extension of Gellner's usage, in which he distinguished between traditional nationalism as the quest for a nation-state, and the diasporic nationalism of a middleman minority-type diaspora that carries on ethnic ties and cultural practices through niche economic roles (Gellner 101-109). This framework is expanded here beyond middleman minorities to any type of diaspora and the boundary-making, cultural negotiations, and political claims that go into making a

diasporic nation. Because the diaspora does not have a state or mechanisms to establish a leader or legitimate power, politics and power instead take the form of serving as an arbiter of all things diaspora – culture, history, national narratives, leading key organizations, establishing immediate and long-term visions for the diaspora, and serving as a political voice of the nation and making political demands on its behalf.

Long-distance nationalism, to use Anderson's terminology, represents those political claims diasporic actors possess towards the homeland or some iteration of the homeland. It is ultimately a political demand in another state. Threats to the diaspora or injustices facing co-ethnics in other states may fuel long-distance nationalism in demand of changes in state policy, administrative rights, or statehood. Thus, Smith's use of vicarious/diasporic nationalism fits into the concept of long-distance nationalism as used here. Long-distance nationalism may therefore emerge from and coexist with diasporic nationalism: in this sense, it is a targeted nationalism, the making of long-distance political claims regarding co-ethnics in a foreign state, that differs it from diasporic nationalism.

The distinction between the aims of these nationalisms is illustrated by the difference between the long-distance nationalism of the Jewish diaspora in America toward Israel, from its creation to its politics today, and its diasporic nationalism toward the diaspora, toward maintaining Jewish institutions, religion, and the well-being of Jewish-Americans as an extension of the Jewish nation. As Melvin Urofsky described, Jewish émigrés believed a common Yiddish culture could be maintained in a society in which they could run their own social and cultural affairs, noting, "This doctrine led directly to the concept of "Diaspora nationalism," the idea that Jews - despite the lack of geopolitical homeland - still constituted a distinct nationality' (Urofsky 1976: 32-33). Diasporic nationalism, in this sense, served both as an alternative and a compliment to Zionism: the diasporic nation could be maintained without a state,

while in pursuit of a state, and coexisting with a state. As it pertains to this thesis, both forms of nationalism are significant components of the Assyrian and Chaldean diaspora. Diasporic nationalism motivated Assyrian and Chaldean elites to build and maintain diasporic boundaries, whilst long-distance nationalism toward Iraq shaped the political responses of diasporic leaders following the Iraq War.

As both diasporic and long-distance nationalism make political claims, state locality determines the ability of actors to lobby governments and engage with other political actors and non-governmental organizations. Political mobilization may be further constrained by repression that restricts political rights or freedom of expression; competition from within the diaspora or from other ethnic groups; or logistical challenges resulting from inadequate organization, resources, or leadership, or uninterest (Ogelman et al 2002; Saideman 2002). In the U.S., the first factor is less of a challenge because the nature of the political process encourages ethnic lobbying. Once mobilized, ethnic lobbies often succeed because the social character of the U.S. as a nation of immigrants gives ethnic actors a prominent role in society, and the structure of American democracy allows ethnic groups, and civic groups generally, access to policy-makers and policy-making (T. Smith 2000: 86). Members of Congress, whose role in shaping foreign policy stems from its funding powers, are accessible to both professional lobbyists and ordinary constituents. Accessibility is a result of vulnerability: American legislators are uniquely vulnerable compared to legislators of other countries through a combination of short terms in office; the prospect of primary defeat; the system of running for office as individuals and not as party standard bearers; and the need to continually raise large sums of money to finance one's own campaign (King 1997: 29-30). Ethnic constituency groups, particularly groups with deep pockets for campaign donations and whose endorsement will carry sway within their community, can make significant inroads into gaining support from their Congressional delegation.

Noting that ethnic lobbies have come to play a larger role in foreign policy over the course of the past century, theorists such as Tony Smith and Samuel Huntington take pause that the democratic right of ethnic groups to lobby and voice their opinion can be fairly balanced with considerations of the greater community; that the few, who may have allegiances and objectives that are not necessarily aligned to American interests, can influence policy because of the disinterest of the many (Huntington 1997; T. Smith 77). Their concern, essentially, is capture, wherein a minority interest group pursues a policy of which the general public is unaware or uninterested, thereby allowing the minority's desired outcome to prevail. Ethnic lobbies are usually the sole contributors to the discourse on issues of concern to their diaspora, essentially allowing them to capture the issue, frame it in their own terms, present their goals as the desired outcome, and pursue legislation on their behalf.

Yossi Shain, however, finds that to capture an issue, diaspora lobbies must meet the challenge of amassing sufficient political interest. Shain contends diasporas can have a positive impact on foreign policy as the U.S. 'recasts these [diaspora] groups not only as marketers of the democratic-pluralist creed abroad, but also as America's own moral compass, helping to keep a somewhat confused U.S. foreign policy true to its ideals' (Shain 1999: 199). To succeed in their advocacy, diaspora leadership must work through official government channels of electioneering and lobbying. Factors enabling a diasporic role in public policy therefore include a fragmented foreign policy structure that empowers individual Congressional members; a national ethos that allows any resident to participate in the political process; growing public acceptance of ethnic diversity; a powerful domestic media that can champion interest issues; and uniform objectives across diasporic organizations that temper more extreme views for those that align to liberal democratic interests (Shain 51, 199-200; Shain 2002). Worries such as Huntington's overestimate the ease of building a political consensus and spurring action, even from like-minded and sympathetic policy-makers. One of the surprises Assyrian and Chaldean activists encountered has

been the immense difficulty to effect change, even in the face of immediate crisis. The approachability of government does not necessitate the action of the government.

Shain and Barth (2003: 452) and Sheffer (2003: 53) offer comparable proposals of how mobilization occurs. In their respective scenarios, core members, the organizing elite, are regularly and actively engaged, and orchestrate the direction of diasporic activities; passive members or periphery members are available for mobilization when elites issue a call to action; and silent members, in Shain and Barth's model, comprise the largest and generally absent segment to potentially be mobilized in times of crisis. Brubaker questions this notion of silent members and the validity of counting those who have assimilated (Brubaker 2005: 11). However, a more useful way to consider the awakening of diasporic membership may be to consider the conditions that make diasporic membership again salient, whether a boundary shift welcomed or threatened the diaspora, and whether those boundaries were local or in the homeland. If a boundary shift is impactful enough to make identity salient amongst silent members, it likely says something about the danger or opportunity such a shift creates.

The political arena is often where key diasporic differences play out; it is where they matter most because they can bear consequences. A shift in boundaries presents a turning point for a diaspora: a shift in the surrounding society that closes boundaries can cause another migration, a shift that opens boundaries can facilitate assimilation. Boundary shifts increase the social relevance of diasporic identity because the possibility of change encourages political claims and activism.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND THESIS OUTLINE

Boundaries make diaspora. Diasporas have highly uncertain existences: their formation is not guaranteed, and their presence may become more active or cease to exist with changes in their state of origin or state of residence. Diasporas act for and against the homeland from which they originate, which can block their return, thwart their quest for territory, or encourage interstate relationships. But perhaps more so, they act with and against their surroundings, encountering boundaries that preclude integration or enacting boundaries that enable an acceptable measure of integration. State boundaries thus matter in creating diasporas; the immigration laws, security, social services, education, and individual rights provided shape the diasporic experience, and mobilize demands for such rights when they are lacking.

This phenomenon leads to the core research question of this dissertation:

- **What is the role of diasporic elites in building a diasporic nation?**

In furtherance of the core question, this dissertation asks:

- **How do diasporic elites use boundary-making to maintain Assyrian and Chaldean identities, and how is this process aided or challenged by the American context in which it occurs?**
- **How do changes in the homeland - specifically the Iraq War and its aftermath – shape diasporic nation-building?**

As this thesis explores, Assyrian and Chaldean elites seek to protect their *atra* (the Assyrian word for homeland) in the Nineveh Plain, but, recognizing the permanency of their displacement, in a way also endeavour to make an *atra* in the United States. Both American society and the Iraq War are therefore consequential to the development of the Assyrian and Chaldean diasporic nation, and illuminate the core

issue underlying diasporic nation-building: whether an *atra* can be built in diaspora, intertwined with other ethnic groups, cultures, practices, and absent a territory, and whether it is enough to sustain the Assyrian/Chaldean nation.

The following chapters present the research undertaken to answer these questions. Chapter Three considers the historical context of Assyrian and Chaldean boundary formation and the early 20th century quest for Assyrian autonomy. It also examines the intra-ethnic boundaries of Assyrian-Chaldean identity. Chapter Four considers the institution-building that created diasporic boundaries and cultivated political claims. Boundary formation is one of the first essentials of diaspora-building because of the need to delineate cultural and social boundaries that encase diasporic membership whilst at the same time balancing the need of individuals to achieve some measure of integration into mainstream society. Assyrian boundaries shifted from close allegiance with the Church of the East to an ethnic umbrella based upon shared language, ancient lineage, and cultural symbols. In the Chaldean community, the same narratives of language, history, and culture are significant, but remain closely aligned with the Chaldean Church, which itself was formative to Chaldean boundary construction. Defining Chaldean boundaries against local society and against a broader Catholicism ultimately facilitated a contraction of the intra-ethnic Assyrian and Chaldean boundary.

Chapter Five examines diasporic nation-building in response to changing boundaries between the diaspora and Iraq, and between the Iraqi state and co-ethnics in Iraq. It considers three points of boundary shifting and the policy goals of the diaspora therein: the build-up to the Iraq War; the drafting of the constitution; and the subsequent refugee crisis. Apparent is a distinction between Assyrian actors as more attuned to the potential for change, mobilizing earlier and with concrete policy goals, and Chaldean activism emerging later, a reaction to Assyrian activism as much as changing Iraqi circumstances. Notably, contrary to what might be expected of a

stateless population, early political goals were often tempered, focusing on integration and liberal democratic rights, and not solely focused on territorial autonomy. Relevant is the way boundary shifts were first perceived: early demands assumed ethnicity would be a salient feature in a post-Hussein Iraq as Assyrian activists mobilized to assert their right to recognition as non-Kurdish, non-Arab Iraqis. For Chaldean activists, this carried an additional dynamic of asserting their identity as non-Assyrians, shifting Chaldean from a sectarian Iraqi identity to an ethnic claim.

Chapter Six examines diasporic nation-building in the most traditional sense, as diasporic organizations turned to the nationalist option in response to continued marginalization, pursuing autonomy in Iraq's Nineveh Plain region. Examined are how national and pragmatic approaches to autonomy elevated the Nineveh Plain to the forefront of diasporic policy goals. Whilst long-distance nationalism was present in the diaspora for decades, autonomy became more widely perceived as necessary in response to exclusionary Iraq boundaries. Diasporic actors worked as an ethnic lobby to push against political and ideological barriers in furtherance of a Nineveh Plain province.

CHAPTER II

RESEARCH DESIGN

As this thesis aims to achieve an in-depth examination of how diasporic elites work as nation-builders, and how the construction and navigation of socio-political boundaries occurred in a specific diaspora, this research took the form of a case study. The strength of a case study is the depth of insight gained through drawing upon multiple sources and types of information, allowing the researcher to cultivate a rich understanding of a particular phenomena (Yin 2008).

In line with the thesis's research questions, this case study therefore pursues several areas of inquiry within the broader framework of diaspora-building: an examination of elites as institution-builders and as political actors, and of how nation-building and long-distance nationalism shaped political goals, especially after the Iraq War; and an examination of the salience of Chaldean identity within those contexts. Such inquiry requires analysis that is synchronic and diachronic (Gerring 2004). Assyrian and Chaldean serve as subunits of the diaspora, and are examined in comparison to each other, offering a unique contribution to the field of Assyrian and Chaldean studies. Institution-building is assessed over the course of diasporic immigration to the U.S. to understand how elites work to create and sustain a diaspora and the intra-communal narratives upon which diasporic boundaries are built. In addition to this diachronic approach, the Iraq War is examined as a pivotal moment in which the opening of the Iraqi political structure allowed diasporic actors to pursue policy objectives. To gain specific insight into the effects of the war on the diaspora, analysis focuses on the pre-war period through January 2014, within which key war-related events are specifically examined: the lead-up to the war, and ethno-sectarian conflict, whose outbreak reached a crisis point in 2006 and which continues through today. These periods were selected to permit analysis of how ongoing circumstances in Iraq

affected diasporic policy goals, and why change in diasporic activism and policy focus occurred within this period.

Further, this research seeks to understand the Assyrian and Chaldean diaspora in an American context. This is a significant point of analysis because diasporas are made in relation to the social environments in which they exist. A case study facilitates examination of boundary formations to better understand diasporic ideology and consciousness, as well as to understand the success of Chaldean identity in the U.S.

The American diaspora is an important point of analysis because of its significance to the worldwide Assyrian and Chaldean diaspora as the largest diasporic population. Prior to WWI, Assyrian and Chaldean populations primarily resided in northern Iraq, the Anatolia region of modern-day Turkey, Persia, and Syria. Iraq's Christian population, prior to 2003, was estimated between 800,000 to 1.2 million people, approximately three percent of Iraq's total population, of which an estimated 70 percent belonged to the Chaldean Church (USCIRF 2013; Zubaida 2000: 381). By 2013, this figure had decreased to an estimated 300,000 to 500,000 and, coupled with the recent crisis in Syria, more Assyrians and Chaldeans are now estimated to be living in diaspora than their ancestral homelands (USCIRF 2013).⁵

Specific population numbers in the U.S. are difficult because the census no longer contains an Assyrian/Chaldean designation, incoming refugees are categorized as Iraqi, and immigrants may instead identify by their country of origin on official forms. The 2000 Census placed the community at 82,322 who self-identified as Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriac; however, this figure was believed to be under-representative for several reasons, including low completion rates, language barriers, and an oversaturation of ethnic options. This option was eliminated when the 2010

⁵ Accurate numbers are difficult as widespread displacement and the potential dangers of identifying as Christian further challenge estimates.

Census reduced ethnic categories. The Chaldean Chamber of Commerce estimated in 2014 there were 121,000 Chaldeans in Michigan and another 150,000 Chaldeans and Assyrians throughout the U.S. (Chaldean American Chamber 2015a). Other Assyrian organizations have placed total recent estimates at 400,000 (BetBasoo 2013). There is geographical significance to where identities are found: Assyrians and members of the Chaldean Church often identify as Assyrian in Chicago and most of California, whereas members of the Chaldean Church in Detroit and San Diego overwhelmingly identify as Chaldean. Through what community members describe as a more herdish migration path, Chaldeans comprise the larger American population: outside of Detroit, San Diego possesses the largest Chaldean population, estimated at 50,000; the largest Assyrian populations are in Chicago and California, particularly the San Jose and Turlock-Modesto areas (Stickney and Fry 2013; Shamon 2014). As of 2014, the American-based population and the Iraqi-based population are thus almost parallel in size given the continuing rates of displacement. Significant diasporic communities also exist in Australia, Sweden, Great Britain, and Brazil, whose numbers are around or under 100,000; the world-wide population is estimated to be between 3.3 million to 4.1 million (UNPO 2008; Assyrian Information Management 2012).

Notably, the Syriac-identifying population is not examined here. The Syriac community faces a dynamic similar to Chaldeans, in that there is a tension between the Syriac-identifying population and Syriacs who identify as Assyrian. Syriacs are therefore implicitly represented in Assyrian advocacy, as Assyrians consider Syriacs to be ethnically Assyrian, but Assyrian activism does not necessarily represent the Syriac-identifying perspective. Given the rather small population in the U.S., estimated to be between 15,000 to 25,000 individuals, the community is less visible and less politically and socially engaged (Grammich et al 2012). The Assyrian-Chaldean narrative in the U.S. is overwhelmingly dominant, and is thus what I have chosen to explore. This is in contrast to the diaspora in Europe, where the Syriac-

Assyrian divide is dominant, paralleling Chaldean-Assyrian contestation in America (Gaunt 2010; Atto 2007). Syriac identity results from religious differences, with the Syriac Orthodox Church claiming roots as one of the first Christian communities, and different migratory paths, with Syriacs common to Syria, Lebanon, and Western Turkey. Whilst early waves of migration to the U.S. included Syriacs, particularly following the WWI genocide, its population in recent decades has largely turned to Europe and has been outnumbered by the Assyrian and Chaldean presence.

Alternative approaches to this case study were considered but not selected. One option was a comparison between the American-based diaspora to those in other states. The focus of such a study would instead draw comparisons of governmental systems, social exclusions, and the receptiveness of each state to ethnic expression and lobbying, changing the research emphasis to the role of state structures in diasporic mobilization. A second option was to compare the American Assyrian and Chaldean diaspora to other diasporic populations in the U.S., thereby removing the factor of different state structures and facilitating consideration of the nature of diaspora in America. While such research certainly has merit, it likewise dilutes the focus from that which I am trying to capture: the multi-layered diversity and boundary negotiation within a specific diaspora, and political mobilization. The best approach to capturing such an understanding is thus a comparison of the Assyrian-identifying diaspora to the Chaldean-identifying diaspora.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research into this thesis's questions presented three major challenges. First, as noted above, existing academic literature on this population is rare, and, at the time this research was conducted, almost non-existent in relation to the post-Iraq War period. Second, telling a story of political activism presents its own challenges regarding sources and accuracy of information, challenges that are compounded when it is a

story of unsuccessful political activism without measurable outcomes. Third, this research seeks to capture a moment that is still unfolding and whose outcome cannot yet be known. At the time of this research, ISIL was not yet a known threat and the collapse of Mosul or the Nineveh province was not foreseen, a testament to how quickly events in Iraq can change.

Thus, to meet these challenges, my primary method of data collection necessitated interviews with diasporic elites. This took the form of semi-structured interviews, or ‘conversations with a purpose’, which have an informal style that enable addressing a set of specific topics while providing flexibility for the interview to develop unexpected themes, thus accessing data unlikely to be found in any other context (Burgess in Mason 2002: 62; Mason 62-63, 66). Elites are ‘the influential, the prominent, and the well-informed people in an organization or community’ whose interviews ‘contribute insight and meaning to the interview process because they are intelligent and quick-thinking people, at home in the realm of ideas, policies, and generalizations’ (Marshall and Rossman 1989: 94-95).

This focus does not reveal the extent to which members of the wider diaspora support elite action or are aware such action exists. While certainly the opinions and involvement of non-elites would reveal the depth and resonance of diasporic belonging, ultimately a focus on diasporic elites offers direct and unique insight into the perspectives and motivations of those who create diasporic institutions and undertake action on the diaspora’s behalf. The emphasis on elites is also consistent with aforementioned boundary theory and diaspora theory, which emphasize that boundaries are negotiated and politicized by elite actors, and that diasporic organization and action are built by a core group of elites who comprise the most active members of a diaspora (Brubaker 2004, Shain and Barth 2003, Sheffer 2003).

In a practical context, a focus on elites translates to individuals who are well-known and influential within the diaspora, who help shape diasporic borders and make political claims on the diaspora's behalf, and who possess credibility when doing so, typically because they represent key organizations or are themselves established as community leaders.

For my research, to capture the diversity within the diaspora as it pertains to differences in identity, geography, and waves of migration, it was important interviewees represent organizations that are Chaldean-specific, Assyrian-specific, and neither; organizations preceding the Iraq War and new organizations formed in its aftermath; and geographically representative of the main Assyrian and Chaldean population centers of Chicago, California, and Detroit. To the extent it was possible, I also aimed to capture a diversity of backgrounds by interviewing men and women, those born in the U.S. and those born abroad, and those with non-Iraqi countries of origin.

Identification of organizations and key individuals was facilitated through personal experience gained prior to my doctoral research, including employment as a congressional aide specializing in immigration assistance from 2003 through 2006 and a legislative aide for foreign policy from 2009 through 2010 to Congressman Sander Levin, through which I worked with Chaldean and Assyrian advocates, and work with the Chaldean Federation of America in 2011, where I assisted Joseph Kassab, then-Executive Director, on behalf of the organization's political efforts. I also used internet and social media searches, and made inquiries of interviewees and friends engaged with diasporic activism regarding their opinion of community leaders and politically-engaged individuals. My intent was to locate those that were meaningfully engaged with the diaspora and the political process.

In total I held 29 interviews between 2012 and early 2014, in which I interviewed eleven Assyrian activists and nine Chaldean activists, two of whom I conducted follow-up interviews with to discuss new organizations they formed and ongoing political events. Contributing to a broader representation of voices, four of the activists were women, two were born in Iran, and seven were born in America; several Assyrian interviewees are members of the Chaldean Church. The remaining interviews were conducted with various policy workers and an academic. The purpose of interviews with non-diasporic actors was to gain outside perspectives regarding Assyrian and Chaldean diasporic mobilization and political goals. The two interviews I hoped to conduct but did not receive a reply to my inquiries were, coincidentally, the more nationalist individuals of each population: Sargon Dadesho of the Bet-Nahrain Democratic Party/Assyrian National Congress, who is one of the most vocal Assyrian nationalists; and Bishop Sarhad Jammo of the Chaldean Church's Western American Diocese, who many other interviewees credit with cultivating the push for a separate Chaldean ethnicity. Both individuals are prolific in their writings and media presence, and I utilized their public statements to develop an understanding of their ideologies. In addition, many interviewees referenced these individuals voluntarily, which provided a further understanding of how their views are situated amongst other diasporic organizations.

I began my interviews with two individuals I knew from my previous work with the Chaldean Federation in Detroit. I was granted other interviews after sending e-mails introducing myself as a doctoral researcher, asking for an interview, and providing a brief description of my research and what I hoped to discuss, and, when applicable, included mention of a mutual contact or referral. I traveled to Detroit, Chicago, California, and Washington, D.C., over the course of my fieldwork to conduct interviews face-to-face. The interviews generally took place in the interviewee's office (in some cases the office representing the diasporic organization, in others the interviewee's primary place of employment), a coffee shop or restaurant, or the

interviewee's home. Those I interviewed were incredibly generous with their information, time, and hospitality, and interviews generally lasted around two hours.

Additionally, while in Detroit, I attended several community events hosted by the Chaldean Federation and the Chaldean Chamber to observe their content and the extent to which lay individuals are engaged with these organizations. These events included meetings with American and Iraqi politicians, which were mostly invited attendance, and talks regarding Chaldean culture and historical figures, which were publicized within the community. Participant observation proved useful as attendance exceeded my expectations and rooms were filled to capacity, attendees were highly engaged and informed, and Chaldean identity was as resonant amongst attendees as organizers. There were generally more male than female attendees at political meetings, but cultural events were mixed and many families were present, and youth participation was evident, although also a smaller demographic at political meetings.

Often with qualitative research, there is an emphasis on triangulation, the use of multiplicity – defined originally as multiple research methods, but since expanded to incorporate multiple data sources - to validate information or provide multiple perspectives that point either to a shared truth or ways in which truth is subjective, thereby accounting for biases or misinformation (Thurmond 2001; Blaikie 1991; Denzin 1970). Norman Blaikie (1991) questions triangulation as varying in efficacy depending upon the researcher's perspective and the data being sought. With the challenges noted above, triangulation as a consistent methodology was not always practical given this research's emphasis on individual understandings and political activism within an understudied community. This presented a challenge of accounting for the accuracy of information whilst recognizing the inherent subjectivity and malleability of some of the information sought. Here, I was in part guided by the research method Kanchan Chandra outlined in her work interviewing

political party elites in India: recognizing the traditional practices of cross-checking information with multiple respondents and written sources were not always available, Chandra shied away from asking broad questions, instead using specific details to develop a big picture, and treated information that could not be cross-checked as fact only if the interviewee had no incentive to lie or stretch the truth (Chandra 2004: 293-295). Given the shortage of studies regarding this diaspora, portions of this guidance proved particularly useful. I sought additional sources, most frequently political documents and newspaper articles, to cross-check verifiable information. Focusing on the minutia of organizational activity and political lobbying helped construct a bigger picture of how diasporic activists act as nation-builders.

At the same time, a portion of my research was inherently subjective. Here, I was instead guided by the approach that ‘the sociologist’s role is not to adjudicate between participants’ competing versions but to understand the situated work they do’ (Quote in Blaikie 1991: 127-128). To this end, only diasporic actors can provide information regarding the social and political contexts in which they work, the challenges faced, and why they chose to pursue certain actions or policies. I asked general questions about political priorities, for example, to facilitate insight into the individual’s policy views and their narratives of and experiences with activism. I was cautious of a normal tendency of political actors to exaggerate their own roles, but generally found accounts pragmatic, blunt, and realistic regarding the limits of an organization’s reach and the U.S.’s own ability to enact change in Iraq. Additionally, I asked broad questions regarding perspectives on the diaspora: for example, I asked every interviewee how they would describe who Assyrians/Chaldeans are to someone unfamiliar with the diaspora. From this I was able to see what narratives are chosen – essentially, how elites understand the Assyrian/Chaldean boundary - and in turn observed the marked consistency of those narratives across my interviews. Likewise, broadly inquiring as to the Assyrian-Chaldean relationship was intended to solicit

subjective understandings and resulted in a wider variety of responses, suggesting this intra-diasporic boundary has not been firmly defined.

Although the individuals interviewed are politically active and generally accustomed to speaking in interviews about their community, the situation in Iraq, and their political aims, certainly the interview itself bore some influence on responses offered therein. Indeed, in examining the research process, the 'values, assumptions, prejudice and influence of the researcher must therefore be acknowledged' (Hand 2003). Yet it is impossible to know how we ourselves are perceived, other than to be conscious of potential factors. I generally found the interviews held a dynamic of a student or researcher engaging with and seeking information from professionals who understood themselves to be speaking on behalf of their own experiences, on behalf of their organization, and, to a degree, the greater diaspora. A relevant factor to contextualizing the interviews is that I am not Assyrian or Chaldean, nor Middle Eastern. Not being a member of the diaspora had potential benefits and hindrances. On the one hand, it made the contrast in ethnicity salient, perhaps facilitating consideration of the ethnic boundary that defines Assyrianness and Chaldeanness in relation to a non-Assyrian/Chaldean American. There was also less likely to be concern I supported a rival diasporic political organization. Additionally, few American politicians and policy workers are Assyrian or Chaldean, suggesting these interviewees are well-experienced in communicating diasporic issues to non-diasporic members. On the other hand, there is the potential individuals could be more guarded and less likely to share criticisms of diasporic leadership or internal issues, or that I might miss an implicit meaning that would be readily understood by someone within the diaspora. An example of this is my uncertainty if mentioning I am from Detroit prompted assumptions from interviewees outside the Detroit community as to my potential biases regarding the divisive Chaldean issue.

From a certain perspective, a degree of bias is perhaps apparent in my approach to the diaspora because it contains a distinct Chaldean component. Some lay diasporic members I encountered expressed concern that exploring Chaldeans as a unique diasporic subset was imposing a label and dividing the diaspora. Having grown up in Detroit, I was always familiar with the Chaldean community and, to this end, felt studying the community was not imposing a label as a researcher, but recognizing a present identity, one with social meaning and understandings and on behalf of which political claims are made. In contrast to such encounters, those I interviewed were immediately familiar with the Chaldean-Assyrian issue and appeared comfortable discussing the challenges they felt the growth of a Chaldean identity in Detroit posed or, alternatively, discussing the necessity of Chaldean identity; I cannot ascertain if the issue was overemphasized to combat perceived biases on my part or if it would not have been raised if it were not a topic of my research. However, given Chaldeanness can be a subject of strong emotions, I felt the comparative research design I chose was the best option to better explore this important dynamic.

An important point of note is that all interviews took place prior to ISIL's occupation of Mosul and the Nineveh Plain. The political aims of diasporic actors, urgency of their demands and worries unquestionably have since been affected by this crisis. The understandings obtained in these interviews thus represent understandings within a less-dire context. The continued political engagement of diasporic elites and the views of frustration they expressed without a backdrop of extreme crisis offer an important context on its own.

Lastly, to verify data and supplement interviews as well as to prepare for them, I reviewed documents produced by or pertaining to diasporic organizations, typically found on their websites and in public statements: such documents include policy briefs, action alerts, press releases, annual reports, and news articles. Community news sources searched included the Assyrian International News Agency (AINA),

Assyrian Information Management (atour.com), *Zinda Magazine*, the *Chaldean News*, and ChaldeansOnline; broader news sources, including the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, BBC, *Detroit News* and *Detroit Free Press*, were also consulted to contextualize national and international stories relevant to the diaspora.

I also reviewed congressional legislation and committee hearings regarding Assyrian, Chaldean, and Iraqi issues to see which diasporic goals were pursued at a national policy level. The introduction of legislation pertinent to Assyrians and Chaldeans, and corresponding Floor Statements, Letters to Members, and press releases, offered insight into the involvement of diasporic organizations in the legislative process and specific diasporic goals during this period. Congressional staff members were helpful in sharing letters and statements related to pertinent legislation. I visited the British National Archives to access documents from the British Mandate era to gain an historical perspective to the Assyrian-Chaldean relationship and national demands. Secondary sources were utilized primarily for historical understandings of the community in Iraq and its early migrations to the U.S., for historical understandings of the Iraqi state, and for information regarding the Iraq War and its aftermath.

CHAPTER III

ASSYRIANS AND CHALDEANS IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

'The Assyrian question is an old question in Iraq, believe me.'
–Emanuel Kamber, former Secretary General of the Assyrian Universal
Alliance (Interview 2013)

Assyrian and Chaldean understandings of themselves are inextricable from their history. They are an ethnically-distinct population who traditionally speak Aramaic, a dialect called Syriac or *Sureth*, and are amongst the earliest followers of Christianity. They claim ancestry amongst the indigenous peoples of Iraq as descendants of the Assyrian and Babylonian empires of ancient Mesopotamia. While there is some dispute as to the validity of this ancient lineage, an analysis of such historical claims is outside the scope of this thesis; however, in studying the national myths and symbols that bind together a group, Walker Connor's assertion that 'what ultimately matters is not *what is* but *what people believe is*' is applicable here (Connor 1994: 93).⁶ Assyrians and Chaldeans are thus understood as an ethnic group and, as is relevant to this thesis, a national minority in Iraq now rivaled in size by its diasporic population.

The Assyrian and Chaldean diaspora is invariably a product of circumstances in Iraq and the greater Middle East. Some waves of migration saw refugees fleeing violence and oppression, but many migrants throughout the 20th century were individuals seeking work, education, and better lives. However, it is the tragedies that indelibly remain etched in diasporic memory, and shape perceptions of and ideologies towards the state today. It is the trajectory of an ever-narrowing Iraqi national boundary by which many Assyrian and Chaldean activists understand Iraq and which contributes to differing cultural perceptions between Assyrians and Chaldeans themselves.

⁶ For sources regarding claims of antiquity, see Hanoosh 2008; Parpola 2004; Joseph 2000; Jammo 2000.

Assyrians have come to be viewed as nationalistic, political, and possessing a strong sense of identity; Chaldeans as more assimilative, apolitical and possessing a middleman-minority mentality. Such perceptions contributed to shaping an intra-ethnic boundary that gains salience as ethnic identity becomes politicized.

This chapter therefore examines modern historical events that are essential to understanding the Assyrian and Chaldean communities today. It observes first the splintering of the Chaldean Church from the Church of the East, which marks the foundation of modern Chaldean identity. It then looks to the tragedies of the early 20th century, the effort to find a permanent Assyrian homeland in response to these events, and Ba'ath era policies which further marginalized this population, accelerated emigration, and drove diasporic nation-building in the U.S. The aim herein is to contextualize the impact of the current crisis within the scale of loss suffered this century, and to contextualize current autonomy demands as an effort to combat an ongoing legacy of displacement and marginalization. In this sense, integration and autonomy claims are both direct efforts to resist increasingly exclusionary boundaries of the Iraqi state: integration to change membership within Iraq's national boundaries; and autonomy to draw new boundaries against the Iraqi state.

The final aim of this chapter is to outline diasporic migration to the U.S. and to provide an American context of who Assyrians and Chaldeans are in terms of their understandings of the boundaries between them. Chaldean identity, as it is experienced in the American diaspora, is deeper than a religious identifier. It is an active identity that is paradoxically understood as both the same as and distinct from Assyrian ethnicity. The argument presented here is that a newly assertive claim to Chaldeanness reflects an evolving process of boundary formation between Assyrians and Chaldeans within the greater diasporic nation. The denominational split that conferred different sectarian identities has since amassed cultural ascriptions and

characterizations. Such differences are relatively minor and malleable, but gained political resonance with the opening of the Iraqi state after 2003, the resulting politicization of ethno-sectarian identity, and the corresponding pursuit of special rights on behalf of those ethno-sectarian identities. Per Wimmer's typologies of boundary change, it is not fully accurate to conclude Chaldeans have fissured from Assyrians to become their own ethnic group, although there are some Chaldeans who believe this has occurred (Wimmer 2013: 49-63). There remains, however, an ongoing evolution over the what this boundary represents: the boundary could one day fissure, but it will likely continue to at times contract and at times blur, reflecting small differences within the broader, more salient cultural ascriptions of shared language, history, and traditions that define the whole of the Assyrian-Chaldean people.

DENOMINATIONAL SCHISM: THE FIRST ASSYRIAN-CHALDEAN BOUNDARY

The contemporary distinction between the Assyrian and Chaldean communities comes from their respective branches of Christianity. Assyrians were originally, and many remain, followers of the independent, Orthodox Church of the East, the heirs of the sect which split from the Catholic Church in 431 at the Council of Nestorius, whose members were known until the early 20th century as Nestorians. A segment split from this Eastern tradition to reunify with Rome beginning in 1552; to differentiate this population from the Nestorians, these Catholic followers were given the name Chaldean by Pope Julius III, originating the modern use of Chaldean as an identity label (Healey 2010: 45-46; Joseph 2000: 56-58). This was followed over the next few centuries by shifting allegiances between the Vatican and the Church of the East, until 1830 when the current iteration of the Chaldean Church was fixed and the Vatican formally established the See of the Chaldean Church in Mosul.

The Ottoman system allowed measured autonomy to minorities under the heads of religious institutions. Despite the later dates at which the Chaldean and Assyrian millets received formal recognition, both enjoyed fairly independent status throughout Ottoman rule and may have first been grouped under the Armenian millet with other Christian minorities: Chaldeans were granted status as a millet in 1844, in part the result of urging from France as a champion of Catholics in the Middle East; there is greater uncertainty when the Assyrian millet was recognized, with some scholars stating recognition came the following year and others stating it was not until the late 19th century, after a 1864 effort was rejected by the Nestorian Patriarch (Healey 46; Hanoosh 58; Joseph 9, 43-44).

Conversions to the Chaldean Church accelerated throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries with the influx of Catholic and Jesuit missionaries to the Ottoman Empire.⁷ Community members often suggest there were likely existing cultural differences between those who converted to the Chaldean Church and those who remained Nestorians, with geography a primary dividing factor that permitted or precluded missionary access (Bacall and Bacall Interview 2014; Abbo et al Interview 2013; Hanna Interview 2013).

The community at this stage, much like the community today, is presented as one people, with a shared language and religion, but with minor yet emergent cultural differences shaped by distance and in relation to neighbouring populations.

Chaldean conversions were most common in villages accessible to Catholic missionaries; as such, villages around Mosul, the Nineveh Plain, and other lower-lying and urban areas were more likely to become Chaldean, in contrast to the populations in the mountains of Hakkari. The mountain villages were difficult to reach and heavily self-reliant. Sami Zubaida notes Assyrians, whom he understands

⁷ For missionary accounts of this era, see Coakley 1992; Layard 1854; Grant 1841; Ainsworth 1838.

as Nestorians, were ‘a different kind of community from the religious minorities designated as millets’: whereas ‘typical’ millets were urbanized communities or settled communities, Assyrians were characterized as possessing a hard-fought, less secure existence of ‘armed tribes under their own chiefs and priests nominally under Ottoman suzerainty. They maintained their security and property in a network of precarious pacts and alliances...They resented and feared centralizing governments’ (Zubaida 2000: 372). Thus, it is suggested those who resided in more urban or heterogeneous areas were more inclined to adapt and integrate into the surrounding culture; those who resided in the mountains of Anatolia were well-versed in the defense of their community and its interests, and thus more inclined to nationalism. The former were more likely to become Chaldean; the latter were not. Such assumptions regarding adaptiveness and nationalism carry through the Chaldean and Assyrian population today.

Some scholars suggest the use of the Assyrian identity accelerated in the mid-19th century when Protestant missionaries to Anatolia encouraged its use as a move away from the reference to Nestorius, whom missionaries viewed as a heretic (Joseph 17-19). Anthony Smith, for example, casts doubt on the continuity of the Assyrian people, framing Assyrian as a name clung to only by a ‘small, persecuted’ religious group following the collapse of the ancient Empire:

Thereafter, no more is heard of the Assyrian state or people. There are references to the ‘land’ of Assyria now and again, but when Xenophon marched through it in 401 BC he found all the cities were deserted with the exception of Erbil. No one henceforth claims to be ‘Assyrian,’ except a small and persecuted sectarian community of Nestorians in northern Iraq today and in a far-flung diaspora (Smith 1986: 101).

This embrace of the Assyrian name is framed by such scholars as a nationalizing moment, an isolated community quick to embrace a ‘rediscovery’ of its biblical roots and ties to an ancient civilization, one whose remains at Nimrud were being

uncovered in this period by British archaeologists – the ‘stuff of nationalist mythology’ as Zubaida describes (Zubaida 373). British officials, however, generally took an unquestioning approach toward Assyrian claims, as found in the British Inspector for Mosul’s observation that, ‘It appears probable that the Assyrians of to-day retain something of the ancient Assyrian strain...The important point is that the Assyrians themselves are convinced that they are the descendants of the ancient Empire, and this pride of race explains some of their more extravagant claims’ (Stafford 1934: 159).

These observations specifically understand Assyrians as Nestorians, underscoring a semantic challenge encountered in studying the community. Whilst there is a tendency in modern nationalist discourse to see references to Assyrian and intuitively imbue it with a modern national understanding encompassing Nestorians, Syriacs, Chaldeans, and sometimes Maronites, Arameans, and other peoples nationalists believe were lost to modernity and state boundaries, sectarian identity was at the forefront of communal identity under the millet system. Religious leaders held both spiritual and temporal power over their followers, rendering ethnicity as less socially and politically relevant. Aryo Makko finds conceptions of a greater Assyrian nation as understood today were still highly localized on the eve of WWI, with various intellectuals just beginning to promote a nationalist awakening (Makko 2012, 2010). Makko stresses ‘the transition, which some scholars have defined as a shift from ‘community’-*millet* to ‘nation’-*millet*, was rejected by the most powerful groups of actors, the clergy and tribal leaders in rural areas, who feared for their authority’, to which he wryly comments, ‘there is little evidence to suggest that this has changed ever since’ (Makko 2012: 299). It is not that religious leaders objected to positioning their community as a nation per se, it is perhaps rather that they preferred such positioning to continue their role as the nation’s temporal and spiritual head. This further suggests intra-ethnic boundaries were complicated even under the Ottoman era as religious schisms created a denominational boundary that led to separate

millet systems headed by separate religious institutions. Western missionaries and geopolitical influences further sought to move individuals and villages across this denominational boundary, accelerating conversions away from the Church of the East. The repercussions of this ultimately came to entwine denominational belonging with politics and identity.

However, it is important to note that Nestorians and Chaldeans alike also identified as *Suraye*, an ethnic designation whose synonymousness with Assyrian is a point of debate amongst linguists, historians, and nationalists, and whose use suggests Nestorians and Chaldeans understood themselves as a common people indigenous to Mesopotamia (Bacall and Bacall Interview 2014; Abbo et al Interview; Donabed 2012; Aljeloo 2000). Some scholars trace references to Assyrians or *Suraye* throughout the second millennia and suggest instead it is Europeans who only later came to recognize this population's ancestry (for more regarding this history, see Cetrez, Donabed, Makko 2012; Joseph 2000). Although there is a romantic national attachment to this meaning, whether *Suraye* translates to Assyrian is perhaps less consequential to the larger point that its usage indicates this population understood itself as a distinct people, even if it did not engender political commonality.

It is difficult to ascertain the extent to which rising Assyrian nationalism prior to WWI was influenced by sectarian geopolitics and outside influences, and how much was simply a byproduct of increasing discontent within the Ottoman state. Two significant national developments were underway by the early 20th century. First, tensions and insecurity within Hakkari grew with more frequent land battles with Kurdish neighbours and with changes in the administration of the Ottoman state, particularly following the Tanzimat reforms that sought to end the millet system (Healey 2010: 48). Those changes spurred a dynamic of increasing insecurity that would lead the Assyrian nation to declare war on the Ottoman Empire during WWI,

the end result of which would ultimately devastate the community.⁸ Second, Nestorian as a group identifier began to fall from use, as evident by widespread use of Assyrian by the British government, Iraqi State, and League of Nations thereafter (Zubaida 2000; Stafford 1934).

There is a small but vocal segment within the Chaldean nationalist community who have flipped the Assyrian narrative, contending the roots of Chaldeans today are instead found within ancient Babylon and Chaldea, a separate empire originating south of ancient Assyria and which ultimately conquered Assyria, therefore standing as the ‘last national name’ of the inhabitants of ancient Mesopotamia (Jammo 2000; Hanna 1999). Other Chaldean nationalists similarly claim ‘names such as Babylonians and Assyrians refer to State inhabitants and not to ethnicity, while the term “Chaldeans” refers to the descendants of the Proto-Kaldi’, thereby attempting to frame modern Chaldeans as the indigenous people of Iraq and modern Assyrians as Turks and Iranians foreign to Iraq (Hanna 2015). These claims, like their Assyrian counterparts, cite uses of Chaldean appearing prior to the foundation of the modern Church as evidence of antiquity (For such uses, see Hanoosh 66-70). Whilst identity usage begins to offer insight into the complex diversity of the region and the social contexts in which various identities were drawn upon, it is certainly not conclusive of Chaldean or Assyrian continuity. Rather, the intent by those who put forth this argument is to advance a distinct Chaldean national narrative, presenting Chaldeans as an ethnic group which has always been separate from Assyrians. It is telling that this reassessment of Chaldean origins has appeared within recent decades, driven largely by American diasporic actors, underscoring that the locatedness of diasporic settlement matters, providing an open society in which such ethnic-building and debates of identity can occur.

⁸ Evidence suggests the declaration of war was encouraged by Britain and Russia, the latter of whom supported Assyrians with weapons and promised to help liberate the population from Turkish oppression (Werda 1924).

Whether today's Assyrians and Chaldeans knew themselves as Nestorian or Suraye or Assyrian or Chaldean prior to modernity means both nothing and everything: as indigenous communities the world over are acutely aware, proof of indigeneity confers with it no immediate or mandatory special rights. It will not appear an Assyrian state. And yet, as a marginalized, powerless people claiming a national existence, proving the continuity of that existence gives meaning to their perseverance, pride in their history and confers legitimacy.

However, common lineage does not necessitate permanent linkage. Prior to WWI, the Assyrian-Chaldean denominational schism found itself loosely overlapping with cultural differences produced by geography and social environments. Ultimately, this would prove to demarcate the early foundation of a porous, minor boundary between the communities that would later entrench, becoming consequential as politics and tragedy gave social relevance to different identities.

CONFRONTING THE BOUNDARIES OF THE IRAQI STATE

The past century began and ended with genocide against the Assyrian and Chaldean people. From the Young Turks of the Ottoman Empire to local terrorism of what is now ISIL, this era is bookended by the concerted, brutal displacement and murder of Assyrians and Chaldeans. Such tragedies occurred during periods of political and social upheaval. The end of the Ottoman Empire and creation of the Iraq State permanently changed the Assyrian and Chaldean nation, creating a diaspora far removed from the Middle East and with memories of a state boundary against which they continue to be pushed and marginalized. The removal of the long-standing Ba'ath dictatorship and introduction of democratic reforms continued this trajectory. The quest for autonomy came to a forefront in the aftermath of both crises. Understanding how close Assyrians came to autonomy, the multi-year, international

effort to find an Assyrian homeland, and the consequences nationalists suffered are essential to understanding Assyrian and Chaldean national ideologies today.

From Ottomans to Iraqis: The Quest for an Assyrian Homeland

Although significant population losses were suffered under the region's various Mongol, Arab, and Kurdish conquests, it was ultimately the fervent nationalism of the Young Turks and the ethnic cleansing of Christians during WWI that led to the first modern displacement of the Assyrian and Chaldean communities. Referred to as *Seyfo*, or the sword, Assyrians and Chaldeans, like the Armenians and other religious minorities living under Ottoman control, suffered heavily from a genocidal program that began in 1915: an estimated 250,000 Assyrians and Chaldeans were killed; religious leaders, including the Assyrian Patriarch, Mar Shimun XXI Benyamin, were murdered; and villages were razed by Ottoman and Kurdish forces (Travis 2006: 337-338). This period fundamentally reshaped the Assyrian and Chaldean community. It scattered their populations across the Middle East, Russia, Europe, and North America, and tens of thousands of refugees from Anatolia fled to the new British Mandate in Iraq. The genocide is significant to national longing and remains an important marker of national identity for it created a permanent diaspora.

Those who contest the existence of a genocide argue the Assyrians were targeted as a belligerent nation: they and their Patriarch, operating under their own millet and already frustrated by increasing Kurdish encroachment, declared war on the Ottoman Empire in 1915, becoming the 'smallest ally' of the Allied cause (Özdemir 2012; Wigram 1920). Whether this was a fatal mistake or whether the outcome would have remained the same cannot be known. However, while such politicians cite the Assyrians' declaration of war as justification for Ottoman retaliation, the scope of destruction and overwhelming toll of human life challenges the argument this was standard warfare practice. The International Association of Genocide Scholars

(2007) resolved this period constituted a genocide against Assyrians. Those who were able to flee Anatolia initially took refuge in Persia, which was protected by Russian troops until its own revolution ended Russian involvement in the war; these refugees were forced to flee again, many to the British protectorate by then established in Iraq where a camp to house over 40,000 Assyrian refugees was constructed in Baqubah (Omissi 1989: 302).

The question of what to do with this displaced population was left to the incipient Iraqi state and its British administrators. The initial demands of Assyrian representatives echoed the desire to return to Hakkari and something resembling the previous millet arrangement, if not a state. The majority of the surviving Chaldean population resided in and near Mosul, which did not endure the violence as other parts of the region and fortuitously suffered less displacement (Gaunt 2006: 25). According to British inquiries, Chaldeans instead first conveyed a desire to be tied to the French state because of shared Catholicism and ties to French Dominican missionaries within Mosul, but Chaldeans and Assyrians alike soon supported remaining under British protection as a lack of favourable options emerged (Office of the Civil Commissioner 1918). Noting the desire within the Mosul population for a single Iraqi state inclusive of the Mosul vilayet and recognizing the challenges of securing a separate Christian state, British representatives noted, 'We could include, if desired, in such a state Nestorians and other Christian communities between latitude 37 and 38 [the Hakkari region]. Such a step would go far in the solution of the difficulties attending their separate recognition' (ibid). Negotiations regarding the Iraqi and Turkish territorial boundary accordingly saw British representatives argue for the Mosul vilayet and the Hakkari Mountains to be placed within Iraq in part because the simplest solution for the Assyrian refugees was a return to their homes.

However, demands presented by Assyrian and Chaldean representatives at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference called for an independent state.⁹ Versailles, in hindsight, foreshadowed dynamics that would again confront the community after the Iraq War: a population displaced and devastated by tragedy; a rallying of the diaspora to advocate on its behalf; framing the community as under a single ethno-national umbrella; and a demand for autonomy. The American diaspora at the time, despite its small numbers, came together to form the Assyrian National Association of America (ANAA) to advocate for co-ethnics abroad (Ishaya 2003). Diaspora and displacement created the circumstances upon which a national claim could be built by bringing together populations previously separated from each other and expanding the understanding of an imagined Assyrian community. As the scattered Syriac populations, divided by history and geography, ‘only became aware of each other in the confusion of the exodus’, the same arguably occurred in diaspora (de Courtois 2004: 218).

The secular, geography-spanning claim of the Assyrian nation presented at this time reflected the diversity of origin and denominations of those who appeared at the Paris Conference. In addition to two American representatives from the ANAA, there were several representatives of the Assyrians of Turkey, a delegation of Assyrians of Transcaucasia, an Assyro-Chaldean delegation supported by Chaldean Patriarch, and a memorandum submitted by the Assyrian Patriarch, Shimun XXII Polus, from the Baqubah refugee camp (Yacoub 1986: 9). Such efforts came at difficult time for a population that just suffered genocide, and particularly for the Nestorian Assyrians, whose Patriarch was murdered during the genocide and whose new Patriarch was dying of tuberculosis in Baqubah (Wigram 1920).

⁹ The Paris Conference at Versailles initiated a series of treaties to end WWI, including the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres which negotiated an end to the Ottoman Empire. This was later renegotiated as the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne.

The 'Claims of the Assyrians' presented to the Conference by the American delegation demanded a separate Assyrian state under the protection of 'a mandate power' for twenty-five years to ensure its security (See Werda 1924 for full text). The American delegation further presented the Assyrian umbrella as including 'Nestorians, Chaldeans, Jacobites, a Maronite element, Persian Assyrians, Assyrians in Russia, and a Muslim Assyrian group that included Shakkaks and Yezidis' (Donabed 2012: 410).

Joseph describes this political effort as 'totally out of touch with the true state of affairs' because such unity existed in name only, and because of the impracticality of the delegation's territorial demands on behalf of a scattered population, including for territory that provided access to the sea (Joseph 157). Notably, the Chaldean Patriarch at this time appears to have supported the demand for an Assyro-Chaldean state, possibly encouraged by support by French officials for a Christian state in the Middle East (Giwargis 2006). Such support may also have been a response to the fear and insecurity that resulted from the war's tragedies, as well as the climate of self-determination spurred by Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, which encouraged national claims by minority populations, specifically as Point Twelve stated nationalities in the now-Turkish state should be granted 'an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development' (W. Wilson 1918).

Geopolitics also played a factor in the appearance of a hybridized 'Assyro-Chaldean' identity during the Conference, as well as within the ANAA, who changed its name during the conference to the Assyro-Chaldean Union of America despite the Chaldean-American population being estimated at just a few dozen people (Makko 2012: 299; Sengstock 1999: 66). There is some suggestion its use came at the urging of France and the Chaldean Church, and was adopted out of fear France and the Vatican would oppose their national claims otherwise (Giwargis 2006). Makko notes it was highly controversial amongst delegates – much like the political compromise of

ChaldoAssyrian proved to be almost a century later when created by Assyrian political parties after the Iraq War (Makko 299).

Such political effort was for naught, however, as the Treaty of Sèvres failed to confer similar rights to the Assyrians as those granted to other minorities. Section 62 recognized 'Assyro-Chaldeans' as requiring protection, but did so within a scheme of autonomy for the Kurds of Turkey, permitting only that a League of Nations commission should visit the Assyrian region and 'decide what rectifications, if any, should be made to the Turkish frontier' (Treaty of Peace with Turkey 1920).

Statehood efforts would have another opportunity, yet prove less fruitful for all former Ottoman minorities, at the Treaty of Lausanne negotiations. Differing from the 1919-1920 negotiations where Assyrians and Chaldeans presented multiple delegates, only Assyrian General Agha Petros represented the population. Petros petitioned negotiators for 'The Claims of the Assyro-Chaldeans to Autonomy in Asia-Minor', contending Assyrians and Chaldeans formed 'one single nation, one same race' of approximately two million people deserving of autonomy like 'all the other small peoples' under the former Ottoman Empire (Petros 1922). However, Petros's umbrella approach was opposed by religious figures who feared losing power over their churches and who favoured British protection out of fear they would otherwise be forced to live under an Armenian or Kurdish state (Özdemir 2012: 104).

Opposition may also have been fueled by distrust between Petros and the Shimun family: Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII was eleven years-old when he became Patriarch in 1920, leaving the Church of the East without a strong leader at the time of negotiations, which in turn enabled Petros to position himself as the 'Commander-in-Chief' of Assyrians; Petros, likewise, was understood to resent the power of the Patriarchal family (Wigram 1920; Stafford 1935: 37-38, 93-94). Ultimately, a secular Assyrian national identity failed politically, and the Patriarch remained

responsible for leadership of the Assyrian nation (Makko 2010). Ethnic Assyrianism was thus subordinated to Assyrian sectarianism at this period.

Despite the lack of Assyrian or Chaldean representation at Lausanne, the 'Assyrian problem' took an important role in negotiations as a component of the still unsettled Turkish-Iraqi border dispute. Mosul's oil reserves presented a strategic interest to the British; as a result, the Assyrian cause 'assumed greater importance in British policy, since it was realized championing Assyrian interests, while helping Britain at the League, could also be utilised to justify a frontier line more favourable to Iraq' (Beck 1981: 262). The failure to resolve the Mosul border was cited as stemming from oil and 'sentimental outbursts on the woes of Christian minorities' (Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society 1926).

Notably, despite the Paris delegates' claims to a single Assyro-Chaldean nation, present in British understandings was a distinction between Chaldeans as a small and adaptive community and the Nestorians as a minority nation. The Government noted in 1920 that:

The "Millet" which chiefly concerns His Majesty's Government as mandate Power for the vilayets of Mosul and Baghdad is the Chaldeans...a progressive body of cultivators and artisans chiefly resident in and around Mosul. They are not to be confused with the Nestorian Millet, whose original homes are outside the limits of French and British mandates (Montagu 1920: 4).

A British civil service guide to Iraq further categorized Assyrians and Chaldeans as different populations, framing Assyrians as Nestorians from Turkey and Persia and Chaldeans as secessionist Catholics concentrated in Mosul and Baghdad (in Montagu 3-4). Such understandings of the Christian population did not mesh with those presented in 1919 and at Lausanne. Instead, ethnic descriptions were often oversimplified and portrayed Chaldeans and Assyrians of different origins, a distinction some Chaldean nationalists would reiterate decades later. This was both

beneficial and harmful to Assyrians: presenting the Assyrians as a displaced, now homeless nation encouraged British and League efforts to find an area of permanent resettlement, but would also marginalize the population from Iraqi society and later challenge the claim of Assyrian nationalists that they constitute an indigenous population of Iraq.

The Turkish-Iraqi border remained unresolved by the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, which left the final determination to negotiations between the two states; when that failed, the decision went before the League of Nations in 1925 (Beck 1981). The League established an interim 'Brussels Line', essentially the northern border of the Mosul vilayet and, despite investigations in Mosul in which Assyrians reiterated their request for a right of return, the League affixed the Brussels line as the final border in the Treaty of Angora in 1926, permanently sealing the displaced Assyrians from their homes in Hakkari. This decision was criticized for years by the British Foreign Service, which noted that the League's decision left the 'Assyrian problem' again to the British:

The responsibility for the present deplorable situation does not arise from any action or decision of ours. In fact, it has followed from a decision of the Council of the League of Nations. If in 1925 the League Council had taken our advice, and had fixed the Mosul frontier so as to include the Hakkari territory within the boundaries of Iraq, the Assyrians might have been satisfactorily resettled in their old home as a homogenous community. In all probability the Assyrian problem then might have been permanently and satisfactorily solved (Simon 1937: 3).

Patriarch Shimun and supporting Assyrian leaders likewise expressed frustration that, 'Numerous petitions were submitted by us on this subject prior to the delimitation of the Turco-Iraq frontier by the Commission of the League of Nations and we cannot understand why even the place which is the inheritance of our forefathers should have been seized from us' (Shimun et al 1932: 3). Turkish citizenship laws

established in 1928 correspondingly granted citizenship to those who remained in Turkey throughout WWI, effectively precluding Assyrians attempting to return to their homelands in Anatolia from citizenship (Özlem Biner 2011: 371).

Thus, although Mosul was given to Iraq, the Assyrian question of resettlement remained unresolved. Perhaps comparable to the early days of Zionism, Assyrian claims for relief at this time were not exclusively affixed to a particular territory or degree of self-governance, but rather adaptive to evolving geopolitical circumstances. Interwoven throughout this period are the multiple Assyrian petitions submitted, often by Patriarch Shimun, to the League of Nations for an autonomous state, millet designation in Iraq, or state-sponsored resettlement. Such petitions were offered at every major development relating to Iraq: prior to the drawing of the Iraqi-Turkish border in 1925; prior to the 1930 treaty laying the groundwork for an independent Iraq; throughout the early 1930s as the independence process moved forward; after the Simmele massacre; and again at the founding of the United Nations (Omissi 1989; al-Khalil 1989; Shimun 1946; Wilson 1926).

The League subsequently continued to task committees with exploring various solutions in response to pending Assyrian-related petitions; as the process dragged on, British support waned as it sought an end to the mandate and exit from Iraq. The lingering Assyrian question potentially challenged British nation-building efforts: as was noted in 1932, 'The Assyrian demand is to live in Iraq without taking their place as Iraqi citizens. This is not possible. The aim of His Majesty's Government is to create an Iraqi state and nation' (Quote in Lukitz 1995: 30). Concerned the British would abandon Assyrians without a territory, Patriarch Shimun personally went before the League in 1932 to plead the Assyrian case, presenting what he called the Assyrian National Petition with the hope the status of Assyrians would be sorted before the Mandate's end (Omissi 315).

Such efforts were unsuccessful and the League officially recognized Iraq as an independent state, absent a settlement to the Assyrian question, in October 1932. The nascent Iraqi state ultimately came to reject any notion of substate autonomy for the Assyrians, fearing any of Iraq's minority groups would seek to emulate the Assyrian model, codifying ethnic and sectarian divisions that could permanently fracture a fragile Iraq. However, just ten months after independence, the Simmele Massacre and destruction of Assyrian villages in Northern Iraq occurred.

The Simmele Massacre followed a border incident involving Assyrians who tried unsuccessfully to seek refuge in French Mandate Syria and led to a horrific Iraqi military campaign against Assyrians and Assyrian villages by the Iraqi army and Kurdish militias that killed between 600 (Iraqi estimate) and 3,000 (Assyrian estimate) Assyrians over the summer of 1933, most notoriously in the town of Simmele, and violently looted sixty Assyrian villages in northern Iraq (al-Khalil 1989: 168; Stafford 1934: 175-178). A wave of Assyrian emigration from Iraq followed these attacks. Successive generations of Iraqis were taught of the massacres as a justified response to an Assyrian uprising; present-day Assyrians recount stories of how their parents, born after the atrocities occurred, had to affirm that they were not part of the uprising to gain Iraqi citizenship, an act which reinforced the message that Assyrians had betrayed Iraq (Abbo et al Interview).

Although the specific cause behind Simmele remains uncertain, scholars generally conclude the Assyrians were targeted because they were perceived, and presented themselves, as non-nationals, and not specifically because of their ethnicity or religion (see Polk 2005; al-Khalil 1989). This perspective was aided by the Assyrian role in the British-created Levies military force, which was used in suppressing Kurdish and Arab separatist uprisings (Zubaida 367; Omissi 304). The Levies' success, however, precipitated the sense among the Iraqi population that Assyrians

were pawns of the British. This, coupled with the Assyrians' own insistence on their foreignness, further marginalized the community from the new Iraqi state.

The assumption that Simmele was not religiously motivated draws from the fact that Chaldeans, other Christian sects, and Jews were not similarly attacked. Nonetheless, minority communities afterwards quieted expressions of identity and religion.

Simmele is further cited as a crucial dividing point between Assyrians and Chaldeans. It is suggested Chaldeans were so fearful following the attacks that they became more likely to assimilate, showing 'much less inclination than the mainstream Church of the East toward nationalist aspirations, becoming an integral part of the Iraqi state' (Healey 46; Lukitz 28). Aside from the Patriarch's 1919 presence at Versailles, Chaldeans appear to have rarely expressed an independent or nationalist dynamic comparable to that of the Assyrians, nor were they the subject of warrior-like myths that accompanied Assyrian stereotypes. This dichotomy was apparent in the decades following Versailles, when Chaldeans remained relatively silent in the face of the Assyrian activism. The majority of Chaldeans in Iraq had lived and continued to live in and around Mosul, and fewer were refugees in search of a home.

Chaldeanness perhaps did not begin so much with the denominational schism but as a result of rising nationalism and the consequences it wrought. As one community leader noted, 'Yes, there's 1530, and then there's 1830, but in the real more modern sense, I think the real separation occurs at Simmele. Well, the combination of the Assyrian genocide followed by – because there were a lot of Chaldeans in the Assyrian genocide - but the Assyrian genocide followed 15 years later by Simmele' (Abbo et al Interview). Others similarly describe the consequences of the massacre as pushing Chaldeans to disassociate from the nationalist Assyrians: '[After Simmele] It's like, no, no, no, we don't know these people. We're different. Even though all these people in Detroit, they all came from the villages TelKeppe and Alqosh that are within 5 miles of Nineveh' (ADM Interview 2013). Through a politicized climate in

Iraq that wrought tragic consequences for being on the wrong side, Chaldean identity arguably came to represent a separate, Catholic, passive population, one distancing itself from the Assyrian nationalists who sought Assyrian statehood. The result of this helped lay the intra-communal boundary that exists today.

Likewise, the Chaldean Patriarchs' support for subsequent Iraqi governments aided the perception that Chaldeans, as a religious community, chose to assimilate and keep their heads down rather than pursue a national agenda. British communications that mention Chaldeans specifically are not easily found, but often reiterate the impression that Chaldeans are less politically assertive than Assyrians. For example, a series of memos in 1950 regarding the new Chaldean Patriarch, Yousef VII Ghanima, notes the Chaldeans never gave the Iraqi or Ottoman governments 'trouble', but were occasionally caught in the 'whirlwinds created by their more turbulent schismatic counterparts, the Assyrians' (Furlonge 1950). The correspondence also noted the close ties between Chaldeans and the French Dominican Mission in Iraq; as well as noting the previous Patriarch, Emmanuel II, enjoyed a close relationship with King Faisal, who gave the Patriarch a seat in the Iraqi Senate in 1926 despite what was characterized as the Patriarch's proclivity toward 'eschewing politics'. Ghanima's cousin served as a Senator and Iraq's Minister of Finance at various times throughout the 1920s through 1940s, and the Chaldean Patriarch would hold a Senate seat until the 1958 revolution (ibid). The stereotype of Chaldeans as unthreatening and apolitical often draws upon this period and the Church leadership's reticence toward political activism, itself likely a result of Simmele and its position as a small, powerless minority.

Following Simmele, Shimun submitted a new petition to the League contending Iraq violated its Declaration of Guarantees to its minority populations. In September 1933, the League responded by formally tasking a Council Committee with finding a permanent solution for the Assyrians while nonetheless failing to offer any

condemnation or conduct an investigation into the massacre (Simon 7). The Committee of the Council for Assyrian Settlement, a six-member committee headed by Spain and rounded out by the UK, France, Italy, Denmark, and Mexico, was appointed to explore options. Given the UK's special ties with the Assyrians, its standing on the committee, and its colonial territories, three general options of inquiry were pursued: resettlement in a foreign country, resettlement in the British Colonial Empire, and resettlement in a British Dominion (Simon 2).

Foreign settlement was understandably difficult. The British Foreign Service in 1937 tasked a Committee on the Assyrians in Iraq, comprising the Home Secretary, Secretaries for Foreign Affairs, Dominion Affairs, the Colonies, War, and the Lord of the Admiralty, with assessing any possible resolution to the Assyrian issue. The Committee observed there is a 'natural hesitation' for any state to receive 'a little known Asiatic community...one for which Great Britain is regarded as having a special liability, and which she, more than other nations, in view of her vast territories, is believed to have room to accommodate' (Simon 8). Turkey rejected an Assyrian return to Hakkari or resettlement anywhere inside Turkey's borders, and had already forcibly expelled Assyrians who attempted to return to their homes. Iran and the Soviet Union were ruled out because of concern regarding the Assyrians' long-term viability therein given the repressive nature of these states. Other countries were ruled out for seemingly more superficial or colonial views regarding either the country in question or the Assyrians themselves: Paraguay was found 'too primitive and unstable a character' whilst Northern Rhodesia was rejected because Assyrians were from a mountainous land and might not adapt well to Rhodesia's plains.

A resettlement scheme that suggested initial promise was in Paran, Brazil, in which a British company, Paran Plantations Ltd., agreed to provide a portion of its land holdings to resettle the approximately 20,000 Assyrians who still sought to leave

Iraq. Beginning negotiations in 1932, a temporary agreement was made between the Brazilian government and the League in January 1934 that would have allowed Assyrian settlement on the conditions the government would not be financially responsible for the Assyrian population; only Assyrians familiar with farming would be admitted to Brazil and would only be settled in groups of 500 families at a time; and the League and Paraná Plantations would bear the costs and responsibility of repatriating Assyrians if resettlement did not succeed (Lesser 1999: 66). Brazilian politicians in support of resettlement looked favourably on the Assyrians' Christianity and the opportunity to develop a remote area of Brazil; however, xenophobic reactions shaped public opinion against the Assyrians as 'nomads and Mohammedans', transforming the Assyrian narrative 'from peaceful Christian immigrant farmers into a warlike refugee group that would bring social and economic damages to Brazil' (Lesser 67, 73). Such animosity was framed in relation to Brazil's Lebanese diaspora who nativists accused of refusing to assimilate and dominating commercial interests against poor Brazilians, common rhetoric against middleman minorities whose negative stereotypes carried to the Assyrians after Shimun called for special national minority rights should resettlement go through. Consequentially, the plan was effectively vetoed by the Brazilian parliament through passage of legislation restricting immigration, preemptively halting Assyrian admittances (Lesser 70; Simon 1934, 1933).

The most promising foreign option was the Ghab region of the Levant, which at the time was under the French Mandate. Documents show the Committee for Assyrian Settlement urging the League to consider the proposal with special attention, noting:

It is not a refugee problem, but an eminently political problem, which the Council, as early as 1931, decided to consider as exceptional – involving likewise exceptional measures. Its immediate radical solution would greatly contribute to the maintenance of peace and tranquility in the Near East. Its

abandonment would have consequences which would affect not only the Assyrians and Iraq, but also other States (Sixth Committee 1935).

The Committee urged the contribution of private and international donations to support the resettlement costs beyond that which Iraq, Britain, the U.S., and France appropriated to the Assyrian Settlement Trustee Board, which was established by the League in December 1934; an official 'Ghab Reclamation Scheme' was further planned to outline transfer of ownership of the Ghab to the Assyrians following a public works development scheme (Sixth Committee 1935; League of Nations 1936). External support emerged to aid the effort; the Archbishop of Canterbury, for example, in 1936 made a fundraising appeal on behalf of the Assyrians for the Ghab settlement (Canterbury 1936). Ultimately, however, Assyrian misfortune continued when Syrian uprisings accelerated the French decision to withdraw from its Mandate in September 1936, effectively ending the Ghab project.

The Brazil and Ghab schemes were to be the most concerted efforts at Assyrian resettlement. The British government looked for several more years at prospective resettlement locations across its empire with varying degrees of enthusiasm and assertiveness. Inquiries were conducted into British colonies and dominions of Cyprus, Seychelles, Eritrea, Malaya, Palestine, British Guiana, and Tanzania, amongst many others (Simon 1937). British representatives consistently expressed concern over the effect of local displacement, of Assyrian acclimation, or suggested capping resettlement at a small number, such as 500 families in Kenya (Hall 1946). Further highlighting the perhaps universal challenges of displacement and statelessness, several memorandums reveal simultaneous considerations of Jewish resettlement in the same British territories being looked at for the Assyrians, including Uganda and British Guyana.

The British Committee therefore noted of its failure, 'We fear that the only course remaining to the League Council is to negotiate with the Government of Iraq with the view to obtaining improved conditions for the Assyrians in Iraqi territory' (Simon 1937: 5). The report reiterated the challenge of the Assyrian nation coexisting within a homogenizing Iraq:

The difficulty in the Assyrians remaining in Iraq is their desire not merely for religious, but if possible for national, or at all events for administrative autonomy, and, on the other hand, the conviction of the Iraqis that their existence as a nation depends on the welding together of the various racial and religious entities of which their country is composed (Simon 1).

Hope for future relief became sidelined in the theatre of the Second World War and the failure of the League of Nations itself. Patriarch Shimun pursued a similar line of request at the formation of the United Nations, presenting again 'The Assyrian National Petition' (Shimun 1946). Again requesting an Assyrian homeland, the Patriarch's petition sought to draw upon the post-WW2 climate by noting that Assyrians were the only faction in Iraq to remain loyal to the Allies during WWII, saving the Royal Air Force base near Baghdad and effectively the UK's oil supply route (Shimun 10-11).

His argument played upon his people's deep Christian roots, their antiquity, their heroic sacrifices for liberal democratic principles, and their right to self-determination – all benchmarks that ideally would have resonated with the victorious Western powers. It was to no avail, of course, and the tiny Assyrian cause became lost in the larger, pressing scope of the Cold War and proxy wars. The British government continued for a few years after WWII to assess various sites. A 1945 memo from the Foreign Office noted the 'fear that their existence in Iraq will be somewhat precarious for many years to come', and a 1946 memo elaborated that discussions occurred in 1945 regarding resettlement in various parts of Africa whilst

urging that if is not possible to relocate the Assyrians, the 'least we can do is to inform them forthwith of their fate' (Eden 1945; Bevin 1946).

Thus, the Assyrian fate became intertwined with Iraq. Assyrians spent the next decades further pushed into diaspora by the repressive policies of the Ba'ath regime, geopolitics, and economic hardship. The legacy of unfulfilled statehood remains an idealized goal that has shaped the long-distance nationalism of many in the diaspora. The culmination of these efforts from the League of Nations, the British Government, the Patriarch, and various Assyrian political leadership failed to secure a self-ruled *atra*, but nonetheless has stood as a legacy to future generations of nationalists that Assyrians are a unique nation.

The Ba'ath Era and Beyond: Arabization to Exclusion

The period between the end of WWII and the Ba'ath era was comparatively calmer for the Assyrian and Chaldean population, although sentiment against the communities was at times apparent. One family recalled, for example, President Abdul Salam Aref announcing on television that children should not have names like Mikhail or Jajou, common Christian names, and how it made people feel their Christian names were shameful (Bacall and Bacall Interview). Much of the state's anti-minority sentiment in the immediate post-war period was instead focused upon Iraq's ancient Jewish community, which, like the Assyrians a decade prior, became the new 'non-nationals', stigmatized as a reaction to the establishment of Israel. Their forced exodus in 1950 again confirmed the perils of being a distinguishable minority.

Perhaps in part for that reason, integration became more common; it was perhaps also encouraged by the rebuilding of the post-war economy, a long, tumultuous political situation, and the futility of continuing the national claim. The Christian

population began to urbanize following WWII as many young Assyrians and Chaldeans moved from Nineveh, Mosul, and Kirkuk to Baghdad for economic and educational opportunity. By 1950, the See of the Chaldean Church was relocated from Mosul to Baghdad to reflect the rapidly-grown Chaldean presence therein (O'Mahony 2004b: 125).

In a sense, Christians benefitted from the presence of the Chaldean Patriarch in Iraq and the secular nature of the Ba'ath regime. The thirty-year leadership of Patriarch Paul Cheiko provided a consistent, stable influence for Chaldeans from the 1958 Revolution through the end of the Iran-Iraq War. The Chaldean legacy under Hussein thus differs somewhat from that of the Assyrians; this is perhaps the result of the inseparable link between Chaldean identity and the Chaldean Catholic Church, and the relationship between the Patriarch and the Iraqi government. The Chaldean Church was able to grow both in Iraq and in diaspora under Hussein and, at times, with the aide of the Iraqi government itself. Over the next several decades, twenty-five Chaldean churches were built in Baghdad in response to continued migration and settlement (O'Mahony 2004a: 436). Chaldeans often note they served in minor but niche roles under the regime, such as cooks, mid-level military officials, and medical professionals, because their small numbers ensured they could not be a threat to the regime (Arabo Interview 2013; Kassab Interview 2012).

The Ba'ath era suggested early promise for Christians in terms of religious freedoms and protections; indeed, a founder of the Ba'ath Party, Michel Aflaq, was himself Greek Orthodox. The 1970 Iraqi Constitution, drafted after Hussein seized power, recognized the legitimate and legal rights of all minorities within the framework of Iraqi unity, albeit short of providing any special privileges, and in 1972 a language decree guaranteed language rights for minorities, including the right to provide language instruction in schools in which at least twenty-five percent of students spoke the minority language (O'Mahony 2004b: 130).

However, this was soon undermined by the enactment of Arabization policies that suppressed the use of the Aramaic language and non-Arab ethnic identities for the use of Arabic and the label 'Arab Christian' for Assyrians and Chaldeans alike. As Sargon Donabed and Shamiran Mako define, Arabization was 'a systematic campaign purposive of instituting policies aimed at the destruction of ethnic and cultural pluralism in Iraq through demographic manipulation and forced assimilation, rooted in the Baathist ideological drive for the creation of a homogeneously Arab society' (Donabed and Mako 2012: 287). In 1975, the government nationalized the school system, undoing long-standing traditions of religious education and language rights. The 1977 Iraqi Census prohibited the use of Chaldean, Assyrian, Syriac, or other ethnic designations, requiring instead the use of Arab Christian or Kurdish Christian (Petrosian 2006: 127). By the 1990s sanctions era, the regime stipulated that only Arab Christians could receive ration cards for food, as well as purchase property (Assyrian American League 2004; Lewis 2003). Christians who hoped the Ba'ath Party would be more welcoming of diversity than previous governments were disappointed by the exclusive Arab-based definition of the Iraqi state that came to be enforced.

Whilst negating Assyrian and Chaldean ethnicity in favour of 'Arab Christian' is perhaps minor in comparison to the overt violence of the early 20th century, its effect was to belie the ethnically, linguistically, and confessionally unique people embodied therein. The limitation of this broad-brush not only renders these communities indistinguishable and interchangeable from mainstream society and other Christian populations, but negates their unique ethnic identities as a people at risk of disappearing. Suppression of identity may have advanced the homogenization of the Iraqi state; however, its purpose was unquestionably the erosion of non-Arab ethnic identity and cultural practices.

Compounding cultural Arabization was forced displacement. The regime forcibly relocated ethnic minority communities from villages where the regime believed opposition groups received support, usually destroying the village and placing residents in camps or distant villages (Tripp 2007: 234-236; Donabed 2010: 190-255). These actions escalated in 1988 against the Kurdish population in particular, with significant consequences for Assyrian villages, as the Iran-Iraq War waned and the Iraqi government could focus its resources, including chemical weapons, on the Kurdish regions. Charles Tripp, echoing a Human Rights Watch study, estimates up to eighty percent of villages in the three Kurdish regions were destroyed and up to 100,000 mostly Kurdish civilians killed during the Anfal campaign (Tripp 236; Human Rights Watch 2003). However, foreshadowing a trend repeated with the post-2003 crisis, literature regarding the Anfal tragedy focuses almost exclusively on the larger ethnic groups and Assyrians, if mentioned, are often only noted in passing. Donabed observed Assyrian figures are made difficult by the fact both the Kurdish and Iraqi governments would not classify Assyrians as Assyrians in reporting statistics; he notes other researchers have estimated 2,000 Assyrians were killed through chemical weapons attacks in Anfal and thirty-one Assyrian villages were destroyed (Donabed 254). This marks significant loss to a small community, yet better numbers are not known in part because of the lack of quality information and in part because Assyrian losses are treated, as Donabed notes, as a 'sideshow' or 'collateral victims' of the Kurdish experience (ibid).

Despite the secular foundation of the Ba'ath party and previous acceptance of Christianity, a turn was further becoming apparent around the time Iraq invaded Kuwait, when regime rhetoric became increasingly Islamist in an effort to counter-balance unhappy Shia factions. The growing fundamentalism of Shia Islamists came to a head with Hussein's 2003 removal. Sectarian conflict between Sunnis and Shias over their respective stakes in Iraq precipitated violent persecution of the country's ethno-religious minorities. More than half the Iraqi Christian population has since

fled or been internally displaced. Most refugees are living in Syria, Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon, or are in the Kurdish region. Even prior to ISIL's advance, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees maintained safety concerns in Iraq were too uncertain to compel Iraq's ethno-religious minorities to return (UNHCR 2011).

As the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom noted in designating Iraq a Country of Particular Concern for the fifth year since 2008:

The Iraqi government continues to tolerate systematic, ongoing, and egregious religious freedom violations. In the past year, religious sites and worshippers were targeted in violent attacks, often with impunity, and businesses viewed as "un-Islamic" were vandalized. Large percentages of the country's smallest religious minorities...have fled the country in recent years, threatening these ancient communities' very existence in Iraq; the diminished numbers that remain face official discrimination, marginalization, and neglect...Religious freedom abuses of women and individuals who do not conform to strict interpretations of religious norms also remain a concern (USCIRF 2012: 93).

Minority-targeted violence includes church bombings, murders of priests and congregations, attacks on university students, kidnappings, rapes, destruction of Christian-owned shops, and other religiously-motivated threats and murders. High-profile attacks included the 2010 bombings of school buses that wounded 80 Christian university students and assassinations of at least five politicians within the Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM), as well as an attempted assassination of Yonadam Kanna, an Assyrian Member of Parliament and head of the ADM. From 2004 through 2013, at least seventy-three churches have been bombed or destroyed, including the devastating 2010 attack on the Our Lady of Salvation Church in Baghdad that killed fifty-eight worshippers and police officers and wounded seventy-eight (AINA 2014a). By March 2013, Chaldean Patriarch Louis Sako estimated only fifty-seven churches remained in the whole of Iraq, a loss of eighty percent of the 300 churches prior to the war (Kumar 2013). Such atrocities have further scattered

Assyrians and Chaldeans across the globe, grown the diaspora in the U.S., and created a refugee crisis within Iraq and Iraq's neighbours.

There is consequentially an understanding amongst the diaspora that this wave of migration is fundamentally different than anything the population had experienced.

As one interviewee noted:

After the invasion of Iraq in 2003 by George W. Bush, and the collateral damage as a result of unleashing Muslim fundamentalists who want to drive out the Christians, you now have refugees. It's now a forced emigration. I mean, they're leaving in order not to be killed. And this is the first time I think - but I'm not a true historian specifically of the Chaldean people - but to me, this is probably the time that the emigration is really religious persecution. All the other times, it was economic advancement (Romaya Interview 2012).

Boundaries of the Iraqi state were again being redrawn as Islamist; whether this took a Shia or Sunni form was not particularly relevant to Assyrians and Chaldeans so long as it resulted in a fundamentally sectarian interpretation of Iraq: the end result was social closure precluding Assyrian and Chaldean belonging. A member of the ADM summarized the transition for Assyrians and Chaldeans as one from cultural erasure to a basic struggle for survival:

Before Saddam, we're fighting this one madman for recognition of our ethnicity, our identity, of Assyrian. I am Assyrian. I am not Arab, I am not Kurd. But he wanted to erase that and call us either Arab or Arab Christian or something other than Assyrian, because then you belong to the land - if you say you're Assyrian, then you're indigenous, then the land is yours in a way. So that was the struggle, really. Now after 2003, instead of one target, we are a target of many, whether it's the Muslims, the Kurds because they're sitting on Assyrian land, we're getting hit from different areas and even within, whether the name issues, whether different parties that don't want ADM to succeed. It's all this bombardment at us. Before it was one, and either you're thrown in jail or you run away. Now it's killing - and survival, really - of the indigenous people of Iraq (ADM Interview).

Notable in the current crisis is the parallel to the Ottoman-era genocide: the violence does not distinguish between denominations. Whilst there was transvaluation of the Shia-Sunni social and political hierarchy, boundary closure came to be around Arab, Muslim Iraqis. Intra-ethnic differences that developed over the past century between Assyrians and Chaldeans were irrelevant to the perpetrators of conflict. Yet whilst for some this fused a common identity, the name issue remains prevalent, both within Iraq and in the U.S.

REFRAMING ASSYRIAN-CHALDEAN BOUNDARIES IN THE U.S.

The most persistent point of debate amongst the American-based diaspora is whether Assyrians and Chaldeans are one: one people, one ethnic group, one nation. More than intra-communal trivia, this question is fundamental to the institutional framework that will shape their continued presence in diaspora, and their relationship to Iraq and each other. The legacy of the confessional split and Arabization policies contributed to muddling Assyrian and Chaldean identity alike, as well as historical and cultural understandings thereof.

Areas of settlement in the U.S. were highly formative to diasporic identity construction and boundary-making, both within the larger society and within the diaspora itself. Assyrian and Chaldean migration to the U.S. was multilinear, brought by the dual promises of America as a beacon of refuge and a land of opportunity. Although a few individuals arrived in the late 1800s as temporary migrants attending university or seeking employment- often individuals affiliated with one of the American Christian missions in the Ottoman Empire or Iran- migration generally began around the turn of the 20th century. This first wave was geographically scattered in terms of origin and settlement. Most were men, largely from Urmia, Iran, present-day Syria, and Turkey, seeking employment, and as such tended to settle in the urban centers of Chicago and New York City or in industrial centers with

available factory jobs, particularly Worcester, Massachusetts, New Britain, Connecticut, and Gary, Indiana (Benjamin 1996: 21-22). Assyrian migration to Turlock, California, was the only planned Assyrian settlement in America, occurring around 1910 and led by Presbyterian Assyrians from Iran looking to build a permanent farming community (Ishaya 2006: 21-24). Prior to WWI, the Assyrian population was estimated to be just under 3,000 individuals, approximately half of which was in Chicago, seven-hundred in Connecticut, and only around forty-five in Turlock, and of which at least 1,000 were from Iran (Benjamin 21; Ishaya 9-14).

The population grew in the inter-war period with the admission of refugees fleeing genocide and Simmele. Although official numbers are not available, one community survey estimated approximately 10,000 Assyrians arrived between WWI and 1940; another survey conducted by Shimun in 1944 estimated there were approximately 11,000 members of the Church of the East specifically in the U.S., approximately half of which were in Chicago, and over 1,000 in California, Connecticut, and Indiana respectively (Benjamin 25; Ishaya 2003). These estimates are perhaps not as large as would be expected given the gravity of the circumstances in the Middle East. Tight U.S. immigration laws restricted migration, notably the 1924 Immigration Act which limited Middle Eastern states to the lowest available visa quotas (Perry 2008: 60-61; Ward 1924). Nonetheless, those able to secure refuge in the U.S. joined with existing settlements and formed new communities. An Assyrian community in Flint, Michigan, was formed by refugees from Baqubah who sought employment in the city's automotive industry (Ishaya 2003). This period further diversified the diaspora through refugee and familial migration, marking permanent community resettlement and essentially the establishment of a permanent American diaspora.

As noted above, the meaning of the Assyrian nation was in transition as the dissolution of the millet system usurped the role of religious leaders, and the forced displacement that marked this era shepherded members from far-reaching areas of

the Middle East, including the mountains of Hakkari, the farmlands of Urmia, and the refugee camps of Baqubah, into the U.S. The role of religious leadership remained uncertain as the Assyrian Patriarch was stripped of his Iraqi citizenship in the aftermath of the Simmele Massacre and ultimately forced to take refuge in the U.S. (Healey 2010; Shimun 1946). This forced exile likewise placed the ancient Church in a diasporic state as its See was moved to Chicago. The presence of the Patriarch in the American diaspora intertwined the two, and he became directly involved with growing the Church's institutions through the construction of new churches and personally translating liturgy into English and Arabic (d'Mar Shimun 2008). As discussed in the next chapter, this influence helped provide structure and compliment civic organizations that aimed to both keep the diaspora together and to aid traumatized refugees.

Whilst this inter-war wave established the diaspora, it was the wave of immigrants beginning in the 1960s that shaped the diaspora as it exists today. These migrants came to the U.S. in response to turmoil and repression in their states of origin with the benefit of a reshaped immigration system that increased the availability of visas.

¹⁰ The 1979 Iranian revolution forced a rapid emigration of Assyrians and Chaldeans, which coupled with the Iran-Iraq War, saw the population decrease from an estimated 100,000 before the Revolution to approximately 15,000 remaining this decade (Taimoorazy Interview; Naby and Choksy 2010). However, the bulk of this era's migration was from Iraq. Aside from Anfal, such migration was not necessarily the result of community-specific persecution but overall oppression that characterized the dictatorship. Life in Iraq became more difficult as a result of the Iran-Iraq War, which lasted most of the 1980s, and the 1991 Gulf War, after which

¹⁰ The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, still in effect today, was significant to this migration because it eliminated quotas based on national origin. The 1965 system was more individualized, permitting immigration based on pillars of family reunification and employment, with special visa allocations for refugees and asylees. This facilitated immigration for those fleeing conflict as well as those who already possessed immediate family in the U.S. (P.L. 89-263; Lee 2015; Chin 1996).

international sanctions damaged Iraq's economy. Thus, employment, freedoms, a better quality of life, and family reunification were common causes for emigration in this period, a contrast to the refugees whose flight from targeted violence characterized the first wave of migration after WWI and again after 2003.

California proved a lure during this time for multiple reasons: for new immigrants; for those refugees who first settled in New England and industrial cities seeking to retire; and for second-generation Assyrians who sought a better quality of life and better economic opportunity (Ishaya 2003). Consequentially, there has been a population shift westward over the past decades as the Assyrian population in eastern cities decreased, having a cyclic effect as new waves in turn migrated settled in with existing Assyrian populations and better opportunity, further concentrating the diaspora around Chicago and California, expanding to cities like San Jose and Los Angeles in addition to Turlock. As Ishaya commented in reference to the shrinking Connecticut community, which was estimated at 3,500 in the 1980s and only a few hundred today, assimilation and relocation were significant factors; additionally, 'new immigrants were not joining the community to revitalize it socially and culturally. This was due to a decrease in employment opportunities in the state as a result of industrial decline' (Ishaya 2006: 13). The same was true of Flint, Gary, and other rust belt areas, where opportunities for self-sufficiency were becoming fewer. These new migrants in a sense replenished the assimilated diasporic members. Accurate population figures are difficult as incoming immigrants are identified by state of origin: the only official attempt at measuring the population was in the 2000 Census, which was noted for its low response rates for the population, listed less than 7,000 Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriacs in the greater Turlock area and only 14,000 in Chicago (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). For comparison, Michigan's population was listed at 34,000 even though Church surveys found the population in the late 1990s to be between 65,000 to 80,000 (Sengstock 67).

Whilst, as noted below, Chaldeans often speak of an economic niche, it is more difficult to speak in such broad terms about the Assyrian community. In areas like Turlock, settlers were originally farmers or in a farming-affiliated profession, but with the consolidation of the farming industry, today many have opened small businesses or ventured into real estate, echoing the small business mentality ascribed to Chaldeans, or entered the local professional and industrial workforce (Ishaya 2010: 132-152). Assyrian employment elsewhere is similarly dispersed through highly-skilled and blue-collar sectors, representing like most immigrant populations the diversity of the skillset migrants possess and the employment opportunities in their areas of resettlement.

The Chaldean experience that built the Detroit community differed in its early foundations, but followed a similar post-1960 trajectory. The root and route of Chaldean migration is more singular. Sargon Donabed argued, “The “Chaldean” label is today mostly an Iraqi phenomenon as it lacks saturation among the larger religious community. Chaldeans of Bohtan, Turkey, and Urmia, Iran, are self identified as Assyro-Chaldéens’ (Donabed 2012: 410). Chaldean emigration to the U.S. carried with it this phenomenon. In the early years, it was often a direct path from the Nineveh Plain to Detroit; in more recent decades, Chaldeans who emigrated from urban areas like Baghdad or Basra were often born in the Nineveh Plain or a generation or two removed (Arabo Interview; Sengstock 1999). It is a result of this specific Chaldean migration path to Detroit and San Diego that Chaldean identity came to exist and thrive in the U.S.

The first migrants, a handful of people, came prior to WWI, setting the first roots of the Chaldean grocery business that would attract family members and other Chaldeans. Notable is that they settled in Detroit as Chaldeans, developing ties with the established Lebanese Maronite community with whom they spoke Arabic and shared similar Eastern Catholic traditions, and utilized the Maronite Church for

services until 1947 when the first Chaldean priest in the U.S. was sent to Detroit at the request of the small population (Sengstock 27-30). Community narratives differ from those of the Assyrian community in that these early migrants are not cast as refugees, but individuals aspiring to support their family, a narrative tying to that of the Chaldean entrepreneur. Although migrants were also attracted to Detroit for work in the automotive industry, few Chaldeans actually worked for Ford Motor Company, likely because of language barriers that precluded employment (Bacall and Bacall Interview). Community growth was slow in the first half of the century, particularly during the Great Depression, and restricted by the aforementioned immigration laws, and by 1960 the community was approximately 1,500-2,300 people (Perry 2008: 62; Sengstock 67).

Immigration increased after 1965. Here, like the Assyrian community, immigration was spurred both by economic opportunity and flight from the Ba'ath regime. Yet Chaldean migration to Detroit continued to hold ties to the Nineveh Plain, particularly TelKepe. Significant is that Chaldean settlement in Detroit continued despite the decline of Detroit itself. As Detroit's population shrunk following the 1967 race riot, the Chaldean presence grew, particularly as entrepreneurs saw an advantage in taking over abandoned grocery and retail businesses, thus contributing to the continued entwinement between Chaldean small businesses and the Detroit region.

The optics of a favourable relationship between the Chaldean Church and the Ba'ath regime also grew, cultivated by Hussein's financial support of diasporic Chaldean Churches, most infamously the \$450,000 given to the Sacred Heart Church in Detroit that resulted in Hussein being presented a key to the City of Detroit in 1980 (Associated Press 2003). This funding suggests the significance of the burgeoning Detroit Chaldean community. By 1982, the population had grown to merit the establishment of the Chaldean Church's first diocese in the Western Hemisphere in

Detroit, which Bishop Ibrahim Ibrahim was appointed to head. Although today little remains of the Chaldean Town community that surrounded the Sacred Heart Church, as population growth and governance issues in Detroit encouraged relocation into the neighbouring suburbs, the community has proven itself able to remain connected despite dispersion across the greater Detroit Metropolitan area. The Sacred Heart Church relocated to the suburb of Warren in 2015 after years of bussing in parishioners from the suburbs and arranging security guards to ensure safety (Namou 2015). There are today ten Chaldean Churches in Michigan dispersed throughout suburban Detroit (St. Thomas Diocese 2015). In the wake of Michigan's economic challenges, Chaldeans are the only immigrant population whose numbers in Michigan have increased in recent years (Kruvelis 2013).

The San Diego Chaldean community was established more recently. Wadie Deddeh, the first known Chaldean-American elected to public office, often commented that his was the fourth Chaldean family in San Diego when he moved from Detroit in 1959 (Deddeh 2015). Population growth was at first gradual, and by the mid-1980s the San Diego population had grown to approximately 5,000 people, mostly in the suburb of El Cajon (Greeley 1985). Connections between the two population centers are close as much of the early San Diego population were Detroit-area transplants, and the perception of the Chaldean entrepreneur, particularly the Chaldean grocer, was carried to San Diego (Rooney 2007; Greeley 1985). A commonality through both settlements is that Chaldeans pursued small businesses in areas with existing economic and social challenges.¹¹ Chaldeans were perhaps more able to create an economic niche because, as observed of modern middleman minorities, there was a

¹¹ El Cajon, whose total population is approximately 100,000, was cited as the nation's meth capital in the 1980s and recently held the highest unemployment rate in San Diego County (Perry 2014). Detroit's population was over 1 million in 1990 but today is under 700,000, (although the greater metropolitan is 4.2 million); it faces blight, population decline, unemployment, bankruptcy (which it exited in 2014), and has ranked amongst the most violent cities in America since the 1980s (Desilver 2014; Kurth, Wilkinson, Aguilar 2013; LeDuff 2013; State of Michigan 2010).

gap in retail services. An approximate sixty percent of Chaldeans in Michigan own at least one business and an approximate thirty-nine percent own at least two (Kruvelis 2013; Chaldean Household Survey 2008). In Detroit and San Diego alike, business ownership has concentrated around a niche market: Chaldeans own approximately ninety-percent of Detroit's grocery and convenience stores and approximately sixty-percent of San Diego County's food and grocery establishments (San Diego East County Chaldean Chamber 2013; Buss 2012; Detroit 2020 2011).

By 2002, population growth in California merited the establishment of a second American diocese, placed in San Diego and headed by Bishop Sarhad Jammo. There are currently three Chaldean churches and two missions in the San Diego area (Kaldu.org 2015). With the post-2003 influx of refugees fleeing the Iraq War arriving during the American economic crisis, Chaldean and Assyrian migration alike have further expanded to places like Phoenix, Arizona, Las Vegas, Nevada, and Houston, Texas, with more prospects for employment.

This, of course, is not to suggest all Chaldean migration settled in Detroit or San Diego nor that all members of the Chaldean Church identify as Chaldean. Many already identified as Assyrian, including members of the Chaldean Church in Iran who often understand themselves as Catholic Assyrians (Taimoorazy Interview). Others identify with their state of origin or as Arab Christian. In the latter cases, those who went to Turlock or Chicago often 'became' Assyrian, where Assyrian ethnic boundaries were already established and social interaction reinforced belonging within the heterogeneous Assyrian identity these areas had developed. As Sengstock noted, the small Chaldean community that immigrated to Turlock mostly took the Assyrian identity:

The Turlock community tends to unite under the Assyrian heritage and Aramaic language...In the mid-1960s, members of the Chaldean-right church

numbered less than 200 families and came from various parts of Iran, rather than Iraq. Lacking a village tie and with fewer co-religionists available, they had a strong Assyrian cultural tie...Religious intermarriage was common, since the Assyrian cultural identity was stronger than the religious one (Sengstock 182-183).

The membership criteria upon which Assyrian boundaries were drawn proved markedly successful in Turlock and Chicago, bringing together various religious and regional origins that comprised the population into one Assyrian boundary.

Likewise, Chaldean-dominated resettlement in Detroit and San Diego facilitated the salience of Chaldean identity therein.

There are several interpretations of the Assyrian-Chaldean relationship within the diaspora. As one Chaldean community leader described of this dynamic:

You'll see, for example, the Assyrian community say, 'There is no such thing as Chaldean, it's an inherited name, and so you're all Assyrian'. And so that's their view. On the Chaldean side, specifically through our Church, they say, 'How dare you'. So you've had a lot of people now say we're not Assyrian; Assyrians saying, all of you are Assyrian. It's really created this division (Manna Interview 2012).

The intent is not to give the false impression that contestation of Chaldean identity comes exclusively from non-Chaldeans. As noted, many members of the Chaldean Church also believe Chaldean is a religious identity within the Assyrian ethnic umbrella and identify ethnically as Assyrian, further confusing what defines the Assyrian-Chaldean boundary. Specific to this research, several Assyrian activists interviewed are members of the Chaldean Church and always considered themselves Assyrian or were raised identifying as Chaldean and later came to identify as Assyrian; this fluidity is representative of the porousness of the Assyrian-Chaldean boundary. However, to some Chaldeans, that Chaldeans 'become' Assyrian to

support Assyrian causes reinforces their perception that Chaldean identity struggles to exist within Assyrian nationalism.

A lack of continuity in nomenclature, ranging from individual Assyrian and Chaldean titles to hyphenated variants, such as Catholic Assyrian, Chaldo-Assyrian, Assyro-Chaldean, or Chaldean/Assyrian/Syriac, further blurs what the Assyrian-Chaldean boundary entails. It is apparent a boundary exists given the pervasiveness and longevity of this intra-ethnic debate: the effort to accommodate this ambiguous boundary gave way to these hyphenated variants, a political response to keep the community as one by incorporating both names. Yet such variants are often pointed to as institutionalizing fragmentation:

What really hurt our nation was the slashes...The Assyrian slash Chaldean slash Syriac. That really divided the nation –a small nation– into even smaller fragments. So now Assyrians who are hardcore Orthodox Church of the East hate Chaldeans, and Chaldeans refuse to say they're Assyrian. So we're unable to work together. And it's the same common issue. We're the same people (Taimoorazy Interview).

It is unsurprising the hyphenates have not prevailed. It is not in the interest of political actors to compromise when their claims have not failed nor been wholly rejected. This has not yet been the case: although a Chaldean ethnic group has not fissured from the Assyrian one, Chaldean actors, in a small period of time, have succeeded in seeing Assyrian political parties attempting to incorporate the Chaldean name. In this sense, modern efforts recall the 1919 appearance of Assyro-Chaldean and are again finding hybridization does not stick. Such compromises are an olive branch toward political expediency, one that does not go far enough for those who seek independent Chaldean recognition and too far for those who oppose any. As the crisis in Iraq persists, however, there is concern the name divide facilitates, if not encourages, media and public use of 'Iraqi Christians' for simplicity. This label in turn negates the ethnic uniqueness of the Assyrian and Chaldean people,

inadvertently implying religious conversion would end any marginalization or persecution.

There are, however, several features which Assyrians and Chaldeans generally agree upon in explaining the intra-ethnic boundary: Chaldeanness is a relatively modern phenomenon brought forth primarily by ethnic actors within the Chaldean Church; and actors were motivated by the politicization of identity and survival instincts, first in Iraq and now in diaspora. The usefulness of boundary theory is evident here, as it offers an examination of the ongoing construction and negotiation of the Assyrian-Chaldean wedge. Defining who Chaldeans are in relation to Assyrians is undoubtedly an elite-driven process, where various elites have different endgames and a consensus has not yet been reached, but is being actively questioned, discussed, and negotiated.

Cultivating a Cultural Boundary: Nationalists and Merchants

For Assyrians, national understanding is grounded in shared ethnic lineage. Here, Chaldeans (and Syriacs), despite having splintered from the Church of the East, are indelibly part of the Assyrian ethnic fabric. Thus, when Assyrian elites reference Assyrians, it is always inclusive of Chaldeans and Syriacs, as well as members of the Church of the East. The pervasiveness of this view demonstrates the success of Assyrianism in positioning itself as an ethno-national umbrella. Chaldean, here, is understood as simply a religious identity, and Assyrian nationalists cite the Chaldean Church's influence in pushing for Chaldean separatism. Competing versions of this narrative, in this perspective, are dangerous to the long-term survivability of the Assyrian nation.

Amongst Assyrian activists, there are generally two approaches expressed publicly regarding the Chaldean issue. The first reflects a moderate approach, accepting the

existence of Chaldean identity up until it claims ethnic separation. Such moderation certainly evolved, recognizing Chaldean identity cannot be easily dismissed: the line in the sand here is to sustain Assyrians and Chaldeans as a single ethnic group. As a member of the ADM commented regarding the importance of remaining one people: 'If you believe we are all one, then whatever name you want to call yourself, that's fine. If they call themselves Chaldean, that's fine, as long as you know that you're not separate. You're not entity of yourself' (ADM Interview).

Other nationalists, by contrast, are critical of Chaldean identity for driving a wedge within the community. As an example of such rhetoric:

Those separatists tricked many Assyrians. We knew then that their intentions were solely to dilute and destroy the Assyrian name by adopting a mediocre shameful slashed solution under the pretext of a very shiny word called unity! After three years of that "unity", we live today to witness the establishment of a new Chaldean history, Chaldean language, Chaldean flag, Chaldean Aid Society, Chaldean News Agency, Chaldean Political Organization, and the Chaldean Newspaper "The Chaldean Nation" (Aprim 2002).

The frustration here is not just Chaldean identity, but that an entire ethnic institutional structure has developed around it. The American context is significant to this development as it offers an open society with space to cultivate such organizations and no mechanism to force agreement amongst the whole of the diaspora.

Whilst Chaldean is an active identity, defining it in context of Assyrian identity is complicated. There are several questions at play: foremost, do Chaldean elites understand themselves to be an ethnic group or to share ethnicity with Assyrians? From there, if it is an ethnic group, when did it become so; and if it is not an ethnic group, why is it understood as a separate identity? The Chaldean perspective, however, is not uniform. To some Chaldean leaders, whether Chaldeans constitute

an ethnic group is an unquestionable yes. As one community leader stated, 'It's definitely an ethnic group', one based on faith, descendance from Babylon, familial ties, and cultural practices (Arabo Interview). Others, however, qualify Chaldean ethnicity as shared with the Assyrian and Syriac people. Here, Chaldean is not an ethnic group in and of itself, but one of several names used by this larger ethnic collective: 'The way I view it is, you can call me Assyrian, Chaldean, it's interchangeable; it all means one' (Manna Interview 2012). Yet such leaders themselves do not identify as Assyrian and are active in shaping and sustaining what it means to be Chaldean, which invites confusion as to how these actions and ideology coexist. Still, as Chaldeans negotiate what their identity means in relation to American society and the Assyrian community, there is a common dedication to its perseverance.

For those who believe Chaldean to be a unique ethnicity, there are differences of opinion as to their ethnic origins. As noted above, some Chaldeans claim they have constituted a unique and separate ethnic group for a millennia, tracing their ancestry to ancient Babylon as opposed to Assyria (Hanna 2015). Although this is likely an erroneous understanding, as Connor stated, what matters is ultimately what people believe: a reimagining of history is often part of the nation-building and boundary formation process. Once identity is contested, the markers of identity – history, culture, language – become open for contestation. This reflects the very real belief amongst some Chaldeans that they have always been a unique people.

At the same time, not all embrace this claim to unique Babylonian ancestry. Others accept the Assyrian historical narrative, but dismiss arguments that not enough time has passed since the religious schism for a Chaldean ethnicity to have formed:

I'm sure you know about the Assyrian part, we don't exist and they exist...Sometimes they say this Chaldean identity didn't exist 500 years ago. I

say, okay, 500 years ago, there was no country called America, so what's the big deal? Now we have a country called America, there's American people, it's the strongest country in the world. So even if it's 500 years ago, we're still proud of it. And we have pride with identity, with our name. And you can see wherever you work, here or even in Michigan, everybody says 'I'm Chaldean' (Barka Interview 2013).

This position is notable because it embraces the modernity of Chaldeanness. It perhaps more accurately frames what has occurred: that enough changes have taken place over the past century or centuries that Chaldeans have come to understand themselves as distinct. Chaldean identity has been prevalent in the Detroit and San Diego population centers since settlement therein. Indeed, the resonance of Chaldean identity facilitated the U.S. Census Bureau's acceptance of Chaldean as an ethnic group, finding of the Detroit community that 'many of the people, especially the younger people, viewed it as an ethnic group, not a religion' (Quoted in Kulish 2001).

Underscoring the ambiguity of Chaldeanness is that a belief it constitutes an ethnicity is hardly consistent amongst all Chaldean activists. Other Chaldean leaders agree Assyrians and Chaldeans are of one ethnic group but maintain Chaldean as their identity. As a longtime Chaldean activist stated to this effect, 'My conviction is that the Chaldeans, Assyrians, Syriacs and all Christians of Iraq are one people by a virtue of their common heritage and faith, and that they share the same destiny of possible extinction from the land of their ancestors – Mesopotamia' (Quoted in Namou and Wiswell 2009). As was similarly noted, the need to work together, emphasizing their commonality as the Christian people of Iraq, is more important from a political and practical standpoint:

The reality is, we're too small of a community - the Iraqi Christian community - to be worrying about identity...To me specifically, and everything that we do here, if you look at the mission of the Chaldean Chamber or the Chaldean Community Foundation, it will always say 'Chaldeans representing the

Chaldean-Assyrian-Syriac community, all Aramaic-speaking people' (Manna Interview 2012).

From the perspective of diaspora-building, this presents an argument that, in relation to American society, boundaries are more efficacious when representing a larger group – perhaps a testament to both the need for a larger presence to gain salience as well as the need to retain membership against assimilation.

Present here is an interesting dynamic in which long-time community leaders who have created secular community institutions on behalf of the Chaldean name and who have advocated on behalf of the Chaldean name maintain Assyrians and Chaldeans comprise a single ethnic group. If Chaldeans are part of a greater nation, it leads to the question: why claim Chaldean as a separate identity?

The presence of different understandings of Chaldeanness from within the Chaldean community itself indicates boundary formation is evolving. What it means to be Chaldean is easily delineated in a Detroit context, for example, where boundaries are less complicated and reliant upon key differences with the surrounding population: an Iraqi ancestry that differentiates Chaldeans from the majority of the local population; and affiliation with the Chaldean Catholic Church (or a lapsed affiliation) that differentiates Chaldeans from the area's Muslim Iraqi population. As culture and history are shared with Assyrians, defining the intra-communal boundary becomes more complicated, and Chaldean identity is consequentially defined against Assyrianism. Encased in this dynamic is a chicken-or-egg uncertainty of whether boundary-creation was a reaction to assertions by Assyrian nationalists that negated Chaldean identity, a way to challenge the Assyrian narrative of who Chaldeans are; or whether a boundary was already present and understood to reflect minor differences between Assyrians and Chaldeans, but was swept aside by Assyrian nationalism.

To some Chaldean leaders, Chaldean is a sectarian identity with its own attributes and criteria, the use of which does not negate the common ethnicity of the Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriac people. As understood in this viewpoint, Chaldean, Syriac, and Orthodox affiliations have created bounded subdivisions within the ethnic whole. Being Chaldean has criteria which the whole ethnic group does not share, but the common cultural markers of a shared ethnicity nonetheless remain more significant: 'We all believe in god, we are all Christians, we all speak the same language, we all share the same land and the same culture' (Kassab Interview 2012).

Yet the communities in Detroit and San Diego are presented to the surrounding population as Chaldean. Jacob Bacall, who recently published a book on Chaldeans in Michigan, noted that in the course of his own research, pride in being Chaldean is pervasive:

I too have my own identity, I'm a Chaldean, and every interview I have done - the last interview was number thirty-seven, and those are permanent people - and every single one said we are Chaldeans...We are one people, yes, but we are different...Now in possibly a generation, two or three or four, if they want to come with a Syriac or ChaldoAssyrian — but I am who I am, and I'm a Chaldean and I'm a proud Chaldean... Don't tell me I'm Assyrian; I'm not Assyrian (Bacall and Bacall Interview 2014).

Identity as expressed here is more than sectarian, the idea that Assyrians and Chaldeans are one but different. That there is a pride and a pervasiveness in being Chaldean indicates intra-ethnic boundaries have come to reflect other, implicit differences that stand in contrast with what it means to be Assyrian.

The most frequently articulated distinction is that Assyrians have tended to be more nationalistic, protective of their language and cultural heritage, in comparison to

Chaldeans who have tended to shy away from politics towards integration. For example, Chaldean leaders commented that:

Chaldeans are more pragmatic, they are much better in business, they were involved in other parties; Assyrians, they kept their language more alive. When it comes to language, they speak it (Bacall and Bacall Interview);

Most of the Assyrians, they are more into politics...We are more in the business part. So you can see the difference actually between us and them. They are more - they are a smaller group than us, but they are more loud...We all say we are Chaldean, but we don't act on it (Barka Interview).

The perception of Assyrians as nationalistic is shaped by national claims and activism over the past century. Yet it is difficult to imagine a generations-old event or differing tendencies for national activism are enough for Chaldean elites to build a boundary upon: certainly not all Assyrians, or even the majority of Assyrians, are politically-engaged, and certainly Chaldean elites themselves are politically active. Rather, framing Assyrians as nationalistic is indicative of behavioral and cultural expectations: it becomes meaningful when placed in comparison to Chaldeans. In such context, it is not just that Chaldeans are less likely to be national agitators, but that, as they understand themselves, they integrate, they fill niche economic roles, they retain their community by adapting in certain ways to avoid persecution.

Integration as a survival mechanism, some argue, gave way to business acumen that is often used as a descriptor of the Chaldean-American community. Chaldeans, in this sense, were a Gellnerian diaspora even before displacement from Iraq. Their approach to integration recalls Blalock and Bonachich's descriptions of a middleman minority, finding a niche way to protect their existence as minorities in a potentially hostile society. As was explained of this mentality:

I don't want to become involved in politics because I'll be recognized as a Christian and I'll be annihilated...Let me become an entrepreneur and a

businessman, and let me teach my family that. So now here they are, they are armed not with a weapon, but are armed with a weapon of education and business skills...they became very passive, did not become involved in the governments or the politics, and that's how they survived (Kassab Interview 2012).

Assyrians are understood as protecting cultural and linguistic traditions; Chaldeans as adapting as middleman minorities. Certainly this is not to suggest that all Chaldeans are great businessmen and no Assyrian pursues business, nor to suggest that Chaldeans themselves think of this as a stringent boundary: it is a general, stereotypical understanding that becomes self-perpetuating as Chaldean elites in America tend to find success as business-owners, dominating niche occupations, and as politically-active diasporic organizations tend to be Assyrian-run.

This understanding was often echoed in interviews, that Assyrians endured unique persecution and feared an existential threat, which perhaps explains their national drive to this day. Chaldeans did not require such a national effort because they had already adapted to being a minority and finding ways to survive therein: 'You would say that the Chaldeans are well-known to have merchant mentality, and they always managed to be pragmatic people, and work side by side, not alienate the Muslims or the people, those who are the government' (Bacall and Bacall Interview).

The Chaldean Church has reinforced entrepreneurship and integration as Chaldean traits in contrast to other nationalists, thereby also reinforcing a Chaldean boundary in relation to Assyrians that extends beyond Church membership. Bishop Jammo, for example, frames the Chaldean business focus as leaving room for Assyrians to claim an ethnic net over Chaldeans: Chaldeans 'entered into competitive fields where they would be the best in their trade and then be respected...We do not force our identity onto others, though others do this to us. They will go to governments and

parliaments and demand that we be called by another name than our own. We are called by no other name than Chaldean' (Jammo 2011).

From this perspective, it becomes easier to dismiss Assyrian arguments denying Chaldean ethnicity and identity as the expected rhetoric of nationalists. Here, 'by being in some ways so militant about saying "you're Assyrian", in fact what they end up doing is calcifying Chaldeans into holding their ground' (Abbo et al interview). This perception is aided by rhetoric frequent in online diasporic message boards and websites defining all things Chaldean as Assyrian. An anecdote typifying this sense of Assyrian encroachment came from a mention on Wikipedia that TelKeppe, the village from which the vast majority of Chaldeans in the U.S. emigrated or trace their lineage, was referred to as an Assyrian village:

Even our homeland and the village we come from, TelKeppe...the last time I checked in Wikipedia, it said this is Assyrian village. Of course I checked with someone knowledgeable, Martin Manna, who said they've been in this country much more active than us and they feed all those websites (Bacall and Bacall Interview).

It is this degree of national insistence that leads Chaldeans to worry their identity will be lost under an Assyrian umbrella. Even the use of Chaldean in a purely religious context may be claimed as Assyrian by online nationalists: the Assyrian International News Agency, for example, cited the resignation of Chaldean Patriarch Delly as the Assyrian Patriarch's resignation, and recently stated the 'Assyrian Patriarch Calls for "Chaldean League" to Unite Iraq's Lay Catholics', perhaps inviting surprise the actual Assyrian Patriarch would make such a call (AINA 2012; AINA 2014b).¹² Here, too, an open society allows assertion of those claims, as does the ever-open forum of the internet (Eriksen 2007).

¹² This was changed from the syndicated *Agenzia Fides* (2014) article, whose headline read 'Patriarch Sako: We Need a Chaldean League'.

Assyrian political claims unquestioningly group Chaldeans underneath the Assyrian ethnic umbrella; the same occurs with Syriacs, who face similar dynamics with Assyrians in Europe. As noted above, Assyrians were often more politically active and historically pursued strong nationalist objectives: as one community leader noted, ‘the whole world knows about the Assyrian problem’ (Kamber Interview 2013). There is consequentially a political assessment to the benefits of Assyrian identity: a national claim was staked upon the Assyrian name and holds historical recognition, and gives legitimacy to modern national claims. Yet Assyrian nationhood does not hinge on Chaldean inclusion, but benefits from it. As a Chaldean activist, who believes Assyrians and Chaldeans are one ethnic group, commented, ‘The extreme Assyrian church, the Assyrian Democratic Movement and some Assyrian political parties are trying to ignore us, humiliate us, undermine us and use us...We [Chaldeans] are 88 percent and they are 12 percent. They need us more than we need them...It’s a shame we’re fighting over names – it’s not helping Christianity or our mission’ (Quoted in Namou and Wiswell 2009). The at times awkwardness of Assyrian assertion over Chaldean identity is evident here: Chaldeans are not a small, vocal minority, but the majority of Iraq’s Christians and the American diasporic community.

Wimmer’s boundary expansion model of nation-building is perhaps useful to understand the Chaldean perspective and its concern of disappearance (Wimmer 2013: 50-52). The Assyrian national boundary-making argument reflects Wimmer’s emphasis shifting model ($c=a+b$), in which shared ethnicity is emphasized as the national boundary, shifting emphasis away from church membership (Assyrian ethnicity = Church of the East + Chaldean + Syriac). Chaldeans, however, appear to see Assyrian boundary-making as what Wimmer terms the incorporation mode ($a+b \rightarrow a$), in which Chaldeans are subsumed into Assyrian identity (Assyrian + Chaldean \rightarrow Assyrian).

Thus, as these identities were confronted with the Iraq War and the opportunity to gain recognition and perhaps a measure of political power, such a political opening saw Chaldean actors become politically assertive. As will be explored further, Chaldean identity is not simply a by-product of the Iraq War, but the U.S. provided space to express and contest identity, and the freedom to organize on behalf of that, or any, identity.

The lastingness of Chaldeanness, from this perspective, is uncertain because it is a new challenge in the political realm. At the same time, challenges in Iraq and the Middle East make communal solidarity evermore important. Ethnic identity is socially constructed and reconstructed as social circumstances change, and the Assyrian-Chaldean internal boundary will continue to be remade. Revealed here is the complexity of this diaspora and the active negotiation over identity, culture, and ideology taking place therein.

CONCLUSION

The Assyrian claim to self-rule as a unique nation originated far prior to the 2003 Iraq War, cultivated under the Ottoman Empire by the dual experiences of autonomy and renewed persecution. Assyrian nationalism came to a head following the WWI-era genocides, during which hundreds of thousands of Assyrians and Chaldeans were killed or displaced. In response, the League of Nations called for a permanent refuge, an *atra*, for the displaced Assyrian nation. Although coming close to securing resettlement on two occasions, the Assyrian presence became increasingly incompatible with British and Iraqi efforts to make an Iraqi nation, and by the end of WWII, the Assyrian project was ultimately abandoned. The failure of autonomy at this stage left a legacy that would help shape Assyrian national ideology decades later and create a permanent diaspora removed from the Middle East.

The Chaldean path has been less distinctly national, with sectarian differences cultivating differences in identity that gradually gave rise to a fluid and relational, but resonant, intra-ethnic boundary. Framing Chaldean as an exclusively sectarian allegiance fails to fully capture the ways in which Chaldeans have cultivated self-understanding. Although history has contributed to minor internal differences, the assertion and political claim to a distinct Chaldean ethnic identity is a modern phenomena, albeit a controversial one.

CHAPTER IV

‘THERE IS NO MAYOR OF CHALDEAN DETROIT’: THE LOCALITY OF DIASPORA-BUILDING

‘At the end of the day, if a religious member says something, he holds more clout. He brings salvation to heaven! What can a nationalist do? He only brings trouble!’
–Firas Jatou, Assyrian Activist (Interview 2013)

Diasporic elites first act as nation-builders by negotiating markers of identity and culture to create diasporic boundaries that enable integration within local society whilst forestalling assimilation and cultural disappearance. Diasporic elites further act as nationalists, creating ideologies and visions for the future of the nation that inform political goals and give purpose and meaning to the diaspora. Institutional structures support this process by aiding the preservation of diasporic identity, shared consciousness, and the traditions and culture that shape the diaspora’s understanding of itself in the face of assimilation and acculturation; their presence marks a significant development in diaspora-building. Diasporic institutions are not stagnant, stable structures, but are themselves created and refashioned by actors within the diaspora. Over the course of the Chaldean and Assyrian presence in the U.S., their religious, political, and civic institutions have cultivated solidarity within the ethnic group whilst being refashioned to adapt to changing politics and preferences.

In some ways, boundary-making is a conscious process by which organizations are formed and cultural events held to define ‘who’ Assyrians and Chaldeans are in relation to other ethnic groups and to provide a narrative of who ‘we’ are to the diaspora’s own members. In some ways, it is a byproduct of other pursuits, of humanitarian organizations that acculturate refugees into both American society and the diaspora, of an ethnic occupation that in turn shapes how society perceives members of the diaspora. Diasporic actors cultivate an understanding that the diaspora is part of a nation, an imagined community that is both local and

transnational, whilst building institutions, narratives, and political ideologies to meet the considerable challenge of sustaining an extra-territorial nation intermixed within a diverse society. This process is further shaped by internal diasporic dynamics, homeland politics, and in relation to economic, social, and cultural factors within the society of resettlement.

The aim of this chapter is thus to provide an overview of the institutions key to Assyrian and Chaldean boundary-making and maintenance that advance diasporic nation-building. Special attention is given to boundaries and institutions that engendered Chaldean identity in Detroit and San Diego. It finds the Assyrian diaspora, over the past half-century, has undergone a transition away from a boundary that emphasized sectarian identity as Nestorians toward an ethnic boundary defined by shared lineage, culture, and history. This, in turn, has served as the basis for renewed political claims as Assyrians inclusive of Chaldeans. The Chaldean diasporic boundary instead remains intertwined with its Church, whose leaders remain formative to cultivating Chaldean identity. The Chaldean boundary has thus come to reflect ethno-sectarian criteria, defined by the ethnic attributes shared with Assyrians plus affiliation, or lapsed affiliation, with the Chaldean Church. It was not until the Iraq War that Chaldean political institutions and secular activism emerged.

Diaspora building is motivated by fears of assimilation, compounded further by fears of assimilation absent a homeland. Whilst there is sometimes a tendency to attribute the continuity of Assyrian and Chaldean survival in the Middle East to the strength and solidarity of their people in the face of centuries of displacement and oppression, the baseline of this assumption understands their commonality was also externally forged: their religion and their ethnicity separated them from those outside forces. These dynamics would change upon arrival in the United States. The threat of assimilation became a greater risk given the primary signifier of Assyrian and

Chaldean 'otherness' in the Middle East – their Christianity – no longer distinguished them from the surrounding society. The sectarian cleavages found in Iraq were not as salient to identity within American society, where identity tends to focus on ethnic or national origins (Zolberg and Woon 1999). Diasporic nation-building, in a way, is to compensate for the loss of and displacement from the *atra*. Building the diaspora after initial cultural and language shocks subsided necessitated dedicated leadership.

There is thus a marked contrast between the social closure in Iraq, enacting boundaries that precluded Assyrians and Chaldeans from equal membership in the state, and the more open boundaries encountered upon arrival to an immigrant society, one which captures the idea that 'everyone in America is a cultural hybrid' (Thomas in Gaskins 2012). At the same time, the receptiveness of local societies to boundary-crossing or boundary-shifting varies depending on the nature of the receiving society and the nature of the new population (Wimmer 2013). Race, religion, language, economic status all present factors that might hinder an individual from feeling American, even if their citizenship is such. Assyrian and Chaldean integration arguably benefitted from a 'whitening' of ethnic groups that occurred prior to large-scale Assyrian and Chaldean migration, as social boundaries shifted to recast Irish, Italian, and Jewish residents as white, entrenching social membership more firmly along racialized colour lines (Wimmer 61, 83). In the arbitrary nature of racial ascription, Assyrians and Chaldeans were as 'white' as Jews or Italians. Consequentially, observed in the Assyrian and Chaldean case are both boundary crossings of individuals as Christian, English-speaking, non-Arabs, and boundary shifting in local communities like Detroit, Turlock, and Chicago, where the boundaries of receiving communities expanded with the integration and established presence of the diasporic community. The resulting boundaries are fluid, where members navigate between ethnic identity as Chaldean or Assyrian and the many other identities held within society based on their profession, familial role, area of residence, political allegiance, and more. The U.S. therefore proved particularly

instrumental in developing space between the communities and in providing space for new, secular institutions to develop and to institutionalize diasporic culture so this new, complicated *atra* could be reproduced for successive generations.

The trajectory of growth from an immigrant population into a diasporic nation is examined through three institutional typologies: that of ethnic institutions, which provide services to the ethnic community and perpetuate the diaspora's unique culture, language, and identity; nationalist political institutions, which seek to define national goals for and make political decisions on behalf of the diaspora; and advocacy institutions, which serve as an ethnic lobby towards the American government on behalf of community members in the U.S. and Iraq. These typologies are not tightly-bound, equally-balanced categories, but rather encapsulate developments that advance nation-building. As such, they represent a path of diasporic development: the ethnic framework capturing identity and building a cultural narrative; political ideals emerging from within that structure, turning focus locally, as diasporic nationalism, and transnationally, as long-distance nationalism; and mobilizing political engagement on behalf of the diaspora, the homeland, and the future of the nation. In this sense, the scope of each typology becomes smaller and more focused: ethnic institutions serve the entire diaspora whilst advocacy groups serve a specific diasporic interest. It is how this process developed, and in turn shaped Assyrian and Chaldean national understandings, that is the focus of this chapter.

Demonstrated is the necessity of strong ethnic institutions at the beginning of the immigration trajectory as well as throughout successive generations after settlement. Later waves of migration can also help revitalize a waning identity and institutions, particularly if the later waves settle in the same geographic area. The importance of organizations to the maintenance and promotion of diasporic identity is developed by Sheffer (2007) and Safran (1999); furthermore, Khachig Tölölyan (1996) finds that

the 'doing' performed by such institutions and community leaders is a defining characteristic of diaspora.

Collectively, these typologies construct, reinforce, and negotiate diasporic boundaries within and in relation to American society; per Tölölyan, 'these institutions constitute a diasporic civil society that nurtures and sustains the public sphere of debate and cultural production' (Tölölyan 2000: 109). However, it is not just the presence of diasporic institutions, but their collectivity, the degree to which some measure of institutional completeness is attained, that aides the diaspora's longevity and resonance (Stinchcombe 1965; Breton 1964). The breadth of Chaldean institutions in Detroit aided the growth of the Chaldean identity and population therein.

The necessary role of diasporic institutions was addressed in an interview with Elmer Abbo, Executive Director of the Assyrian-American National Coalition, who suggested in the absence of a way to legitimize authority, organizations aspire to serve as de facto political representatives of the diasporic community:

When you are the sort of disempowered people, there's no formal authority figure. And there's no formal, clear authority structure...In Iraq, we had a clear authority figure, and that was the church...But, once you come to America, although the church within the community may have some power, it's still the church. And so it can't speak on every issue...To the extent that you want the community to start exerting political power, it needs to happen outside the church. And yet, there's not a political force or a political structure to make that happen. There is no mayor of Chaldean Detroit. There's no congress or city council for Chaldean Detroit. Or there's no congress for Assyrian nationalists in the diaspora...

We don't have structural mechanisms to identify who is that legitimate person, so essentially what we have is a situation where anyone can declare themselves the public spokesperson if they can create an organization and just say, well, my organization represents the will of the people. And so you have this jockeying of organizations. Which is essentially, the way I interpret

it is, it's politics playing out in the absence of a government or political structure to authorize legitimacy (Abbo et al Interview 2013).

Abbo's succinct notion there is no 'Mayor of Chaldean Detroit' encapsulates a core point of this thesis: diaspora-building is challenged by the absence of leadership with the authority to compel belonging from all members of the diaspora. There is no framework in which diaspora members must operate and no restrictions on who can create an organization. In the absence of a state, organizations become the means for elites to contest the ideology, myths and symbols, membership and long-term goals upon which the diasporic boundary is constructed. Diasporic elites compete to present the best national vision, measuring legitimacy through popular support and political success (Wachtel 1998: 3). Such competition reflects diasporic nationalism and the competition for power within the diaspora.

The existence of an organization alone does not signify its importance to the diaspora. Within both communities, there is at times an element of organizational fatigue; the sense that newer organizations in particular are more for show than substance. As one community member cautioned, 'First, don't give weight to the diaspora organizations as numbers and as substance. Ninety-five percent of that are three or four people, and that's it. Everybody calls themselves somebody' (Hanna Interview 2013). Former Congressman Michael Flanagan of Illinois similarly described advocacy organizations as fractured and contentious:

Like most small very small minorities, the Assyrians lack cohesion. There were at least half a dozen such organizations inside of the tiny Assyrian Community in Chicago, California and Michigan. None of them had any money and none of them had any influence but each was sure that it was THE organization to best represent the community (Flanagan Interview 2014; emphasis interviewee's).

A small ethnography of Chaldeans in suburban Detroit conducted by Natalie Henrich likewise observed the propensity of individuals to form organizations for stature, to bolster their reputation, rather than work within the existing organizational framework toward a shared objective; further, it commented that individuals tended to claim membership in an organization but only participate superficially to be looked upon favorably by the community (Henrich and Henrich 2007: 127-131). While the study does not elaborate upon the extent to which such free-ridership was actually problematic to existing organizations, it does suggest there was both an awareness and an annoyance amongst diasporic members of the sometimes self-promoting nature of organizational involvement.

At the same time, what one might call vanity organizations are hardly unique to this particular population, but instead demonstrate the ease of forming ethnic-specific organizations in the U.S. as much as the priority within this community for ethnic involvement. As Shain and Sheffer theorized, diasporic action is most commonly undertaken by a few core members of the diaspora and involvement of outer members is typically less frequent (Shain and Barth 2003; Sheffer 2007).

Stinchcombe (1965) likewise found a greater number and variety of organizations is indicative of ethnic solidarity; as such, the presence of vanity organizations may indicate a degree of institutional completeness and a priority within the community for activism, suggesting members are being engaged beyond the core activists.

Chaldeans in Detroit are 'doing', as Tölölyan described, and not just speaking to their presence. This suggests efficacy in boundary formation, and is telling as to why the Chaldean identity became and remains pervasive in Detroit.

In both the Assyrian and Chaldean experiences, their alignment with unique religious institutions and history of a millet system provided an existing structure around which the diaspora centered when it first arrived to the U.S. in the early 20th century. Later clusters of heavy migration and the changing political environments

of which they were products – the escalation of Ba’ath repression in the 1970s; the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s; the sanctions of the 1990s – revitalized and expanded the diaspora’s institutions, requiring institutions to build capacity for humanitarian relief and acculturation services. In regard to Abbo’s point, by the time of the 2003 Iraq War, the institutions most situated to mobilize in response to the crisis in Iraq were those which earned legitimacy as diasporic representatives and possessed transnational ties between America and Iraq. To the extent they were positioned to undertake political lobbying, this has been most effective outside the church.

Boundary formation and its corresponding pursuit of institutional completeness emerged as most efficacious at a local level: as Flanagan noted, an interdependent, nation-wide structure has yet to emerge, a factor that would prove consequential to post-war mobilization efforts. Such absence is the product of both the parochial focus of successful institutions and differing political and national ideologies, which, organically or intentionally, create distance within and between Assyrian and Chaldean factions. The significance of local boundaries is evident, suggesting, for example, why diaspora endured in Detroit but not Connecticut. It is through these structures that concerted efforts to respond to the crisis in Iraq would arise and that divisions would persist.

Implicit in Abbo’s assessment is the statelessness of Assyrians and Chaldeans. The use of an Assyrian or Chaldean identity over an Iraqi one underscores the success of diasporic nation-building, which has made the citizenship backgrounds of Iraqi, Iranian, Turkish, or Syrian diasporic members less salient than ethnic identity. The resiliency of the Nineveh Plain as the ancestral *atra* further speaks to one diasporic nation. Yet there is an ideological difference between understanding the diasporic nation as a stateless people whose homeland happens to be in Iraq versus understanding the nation as a component of Iraq. This difference manifests itself in political claims, particularly the need for territorial autonomy within Iraq versus

integration in Iraq. This remains an important wedge within diasporic and long-distance nationalism.

The chapter, consequently, is not intended as a comprehensive list of all diasporic institutions that have existed, for such an examination is both outside the scope of this thesis and risks, as Hanna noted, falsely equating the presence of an organization with substance or impact. In the above parameters, this chapter considers institutions which contributed to the longevity, identity, and nationalism of the diaspora and which would become involved in post-war advocacy. As such, it leaves out many effective organizations, including those which have a strong presence among other diasporic centers but which have not made significant inroads into the U.S. An exception, however, is made with the Detroit Chaldean community, where the presence of a strong measure of institutional completeness helps explain the retention of Chaldean identity therein, a core focus of this research.

The typologies reveal a conscious effort to expand the role of diasporic institutions in the U.S. and engage in American and Iraqi politics. Understated here is the luxury to mobilize on behalf of the Assyrian and Chaldean population because of the distance afforded from the repression of the Iraqi state, and, in particular, because of the nature of the U.S. political and social structure. Consequentially, as the American framework presented the communities with equal opportunity to mobilize, the differences in which ethnic institutions and political engagement manifested in each community helps to reveal differences in the boundaries created and political and national leanings therein. Despite criticism that diasporas may isolate themselves from society, it is clear the intent of Assyrian and Chaldean diasporic elites is to integrate, to become Americans atop being Assyrians and Chaldeans. Institution-building and political activism occur as civic organizations and ethnic lobbies within and intermixed with American society. Hence the challenge elites confront is to develop a diasporic boundary as part of society, not marginalized from it.

ETHNIC INSTITUTIONS

Ethnic institutions provide a variety of services to the ethnic group in support of the diasporic community and community retention. They are amongst the foremost components of boundary maintenance. Assyrian diasporic elites faced the challenge of boundary creation in a diaspora that, although congregating around key population centers, was nonetheless widely dispersed across the U.S. and originated from multiple countries with multiple cultural and linguistic traditions and different sectarian allegiances. By contrast, Chaldean migration centralized in Detroit and later San Diego, almost exclusively originated from Iraq, and frequently possessed ties to the same few villages in northern Iraq, presenting a comparatively more homogenous community.

As outlined by Breton (1964) and Stinchcombe (1965), there are several motivations at play in ethnic institution-building: the desire to aide one's co-ethnics as they enter an unfamiliar environment and ensure they receive the same opportunities and equality as those in mainstream society; and the desire to retain as much as possible that which is unique to the ethnic community - its language, culture, identity, or national goals: in essence, boundary-creation. Moreover, institutions provide a foundation through which elites cultivate and mobilize political claims. An underlying point bearing emphasis is that a group pursues and achieves a measure of institutional completeness when its members cannot or do not want to fully integrate into the surrounding society. It is no surprise, then, that diasporic elites would be primed to pursue a strong institutional structure.

Diasporic elites, aided by institutional breadth, continuously negotiate ethnic criteria of membership in relation to their local populations, and aid in acculturating new immigrants and engaging the existing population to establish the diaspora as part of

the local community. Assyrian organizations that became most instrumental in boundary making were those that provided a variety of ethnic services, defining cultural and social aspects of the boundary, whilst either possessing linkage across the diaspora or creating an entrenched institutional structure within a specific population. The same element is paralleled in the Chaldean community, absent the need for a cross-diasporic reach: a close-knit network of ethnic service-providing organizations is shaping Chaldean identity and discourse, and with it, local and intra-ethnic boundaries.

Thus, this section looks broadly at key Assyrian organizations, and more comprehensively at Detroit's Chaldean network to begin to answer how Chaldean identity was built and prevails. It finds an explanation begins to appear in the highly organized and active presence of ethnic institutions. Indeed, the perception of Detroit as a highly-organized community was voiced frequently by Assyrian and Chaldean activists, noting, for example: 'In Michigan, everyone has a Chaldean organization, everyone has some type of Chaldean non-profit, everyone's a Chaldean leader', and, 'They're [Detroit Chaldeans] so much more organized than we are here [in Chicago]' (Arabo Interview; Taimoorazy Interview). It is in the unique space provided by Detroit's ethnic and social framework that a singular Chaldean identity formed in America.

Diasporic elites in both communities are active in boundary-making, balancing how different the diaspora can be with how alike it must be (Zolberg and Woon 1999). However, institutional completeness serves a role beyond diasporic maintenance: it establishes the diaspora as a component of local society, enabling boundary shifting in acceptance of the diaspora (Wimmer 2013: 60-63). As Hall and Lindholm noted, such diversity and different cultural elements are embraced in America so long as they are 'nice and not disruptive' to society (Hall and Lindholm 133). By establishing Assyrians and Chaldeans share the same norms and values atop their own cultural

elements, diasporic elites attempt to shift local boundaries in a way that individuals do not have to give up being Assyrian or Chaldean, but rather Assyrians and Chaldeans become part of the local community and their cultural diacritica become normalized. Such boundary shifting is a form of integration, but integration that aids diasporic continuation.

Assyrian Ethnic Institutions

Notable within the Assyrian ethnic institutional framework over the past century is the role of civic organizations and the Church of the East as key institutions, both providing ethnic services and easing acculturation whilst aspiring to retain and perpetuate Assyrian identity, language, and understanding. These institutions thus share comparable aims; civic organizations, however, are more able to appeal to the community on a secular, ethnic basis and create boundaries inclusive of Assyrians not affiliated with the Church of the East.

Thus, while the Church of the East is an important diasporic-building institution, there is also a civic effort to detach the understanding of 'Assyrian' from 'Nestorian' and frame Assyrian as an ethnic label accommodating various branches of Christianity. This formulation of Assyrian ethnic identity as an umbrella concept under which the Church of the East, Chaldean, and Syriac sects are covered has become the essential pillar of Assyrian understanding of itself. As one organization described:

Assyrianism is not a movement against the various churches, whether the Church of the East (Nestorian) or Chaldean or Syrian Orthodox (Jacobite), but an attempt to incorporate them and strengthen them within the framework of the nation, allowing them to grow and prosper. Assyrianism is the body in which the spirituality of the churches will thrive. We ought to recognize the irony that Assyrianism as a movement began to grow at a time of great upheaval for the Assyrian nation, when its sons and daughters were

flung throughout the world like autumn leaves upon the field. As we head into the twenty-first century, Assyrianism looks back for inspiration from the past and prepares the nation for the future (DeKelaita 2013).

Assyrian nationalism is typically seen as being confronted by two sources of insecurity: external insecurity brought by the absence of a homeland, flinging Assyrians across the globe; and internal insecurity brought by the confessional splintering from the Church of the East. The above quote, which lists the three ethnic churches, underpins the purpose of this secular Assyrian nationalism: to continue claim to these other sects, and to create a national framework that encompasses, but is independent of, these religious institutions. Calling back to the appearance of Assyro-Chaldean at Versailles, this represents a blurring of boundary criteria, reducing the importance of religion for the importance of ethnicity.

Whilst this concept has been articulated in recent decades as part of the Assyrian national movement, it is not a new phenomena in Assyrian understanding of membership; rather, it reflects the complicated roots of displacement and routes of migration. The urgent humanitarian situation following WWI brought refugees to America and accelerated civic and religious institution-building to acculturate refugees and send humanitarian aide to those still in the Middle East (Ishaya 2003). The presence of local clubs fluctuates with the movement of populations. Such clubs appear in areas with even the smallest Assyrian population in effort to bring the community together around social events and holidays, and to provide social services. Still-operating clubs include the Assyrian American Civic Club of Turlock, founded in 1946; the Assyrian Foundation of America, founded in 1977 and based in San Francisco; the Assyrian American Associations of San Jose, of Modesto, of Massachusetts, and of Houston; the Assyrian American Civic Club of Chicago, founded in 1975, and of Flint, Michigan, founded in 1936; the Assyrian American Society of Las Vegas, founded in 1999; the Assyrian American Cultural Organization of Arizona, founded in 2012.

Early nationalists who recognized the limited efficacy of local clubs sought to bridge together disparate clubs into a coordinated entity. The most successful and still-lasting umbrella organization, the Assyrian American National Federation (AANF), formed in 1933 in the aftermath of Simmele as a joint agreement between Assyrian organizations in Massachusetts, Yonkers, Philadelphia, and Connecticut (AANF 2012).

AANF thus marks a key moment in diaspora-building. The umbrella structure of the AANF did not pursue institutional completeness itself, in that it did not seek to provide ethnic services, but rather sought linkage across the diaspora which, in turn, could reinforce a common, singular narrative of Assyrianism across the U.S. whilst simultaneously providing a unified voice for Assyrian interests. In this sense, it served to complement the structure of religious institutions and local clubs with an additional, cross-national layer. Its annual convention, publications like the *Assyrian Star* magazine, and public advocacy create ways to make diasporic identity salient on these occasions, and offer a way unite local and national populations.

Founders of the AANF, most notably David Perley, considered one of the fathers of Assyrian nationalism, entwined the AANF with the ideal of Assyrianism unifying different confessions and geographic origins. Perley argued:

When a person is of Assyrian blood, he retains his birthright, self-esteem, and the heritage of his fathers. It is for this very reason that he may be called a Jacobite-Assyrian, Nestorian-Assyrian, Assyrian-Presbyterian, or a Chaldean-Christian...It is a mere matter of hyphenated description, not a hyphenation or division. A hyphen does not divide; it unites...The approach of this oneness of all Assyrians regardless of their religious adherence, is through the avenue of blood, and through the majesty of common memories. Religion is a faith acquired and is changeable. Nationality is one's flesh and blood; it is his total nature (Perley 1967).

Although AANF today retains approximately twenty-two member organizations,¹³ it has not succeeded in capturing the exclusive role as a diasporic representative for the Assyrian-American community, precluded by political differences within the diaspora, better connections of lay diasporic members to their local organizations, or the limitations of its structure.

To that end, the Church of the East remains an important pillar of the Assyrian community, although its role has waned in recent decades as acculturation organizations also provide humanitarian aid and as political organizations also advocate for policy goals. The prominence of the Church was initially reinforced after WWI with the influx of refugees and the international advocacy of Patriarch Shimun, which presented the Patriarch to those within and outside the diaspora as a legitimate, internationally-recognized representative of the Assyrian people. Churches thus serve as an important communal structure and ethnic-service provider, offering religious services, Assyrian language classes, acculturation programs, and communal space for social meetings and events, as well as symbolically carrying forward cultural and spiritual traditions. This helped foster a commonality amongst a formerly scattered constituency while its emphasis on the unique nationhood of the Assyrian people provided a *raison d'être*, to borrow Breton's terminology, for the diaspora (Breton 200-201). Significantly, the institutional completeness found through the church model precluded Chaldeans, a factor that reinforced the parallel role of the Chaldean Church as a separate ethnic services provider.

Yet, despite the presence of the Church and civic organizations, the Assyrian boundary was porous, and next generations of Assyrians generally assimilated into American society. Ishaya commented of early Assyrian immigration:

¹³ This was according to the affiliate list on AANF's website, although five organizations were listed as 'suspended for non-payment of membership dues'. Members are generally social clubs, and only the Chaldean Assyrian American Association of San Diego contains the Chaldean name.

The rate of assimilation was so high, that the American born and raised generation could not converse in, much less read and write the Assyrian language. The business of the civic organizations began to be carried in the English language...It must be noted that the continuity of Assyrians as a distinct minority in the United States has been due to the constant inflow of new immigrants into the country. Assyrian Americans have not set in place substantial educational institutions or otherwise an economic infrastructure to maintain Assyrian ethnic continuity (Ishaya 2003).

Indeed, assimilation is a constant worry for diasporic activists, a worry shared in every author interview amongst Assyrians and Chaldeans alike. The concern is highlighted by an anecdote of a young woman inquiring about Assyrians at an event, noting she remembered her grandmother saying their family was Assyrian or Armenian; it was soon realized the woman was a relative of David Perley, the aforementioned Assyrian activist (Abbo et al Interview). Diasporic boundaries at this stage were challenged by small population numbers, geographic dispersal in the U.S., and simply were not developed or entrenched enough to retain American-born Assyrians as social boundaries were porous and easily crossed. Social and geopolitical circumstances did not make diasporic membership salient.

It was with the tumultuous climate of the 1970s that a reawakening of Assyrian nationalism emerged in response to boundary closure in Iraq and Iran. It is in the context of this period's insecurity that a renewed effort appeared to rebuild the Assyrian diaspora with an ideological component entwined with ethno-national identity. The Church itself underwent a significant transition in 1975 with the murder of Patriarch Shimun by a church dissident, effectively ending the hereditary succession of the Shimun lineage that ruled the Church for almost seven centuries (al-Khalil 1989: 175). Mar Dinkha IV, then-Metropolitan of Iran, was elected to Patriarch and led the Church until his death in March 2015; after a brief return of the Church's See to the Middle East, it and the Patriarch soon returned to Chicago in

response to the Iranian revolution and Iran-Iraq War. Dinkha is perhaps as responsible as Shimun for aligning the Church with Assyrian nationalism after officially changing the name of the Church of the East to the Assyrian Church of the East in 1976. This move was a reassertion of Assyrian ethnicity that faced negation by Arabization policies and other repression in the Middle East. Diasporic nationalists who favour the Assyrian addition argue its necessity to sustaining Assyrian identity, and compared the ethnic-religious relationship to the Jewish and Armenian experiences (Aprim 2003). Others, however, contend it reinforced the perception that Assyrian ethnicity is tied to the Church of the East, further distancing potential Chaldean converts to the Assyrian identity.

Dinkha's leadership thus preached an ethnic nationhood, one which coincided with the reemergence of political nationalism. Liturgy often addressed 'the sons and daughters of The Holy Church and of the Assyrian Nation' with nationally-themed statements such as:

As one national group, history binds us together with our Assyrian forefathers in Mesopotamia, this is 2000 years that our Christian forefathers of The Church of the East have maintained and kept the name, language, and literature of our Assyrian Nationality, together with our Christian Faith, thus as one Assyrian Nation, we are to have pride in our history and heritage. We have two gifts given to us from God, which is our Christian Faith of the Church of the East, and of our Assyrian nationality (MarDinkha 2006).

Yet whilst nationalistic, Dinkha was less politically assertive than his predecessor; he was quoted as saying 'In the West, it is easy to lose people whom we anger so we must be careful' (DeKelaita 2015). As the Assyrian nation is increasingly a diasporic nation, the Church itself remains a unique ethno-religious tradition. The loss of a church follower could easily equate the loss of a diasporic member, a concern stressed by the omnipresent risk of cultural assimilation.

Consequentially, secular institutions cast a wider net, engaging non-religious members. The first international effort at amalgamating diasporic organizations into a united, secular voice for the Assyrian cause came with the formation of the Assyrian Universal Alliance (AUA) in 1968 under the leadership of young, professional Iranian Assyrians (Kamber Interview). Similar to the umbrella structure of the AANF, the AUA aims to provide an elected, central leadership to unite the diaspora's scattered international organizations. The AUA's reaches into cultivating Assyrian nationalism included symbolic measures, such as the commission of the national flag still used today across the diaspora (Ashurian 1999). As with the AANF, there is utility for a large umbrella organization to cultivate a common understanding of Assyrian nationhood.

A more American-specific effort came with the formation of the Bet-Nahrain Democratic Party (BNDP) in the Turlock region by Sargon Dadesho, a former AUA official who sought a more staunchly nationalist approach to Assyrian ideology. The BNDP's nation-building goals led to cultivating a degree of institutional completeness to reinforce Assyrian identity and culture across the greater Turlock region. It created Bet Nahrain Magazine in 1974, the first American-based Assyrian radio station in 1979, and the AssyriaVision television station in 1996, which expanded into an international satellite channel as AssyriaSat in 2002 (Bet-Nahrain Inc. 2011). Its radio and television programs discuss Assyrian history and heritage, religious issues, current events, and sports through programming in Syriac, Arabic, and English. The Assyrian Cultural Center in Ceres, California, serves as both the basis for the BNDP's daily work and a community institution, providing language classes, food festivals, and, most infamously, bingo games.¹⁴

¹⁴ Recent tax returns show bingo's gross revenue totals around \$1.5 million annually, and net revenue ranged from approximately \$70,000 (2012) to approximately \$14,000 (2013) (FoundationCenter.org).

Dadesho successfully leverages his nationalist reputation within the community as the purveyor of these organizations: as one journalist commented, 'He runs a police-state like organization in Central California where he is respected and appreciated as the "King of Assyria"'; and another, regarding the BNDP's operation, noted:

Here rules one of the exiled leaders of ancient Iraq, a man with a castle but no country, at least not yet...His castle, turrets and all, is the ethnic group's cultural center, modeled after the historic Assyrian capital of Nineveh. For Dadesho, who works here day and night, it doubles as a headquarters for an Assyrian nation-in-waiting (ibid; Arax 2003).

The effective result is that, within this geographic region, there is an element of institutional completeness provided by the BNDP and its affiliates. This successfully infused local boundary formation with a strong national ideology.

The BNDP was likely successful in cultivating such institutional breadth because the area from which the BNDP emerged is unique to the Assyrian experience in America, a planned settlement rather than temporary refuge. The intent of settlers was to integrate, and thus to shift local boundaries. That the most ardent nationalism appeared here is perhaps a testament to the success in doing so. Moreover, the belief one Assyrian identity encompasses all religious factions is representative of the Turlock-Modesto experience, which brought together Iranians, Iraqis, Hakkaris, Presbyterians, Assyrians, Nestorians, refugees, and retirees into one community. Dadesho's BNDP and its affiliated institutions built upon established diasporic boundaries to cultivate nationalism, communicating a pride and ideology that resonated within and beyond California to represent a strong diasporic voice for Assyrian nationalism.

Although other organizations have not built comparable institutional frameworks, several have expanded their missions in an ethnic-building capacity. Two Chicago-

based, humanitarian-focused organizations, the Assyrian Universal Alliance Foundation (AUAF), formed in 1978, and the Assyrian National Council of Illinois (ANCI), formed in 1986, contribute to boundary maintenance by bridging their core role as providers of immigrant and refugee support services, such as immigration assistance, English-language courses, and elder care programs, with ethnic-building programs and cultural maintenance, such as promoting democratic participation, community events, and, as formed by the AUAF, a library of Assyrian-language and history books.

Additionally, the Assyrian Aid Society (AAS), originally formed by the Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM) to serve as a humanitarian organization in Iraq after the Persian Gulf War, has since expanded its mission to tap into the diaspora for charitable contributions and to support Assyrian culture. As one ADM member described: 'ADM, because it's a political party, it has a sister organization that supports basically the activities that ADM tries to protect like the language, schools - it's called the Assyrian Aid Society....ADM understands the essence of a nation are language and the culture. This has to be preserved' (ADM Interview).

Language and culture represent the cultural diacritica, as Wimmer termed, that mark ethnic and national boundaries (Wimmer 2009: 254). AAS thus supports Assyrian culture and language in furtherance of supporting the Assyrian nation, and solidifying a common understanding of ethnic membership. AAS has local organizations in each metropolitan area with a diaspora presence, each of which is responsible for its own programming and fundraising. Mesopotamia Night, for example, is a yearly fundraiser in the Santa Clara and Bay Area of California to celebrate Assyrian art and has raised approximately \$250,000 in the first five years of its operations for AAS's humanitarian programs (AAS 2012). Natalie Babella, president of AAS's Santa Clara chapter, stressed the importance of such an event is

not just financial support, but building an element of nationalism within the diaspora:

It's hitting two birds with one stone: raising the funds that we need and trying to keep our culture alive in the diaspora. And again, it always goes back to, because we don't have a homeland - I mean, we do have a homeland, but it's not ours officially - it's nice to find ways to preserve our language and our culture and our heritage here in America...I do feel like Assyrians, the younger generation, the first generation that's born here, is becoming more educated, having more opportunities, has more resources. It's just that we need to find out ways to grab them and how to instill that nationalism that they have to help...Mesopotamia Night is a really nice way that we've been able to do it in the Central Valley and in the Bay Area. Our audience has been increasing, our volunteers have been increasing...I think everyone as a strength, you know, and everyone can bring their talent to the table and say this is what I can contribute to the Assyrian nation (Babella Interview 2013).

AAS demonstrates how an organization with a specific purpose can also work in a nation-building capacity. Under skilled leadership, it can engage the wider diaspora in contributing, whether financially or by volunteering services, finding ways to make diasporic identity relevant. Moreover, its internationally-focused services reinforce the transnational nature of the Assyrian nation. The specific focus on youth engagement speaks to the conscious effort of keeping next generations engaged and part of the diaspora, as well as tapping into new ideas and new talent to support the organization itself.

These examples of ethnic institutions demonstrate nation-building efforts are effective but fragmented, with many organizations providing similar services disconnected from each other. However, significant is a common understanding of an Assyrian nation: while organizations serve differing niches, possess differing ideologies, and are located in differing geographies, present amongst Assyrian organizations is a common narrative of what it means to be Assyrian and who is a member.

This is not intended to offer an idealized picture of diasporic institutions. Issues of corruption, legal challenges, and financial mismanagement tainted some organizations and individuals over the past decades. Elite competition and organizational jockeying are consequentially ongoing factors. On the one hand, this can boost the salience of diasporic issues by keeping ideas and narratives discussed and contested in the public sphere, but, on the other hand, the personal and political competition it embodies is distracting, and discourages trust in those organizations.

The challenges of boundary formation are demonstratively pronounced. The diverse roots and routes of Assyrian migration necessitated ethnic institutions able to capture and retain migrants and successive generations of Assyrians, and have shown the difficulties in negotiating diasporic boundaries flexible but resonant enough to forestall cultural disappearance. Assyrian elites have undertaken a diaspora-building endeavor amongst a heterogeneous group, seeking to unify migrants from across the Middle East and across differing sectarian traditions against mainstream American society. Nationalists hybridized and secularized Assyrian identity to refashion its own boundary. As a result, Assyrian cultural diacritica, as defined in relation to American society, encompasses ethnic, linguistic, and historical bases.

Chaldean Ethnic Institutions

The Chaldean community's development differed from the Assyrian experience, but is not entirely dissimilar. In part, the difference is attributable to a boundary arguably more in flux upon migration to the U.S.: a religious identity that became more than a church affiliation. Chaldean identity, in contrast to Assyrian boundary-making, was produced by the formation of the Chaldean Church, situating the Church in an exclusive role within the Chaldean community. It is this factor that preserved the Church's role as an essential diasporic institution. As interviewees often noted, 'It's a

strong identity as far as what we think as church connection, we're very religious. And the priests play a really major role, a major role in the community' (Hanna Interview).

As Chaldean boundaries, particularly in relation to Assyrians, are somewhat uncertain, there is correspondingly more opportunity for individual actors to have a role in shaping American Chaldeanness. Elite competition is reflected in the role of Church leaders cultivating ethnic claims and in civic leaders creating civic and political organizations that also aim to represent the diaspora, as well as the inherent competition with Assyrian elites over who speaks for Chaldeans. As Brubaker observed of diasporic elites, actors are framing Chaldeans as a single entity and making political claims on their behalf; yet at the same time, actors are making visible an identity present within their local communities and churches (Brubaker 2004). Diasporic elites are crafting cultural and historical narratives of Chaldeans as a unique group that span religious, economic, and cultural emphases: they are, in a sense, nation-building (Brass 1991).

Chaldean boundary formation was facilitated by the geographic centralization of Chaldeans in Detroit and San Diego. As such, the growth and expansion of the Chaldean population in America was intrinsically linked with the growth and expansion of the Chaldean Church. It is significant that the Chaldean experience in Detroit has been a singularly Chaldean experience: despite the neighbouring, settled Assyrian community in Chicago, Chaldean migration generally settled in Detroit and did not take an Assyrian identity. The subsequent Chaldean settlement in San Diego has, to an extent, mirrored the Detroit community's development, avoiding identification with California's established Assyrian community. This point thus bears emphasis: Chaldean migration occurred in a way that was uniquely Iraqi Chaldean. Ethnic institutions expanded the intra-ethnic boundary in relation to Assyrians and an ethno-sectarian boundary in relation to the surrounding population.

In a theme reiterated often by Chaldean-Americans, the emphasis on Christianity was used to demonstrate their belonging in America, their commonality with dominant elements of American culture, and ease their acculturation. Fitting with Breton's observation that integration is influenced by the local community and other ethnic groups therein, the presence of America's largest Arab-American populations in the Los Angeles/San Diego region and in metropolitan Detroit meant Chaldean boundaries were in part defined in relation to Arab-Americans, drawing out Chaldean narratives as non-Arabs and non-Muslims (Breton 193).¹⁵ As one Detroit community leader noted, 'We are confused with the Arabic people, especially here in the Detroit area because there's such large Arab population in Dearborn. And we are two separate peoples, two separate religions, two separate histories' (Romaya Interview 2013). San Diego Chaldeans similarly describe the need to reinforce narratives of who Chaldeans are and combat anti-Arab and anti-Islam hostility, finding through experience an emphasis on Christianity was helpful in gaining social acceptance:

They see our Arabic signs and Arabic language and writing, and they get upset...There is this kind of feeling like when you see Arabic language, that means Islam, and that means terrorist...I give seminars, the last a few months ago at this association La Mesa. They wanted to know about the Chaldeans, so I go and talk to them and when I tell them maybe we were the first Christian communities to exist, that we're very old when it comes to Christianity, from the first century, they get surprised...We get a different feeling when we say that (Barka Interview).

This demonstrates boundary development in relation to local society. Population growth in both locations has brought questions of relationality, of 'who' Chaldeans

¹⁵ Recent controversy in Sterling Heights, a Detroit suburb, regarding a proposed mosque construction demonstrates the resonance of these factors with Chaldean integration. The City's mayor stated in opposing the mosque, 'I will do EVERYTHING in my power to protect, support and defend the Chaldean population in Sterling Heights' (Cwiek 2015). Although it is unclear how a mosque threatens any resident, here Chaldeans have become a welcome part of the city whilst Muslims still face barriers.

are in relation to the existing population. Diasporic elites aim to negotiate boundaries that familiarize and normalize Chaldean presence whilst maintaining enough cultural elements to still give meaning to being Chaldean. Given their Iraqi origins, Chaldeans are most frequently understood as Iraqis, Arabs, or Muslims by unfamiliar society. The ethnic demographics of Detroit and San Diego thus placed 'who' Chaldeans are in contrast to 'who' Arab-Americans are – itself an example of the American context cultivating a social boundary that oversimplifies the diversity of Arab origins and experience. This relationality brought emphasis to the unique ethnicity of Chaldeans. At the same time, the strong presence of the Arab-American community helped normalize within mainstream society cultural elements Chaldeans share, such as food, music, and the visibility of the Arabic language: this likely aided boundary shifting towards Chaldean integration. Local interactions shaped how Chaldeans were defined in a broader social context; the Chaldean boundary occupied a space somewhere between being Middle Eastern and being American. This space was not resolved by returning to an Assyrian ethnic identity, but instead gave way to cultivating a distinctly Chaldean one.

Thus, observed is a conscious effort of diasporic elites to pursue boundary shifting to facilitate acceptance of the Chaldean community. By local communities accepting Chaldeans – inclusive of Chaldean churches, organizations, and the cultural diacritica that define Chaldean boundaries – are part of the community, pressure to fully assimilate is reduced because Chaldeans are no longer marginalized. However, boundaries are also made more porous and assimilation easier. Reinforced, in turn, are the need for institutional completeness and boundaries to retain membership and the salience of ethnic identity.

Much like the Church of the East for the Assyrian community, the Chaldean Church's role in this boundary-making process was multifaceted. In addition to the obvious role of spiritual guidance, it offered a fixed point for all sectors of the community to

come together, from the most recent refugees to the families that have been in the U.S. for several generations. With later generations of Chaldeans less likely to speak Arabic or Syriac, the shared space of the church subsequently takes extra significance, a *raison d'être* for Chaldeans. Yasmeen Hanoosh found the church and the community have cultivated a reciprocal relationship: 'That second-generation, English-speaking Chaldeans are claiming membership in the life of their ethnic Church has endowed the religious institution in its American diaspora with a special symbolic authority over the affairs of the community in spite, or because, of owing its material existence and financial robustness to their initiative and unremitting aid' (Hanoosh 198). The Church's importance as an institution lies not just within its spiritual role, but its ability to bring various elements of Chaldeanness together and share them with its followers. Sengstock observed, 'The [Chaldean] church took on a sort of omnipotent character, being all things to all people in the community' (Sengstock 34). Church officials facilitated the inclusion of non-religious elements to Chaldean identity: as with the Assyrian Church, the Chaldean Church often became a place where the Syriac language is taught and where Chaldean history is both learned and imagined.

As noted, the experience in the U.S. has been markedly different from that in Iraq because the marginalization of Christians is no longer a unifying force. Whilst the Church of the East seeks to retain its followers as a unique Christian tradition, there is a risk for the Church that 'Chaldean' could become synonymous with 'Catholic', ultimately retaining only vague suggestions of its ethnic origins like the myriad Italian, Irish, and Polish Catholic churches throughout America. In this sense, the Church also acts as a boundary-enforcer against Roman Catholicism as well as evangelicals and other Christian sects. As was noted of the San Diego church, 'If you go to it, priests will continuously say, don't attend other churches' (Hanna Interview). The Chaldean experience in Mexico is an example of assimilation into a Catholic society:

There's a lot in Mexico, right? And they've assimilated. They've lost their culture. There's no Chaldean church there. So there's a big thing to say with Chaldean Churches: wherever there's a Chaldean Church in the world, the Chaldean culture will have a chance for survival...[In Mexico] the language is gone, the traditions are gone, everything's gone. See that's one thing that – in this life, the most important thing to preserve the heritage is the church, the Chaldean Church specifically. Because it hangs on to the culture. It's uniting (Arabo Interview).

Given the dominance of Catholicism in Mexico, there was nothing to preclude Chaldean migrants from joining any Catholic Church and forgetting the Chaldean aspect of their identity; indeed, that is precisely what has happened.¹⁶ The success of boundary formation around the Chaldean Church in the U.S., however, is evident in this observation: Chaldean culture is understood here as unique to the Chaldean people, and the Church holds a unique capacity to preserve this legacy.

Bishop Jammo is often cited as a key figure in Chaldean boundary-making. Formerly a priest in Michigan and current Bishop of the Western diocese, he has encouraged the expansion of Church institutions outside the physical church space. The Chaldean Federation of America (CFA) was formed as an umbrella organization in 1981 as an initiative of Jammo, local churches, and local philanthropists to bridge together social service organizations operating in Southeast Michigan and to serve as their collective voice; likewise, he became a leading supporter of the Chaldean National Congress (CNC) soon after its 2002 formation, an attempt to mobilize Chaldean political involvement. The Church, CFA, and the CNC also embraced symbolic elements of Chaldeanness, including the use of a standard Chaldean flag championed by the International Chaldean Artists Association and Reverend Jacob

¹⁶ Mexico's population is estimated from 1,000 to 2,000 Chaldeans (Marten 2007, BetBassoo 2013). Figures for Chaldean immigration to Mexico were not available as Chaldeans, like José Muret Casab, a former governor of Iraqi Chaldean descent, may be considered or define themselves as Arab or Iraqi.

Yasso at the Sacred Heart Chaldean Church in Detroit (Iraq Chaldean Artists Association undated). In 2003, he began using the phrase 'Chaldean Renaissance' in public speeches to bridge together what he saw as Chaldeans' historical contributions to humanity with the present need for a vibrant Chaldean nationalism (Jammo 2013; Shapera 2003).

Jammo's ethnic-building role and pursuit of institutional completeness in San Diego is regarded by many as essential to the Chaldean community:

[Bishop Jammo] started the Kaldu TV, which is the Chaldean media. And he started the educational centre, which is like a private school. So when he came they had like seven churches. Now there's fourteen. He's doubled. He did a seminary, a convent. Because he wants people to retain the culture, the language, the heritage. We're always proud – first and foremost, we're American. We hold on to our culture, we're Chaldean American. Just like any culture, we don't want to be forgotten about. The biggest disservice to our ancestors that fought to stay alive and fled and left millions and millions of dollars for their religious freedom is you have to – at a minimum – keep our heritage alive (Arabo Interview).

Of note is the emphasis of being American, but of being able to be Chaldean within an American context because of the ability to create such organizations and religious institutions. Here, Jammo is growing the church to reach the population, maintaining social boundaries by maintaining religious boundaries. Intertwining this role as a Church leader is therefore that of a diasporic nation-builder. To observers, a change in Chaldean awakening was palpable following the Iraq War:

While Saddam was in power, you hardly heard of a Chaldean nationalism, Chaldean flag...The whole construction of the Chaldean nationhood, the Chaldean flag...there's a Chaldean Martyr's Day, and there's a Chaldean New Year. It's the same time, but it's older. *Hundreds* of years older (Jatou Interview).

There are internal tensions within the Chaldean Church itself over its role in nation-building. Patriarch Delly assumed a mantle of Chaldean nationalism when he stated in 2006 that 'Any Chaldean who calls himself Assyrian is a traitor, and any Assyrian who calls himself Chaldean is a traitor' (Quoted in Hanoosh 35). Delly's successor, Patriarch Sako, however, has distanced himself from ethnic politics, favouring a more Christian universalist approach to identity. Sako suggested recently, for example, that Assyrians and Chaldeans could be recognized as Arameans in the forthcoming Kurdish constitution, stressing the community needs to refocus its emphasis on Christianity more than ethnicity (Catholic World News 2015).

Bishop Ibrahim, speaking before a Chaldean nationalist forum, did not shy away from expressing frustration at Sako's calls to distance the Church from nationalism, stating the Patriarch's denial of Chaldean identity is 'unacceptable for us. We don't need specialists to tell us we are Chaldeans...The Assyrians are Assyrians, the Syriacs are Syriacs, the Kurds are Kurds and the Arabs are Arabs' (Ibrahim 2013, Translated by Amboulus). Chaldeanness is thus distinguished as separate from these ethnic groups whose identity Chaldeans are often assumed under. Church leaders may in part be motivated to emulate the Church of the East's historic role in Assyrian nationalism to cultivate a boundary protecting its own identity and religious and social role.

The Church is intrinsically linked to the establishment of symbols of Chaldeanness: a flag, holidays, its historical underpinnings. The American context is formative to Chaldean boundary expansion because American society both creates conditions for assimilation and allows means of institution-building and ethnic expression to work against assimilation. Local civic organizations have since developed in cultural, business, and humanitarian spheres to compliment the work of the church, to fill a void where practicable, or to offer a secular alternative. The institutional completeness brought by civic expansion appears, at present, to be strongly

developing in Detroit. In part, the size of the population allowed greater capacity for a diversity of organizations; yet, despite its size, a relatively cohesive structure headed by few key individuals emerged and remains.

Sengstock, in a 1978 study utilizing data compiled in the 1960s, considered Detroit's Chaldean community in the context of Breton's institutional completeness. She found there was present only one of three factors which he emphasized as essential to institutional completeness: the ethnic church, but not yet ethnic-specific newspapers or welfare organizations (Sengstock 1978: 55-56). She found that despite such absences, participation within the ethnic community remained high, and suggested three other factors compensated for solidarity in the absence of Breton's indexes: ethnic occupation, in which many Chaldean households are involved in some capacity in the grocery and its subsidiary industries; high rates of endogamy; and residential proximity. Sengstock's findings of this period therefore offer a marked point of contrast with the present: they do not disprove Breton's theory so much as underscore the nascence of the Chaldean community at the time of her study. The Chaldean solidarity her study sought to explain was aided by a continual stream of new immigrants fleeing Ba'athist Iraq. As assimilation and integration have ensued in the following decades, the non-Church factors to which solidarity was attributed have begun to wane, particularly as the community grows and spreads across Metropolitan Detroit; Breton's institutions then found lacking have since appeared. The San Diego community, by comparison, is developing both Sengstock's and Breton's indicators as its population grows, perhaps mimicking successful organizations found within the Detroit community.

Detroit's Chaldean organizational network was best described by Hanoosh as 'a symbiotic circuit' because of the interconnectedness of organizations and individuals (Hanoosh 2011: 132). Seemingly all Chaldean roads in recent years led to the Church, the Chaldean Federation of America, or, increasingly, the Chaldean Chamber

of Commerce. The civic portion of this circuit was headed by Michael George, a highly-respected, longstanding community leader known as the ‘Chaldean Godfather’ and Chairman Emeritus of CFA until his recent death in June 2014; David Nona, Chairman of CFA and co-founder and past Chairman of the Chaldean Chamber of Commerce; Joseph Kassab, former Executive Director of CFA and former Executive Director of the Chaldean National Congress; and Martin Manna, current Executive Director of the Chaldean Chamber. However, whilst this mutually-reinforcing structure is organized by few individuals, its reach extends to the wider community. A 2000 community survey, for example, found sixty-two percent of Chaldeans in Michigan reported belonging to at least one organization, of which eighty-two percent were Chaldean organizations (Henrich and Henrich 87).

Growth of the Chaldean cultural sphere accelerated rapidly in recent years. The Chaldean Iraqi American Association of Michigan was amongst the first community-wide organizations, formed in 1965 by 60 families to establish a social club and gathering space; it has since grown to 900 members (Bacall and Ball Interview). CIAAM has operated the Southfield Manor Banquet Hall since the 1970s on land purchased from the Church as a community event space; it opened the Shenandoah Country Club in 2005, an estimated \$25 million venue which also hosts the Chaldean Cultural Center (Hanoosh 133). The Cultural Center, supported by CFA and the Chamber, is in the process of building the first Chaldean Historical Museum, which will be located in Shenandoah (Romaya Interview 2012). Additionally, Bishop Ibrahim is working to construct a library dedicated to works on Chaldean history and culture that will likewise be affiliated with the Cultural Center (Author Interview Notes 2013). Media ventures include the Chaldean News, a weekly newspaper started and co-managed by Manna, and the Chaldean Voice, a radio station formed with the assistance of Ibrahim, who also provided programming content.

These combined efforts curate an 'official' narrative of Chaldeanness, backed by these institutions, that celebrates Chaldean history and accomplishments in a solely Chaldean and Chaldean-American context. Mary Romaya, Director of the Cultural Center, stressed the target audience of the Center's cumulative works is both American-born generations of Chaldeans who risk distancing from their heritage and the American population in general: 'We want them to know who we are, our unique place in history, our unique heritage, our unique language, and that we're really an ancient people, but an ancient people that has not gone out of existence - that we're still a vibrant, living community' (Romaya Interview 2012).

Business-related organizations include the Chaldean American Chamber of Commerce, run by Manna, which represents approximately 800 members and more than 3,500 business interests (Chaldean American Chamber 2015b: 8). The Detroit Independent Grocers, an affiliate of the Chamber, operates as a niche advocacy organization given the importance of the grocery business to the diaspora. Additionally, responding to the inability of non-citizens to secure loans to start a business, George created Metro Detroit Investment, which helped finance an estimated 700 businesses, most of which were or are Chaldean-owned, and in 2005 spearheaded the establishment of the Bank of Michigan to offer banking services to community members and small businesses (George Enterprises 2014). However, as next-generation Chaldeans are more likely to attain higher levels of education, professionals are less likely to enter into the food and hospitality business; to that end, professional affiliations become an alternative means to continue ethnic engagement. Professional groups include the Chaldean-American Bar Association, the Chaldean American Association for Health Professionals, and the Chaldean American Medical Student Association.

Additionally, social services and humanitarian organizations, which are essential to supporting newly-arrived members, receive support through business organizations,

the Churches, and the wider community. The Chaldean-American Ladies of Charity was formed with the aid of the Chaldean Church in 1961 to assist refugees leaving Iraq, and today provides assistance to families, seniors and new refugees. CALC is a member of the CFA umbrella, which also offers assistance through the overseas Adopt-a-Refugee Program - which distributes aid directly through churches in Iraq - and the Operation R4 (Research, Rescue, Relief and Resettle) programs. COACH (Chaldean Outreach and Community Hope), also part of the CFA umbrella, specializes in engaging refugee youth. Additionally, the Chaldean Community Foundation, the charitable branch of the Chamber, operates a wide-ranging social services mission, including refugee resettlement assistance; mental health services; Project Bismutha, which provides free medical health services to the uninsured through partnership with the Chaldean American Association for Health Professionals; the Chaldean Loan Fund, which provides small loans to non-citizens to help with the purchase of a car through partnership with the Bank of Michigan; student scholarships; and donations to churches to support construction projects or humanitarian aid.

The point in this organizational breakdown is not that similar organizations cannot be found in other ethnic communities or the Assyrian community: the point is that Detroit's Chaldean community has been successful in creating a tight-knit yet wide-reaching institutional structure, the presence of which begins to answer how Chaldean identity has remained dominant in Detroit. Observed here is Stinchcombe's finding that 'the solidarity of communal groups is intimately dependent on their degree of formal organization', with formal organizations serving to protect smaller group interests within the larger community and building a degree of homogeneity amongst group members (Stinchcombe 191).

There is a professionalizing, concerted effort, fueled by continued waves of immigration, to serve the community in a way that reinforces Chaldean belonging.

Significantly, the newness of many of these organizations suggests Chaldean identity may be strengthening in Metropolitan Detroit, positioning the community as a long-term presence rather than one tending towards assimilation. Although Manna notes the Chamber officially embraces Assyrians and Syriacs as part of one community shared with Chaldeans, the combined effect of the Chamber's institutions nonetheless serves to reinforce a Chaldean identity and solidify the Chaldean name in public discourse (Manna Interview 2014). For example, a recent flyer published by the Chamber and the Cultural Center, 'Chaldean Americans', notes in the introductory paragraph that Chaldeans are 'among the many ethnic groups that immigrated to the Metropolitan Detroit area' and are an 'Eastern Rite Catholic, Aramaic-speaking, ethnic group originating primarily from Iraq' without any mention of Assyrians (CARE et al undated). Sengstock likewise observed the role of organizations, specifically CFA, in promoting a secular Chaldean identity, thereby reinforcing an ethnic understanding in which Chaldeans who have left the Church remain Chaldean (Sengstock 1999: 183-184).

The closely-knit network of Chaldean institutions subsequently facilitates a common narrative and a consistent, reiterative expression of who Chaldeans are to Chaldeans and non-Chaldeans alike, and is thus consequential to shaping and maintaining boundaries. It has proven capable of absorbing new immigrants and instilling a Chaldean identity. For example, Sengstock recalled anticipation during the 1980s and 1990s that a split in Detroit's Chaldean community was foreseeable as new immigrants who identified as Iraqi Christian or Arab Christian, the result of Arabization policies, might potentially align themselves with the Arab community at the expense of the Chaldean population (Author Interview Notes 2012). Instead, there was relatively little discord and these immigrants 'became' Chaldean. Ibrahim similarly observed immigrants switched from considering themselves Arab to Chaldean, discovering the name and their belonging through engagement with the Church and wider community (Author Interview Notes 2013). Non-identification

remains a considerable challenge with the post-2003 population for Chaldeans and Assyrians alike, further reinforcing the necessity of the institutional framework to capture new immigrants. There remain, of course, divisions and contestations within the Detroit population over things like village of origin, whether one's family is from TelKepe, when one's family immigrated, if they live in Oakland or Macomb County; however, these minor boundaries have not become salient to Chaldean boundary criteria.

The Chaldean network in Detroit, as evident, has sought avenues into many aspects of Chaldean life. Manna states community leaders are learning to be more proactive instead of reactionary: after having in the past built programs to respond to immediate needs, leaders are now trying to project a long-term vision, modeled in part after the successful example set by the area's Jewish community, which operates a wide-range of social services and community-centered facilities (Manna Interview 2014). The institutional completeness and strength of the Chaldean boundary within Detroit subsequently precluded Assyrian organizations from firmly taking root in Detroit's Chaldean structure. Assyrian organizations, such as ADM and AAS, are present, but have a small presence that can often go unobserved.¹⁷ The expansion of Chaldean institutions reinforces Breton's observation that institutional completeness is self-reinforcing, expanding with each wave of migration and driving institutional growth to accommodate the new population. Moreover, the community's continued growth suggests a boundary shifting taking place in which Chaldeans are part of the Detroit-area social and economic fabric.

Whilst the San Diego community is connected to Detroit through a multitude of familial and commercial ties, San Diego does not yet have an institutional structure

¹⁷ AAS Michigan, for example, took in approximately \$2,300 in local donations in 2012, compared to over \$100,000 raised by its Chicago counterpart (AAS 2012). By contrast, the Adopt-a-Refugee program raised over \$800,000 from its founding in 2007 to 2009 (Marten 2009).

as comprehensive as Detroit. Given the small presence of Chaldean civic institutions in San Diego, the influx of Chaldean refugees after 2005 strained the capacity of the community to respond effectively. Chaldean and Middle-Eastern Social Services, also part of CFA, was formed in 2008 to provide refugees with health and mental health services. Additionally, business leaders like Noori Barka, President of the Chaldean American Institute, and Mark Arabo, head of the Neighborhood Market Association, have used their influence to facilitate humanitarian assistance through existing non-Chaldean charitable structures like the Boys and Girls Club, the YMCA, the Knights of Columbus, which now has a branch affiliated with the local Chaldean Church, and through the Chaldean Church. Of these diaspora-driven efforts:

There are different organizations, like I work with the Boys and Girls Club...I'm on the board. I was able to help maybe 80 kids from our community to join...They didn't expect that many people coming, so they have to sometimes increase their capacity...And we have the YMCA here also. So we try to depend on these organizations to help these people, because ourselves, we don't have the self-help, we don't have the power, we don't have the system to do this kind of programming. It takes a lot of work, actually. But what we do, we try to work with them, support them, so they can support our people (Barka Interview);

We're working with the county government and state government to try to get grants from the federal government to help with the refugee settlements and stuff like that. We look at every Chaldean, we might not know them in our whole life, but we see them and it's one of our family members. Every year, we donate like 1,000 mattresses, 1,000 blankets, 1,000 toys. We bring Christmas to refugee kids that don't have a Christmas...There's no group that's set up for them in the West coast. There's nothing out here. There's stuff in Michigan, but California's out of sight, out of mind. So we have to take on our own to give back and help (Arabo Interview).

The lack of an institutional structure encourages elite competition because of the potential to assume a leadership void; however, such competition is curtailed somewhat by the role of the Church. In San Diego, too, the Chaldean Church remains formative under Jammo's leadership.

The expanding Chaldean population, however, may ultimately lead to a stronger civic structure, connected to but distanced from the Church. Recently, civic representation of the community was contested through two newly-formed chambers of commerce, in which the Chaldean American Chamber of Commerce of California, with approximately 200 members, and the San Diego East County Chaldean American Chamber of Commerce, with approximately 130 members, were fighting for preeminence (Barragan 2014). Although the fight, on its surface, was about representation of the area's Chaldean businesses, it also reflected, as one organization's leader told the Los Angeles Times, a shared acknowledgment there is opportunity to build a strong structure and become a leading Chaldean voice in California: 'The perennial issue is that there was a void for a statewide organization to represent our interests at the local, state and federal level, as well as internationally. We're filling that void' (ibid). Thus, elite competition is at play in a way that seems central to Chaldean self-narratives, aiding Chaldean development through representing Chaldean economic interests.

Chaldean integration faces hardships like any ethnic group. Chaldeans in Detroit and San Diego endure negative yet contradictory stereotypes: on the one extreme, they are wealthy, corrupt, flashy, receive a tax exemption from the government or whatever xenophobic urban legend regarding immigrants prevails; on the other, they are poor, unwilling to work, and leeching off government handouts. The lack of social services to support refugee adjustment was particularly felt in San Diego, and consequentially resistance to the growing Chaldean population has been encountered with local society, unforgiving of the trauma suffered under the American-led war and the poor economy into which refugees arrived. Negative perceptions were furthered by a 2011 incident in which sixty Chaldeans were arrested for drug and weapons trafficking in aid to a drug cartel (Associated Press 2011). In 2013, El Cajon's then-Mayor Mark Lewis criticized Chaldeans, arguing refugees manipulate

social services and tax incentives to receive benefits - specifically that schoolchildren receive free lunches before 'being picked up by Mercedes Benzes' and that 'it doesn't take them too long to learn where all the freebies are at' (Gupta 2013).

Statements like these suggest that whilst Chaldeans are making a presence in San Diego, aiding refugee integration and developing institutions, a boundary shift in the local population is ongoing as elites navigate bias and misinformation that hardens local boundaries. Efforts like Barka's, in reaching out to the local community, demonstrate how elites are active participants in boundary negotiation, attempting to redefine and correct outside perceptions and put forward Chaldeans' own narratives of who they are and how they contribute to society. Barka noted Chaldean institutions are bringing together small, local Chaldean organizations to build unity and become more self-sustaining: the intention is to develop an infrastructure more comparable to Detroit, which is seen as possessing a successful Chaldean infrastructure and engaged leadership, the result of being an older community that developed such infrastructure over time (Barka Interview).

Chaldean –and Assyrian- diasporic elites therefore work to integrate the diaspora into American society, aiming to form a diasporic nation as part of society, not isolated from it. From the Chaldean experience, it is evident boundary shifting is not a uniform process but occurs at multiple levels and reoccurs upon encountering different communities. An embrace of Chaldeans by state officials in Michigan and residents in one city does not preclude encountering tensions as the population expands to other suburbs. Cultural diacritica narrating who Chaldeans are may take different emphases in relation to different communities, placing emphasis on religious values in one context and on economic roles in another. Likewise, that California politicians rallied to support Chaldeans against mayoral prejudice demonstrates acceptance from political elites does not negate individual or local discrimination. Boundaries are not formed or shifted at once, but many times, in

relation to many groups, and are constantly being reshaped and questioned. The desire to build successful ethnic institutions speaks to the larger desire to increase the institutional presence of Chaldeans and secure the diaspora's boundaries against assimilation but still remain part of American society. Whilst the same dynamic certainly occurred within the Assyrian experience, that specifically Chaldean boundaries result in Detroit and San Diego consequentially strengthens the salience of Chaldean identity.

NATIONALIST POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

Nationally-focused political organizations represent a more modern development in Assyrian and Chaldean institution-building, cultivated by the changing role of the Iraq state under the Ba'ath Party, increased dispersion, and an absence of national leadership. In this sense, the organizations and the national claims they represent are a reaction to changing international boundaries and weak diasporic ones. Like ethnic institutions, they reinforce a common understanding of the nation, but from there cultivate ideologies for the Assyrian and Chaldean nation, and thereby shape nationalism and political goals on behalf of the diasporic nation or the homeland. Here, the contrast between the Assyrian and Chaldean communities is evident as Assyrian organizations formed with clear national ideologies whilst Chaldean political organizations only emerged in the past decade, largely in response to outside circumstances and pressures on Chaldean boundaries, notably the Iraq War and Assyrian political demands.

Nationalist political organizations are significant because they cultivate an ideology for diaspora beyond simply narrating 'who' the diaspora is. Providing a cause for national identity is especially meaningful to small nations, who, as Hroch found, 'never regarded their existence as self-evident: they felt endangered for a very long time...Only successful national agitation, and consequently the acceptance of new

national identity by the mass of the population guaranteed an irreversible national existence' (Hroch 2010: 884). Here, drawing on Breuille's theory, these organizations mark the appearance of nationalism by channeling Assyrian and Chaldean history, culture, and values into political claims (Breuille 1993). This section therefore examines why political institutions formed and how they came to shape nationalism.

Nationalist political organizations are thus understood as those which seek to define political goals and make political decisions on behalf of Assyrians or Chaldeans, which can include but is not exclusive to the pursuit of political representation. The focus of such organizations may reflect long-distance nationalism to Iraq or diasporic nationalism to the diaspora itself. Political organizations represent a turning point from a localized focus on membership retention and boundary negotiation to the diaspora's political needs and its future.

In contrast to the previous section, however, this typology is weighted heavily in examination of the Assyrian community. Such contrast reveals a general absence of Chaldean political engagement until the Iraq War. This at first reinforces cultural assumptions that Chaldeans have tended to be apolitical and Assyrians more nationalistic. However, it also suggests a different understanding of social boundaries between Assyrian and Chaldean elites, and subsequently different reactions to changing Iraqi boundaries. The emergence of Assyrian political organizations against Ba'ath repression underscores the ethno-national understanding of Assyrianism and its long history of demanding national and ethnic recognition. The lack of Chaldean political mobilization instead suggests the Chaldean boundary was until recently less understood by ethnic criteria, having defined boundaries in line with the sectarian criteria of the Chaldean Church, which remained relatively unthreatened prior to the Iraq War.

In the Assyrian experience, three politically-focused organizations emerged as dominant within the American diaspora: the Assyrian Universal Alliance (AUA), the Bet-Nahrain Democratic Party (BNDP), and the Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM). Of these, BNDP and ADM are political organizations. They have positioned themselves as harbingers of different understandings of Assyrian nationalism: BNDP as a strongly nationalist voice for an Assyrian homeland; ADM as a more moderate voice for recognition and inclusion. The contrast demonstrates elite competition over diasporic representation, as well as different understandings of how much the Assyrian nation's survival is contingent on possessing territory.

The presence of Chaldean political organizations in diaspora was more recent. Political representation is often assumed by leaders of the Chaldean Church, both out of tradition and necessity given the shortage of secular alternatives. It is not until the lead-up to the Iraq War and corresponding change in Iraqi boundaries that an effort at political organizing emerged through the former Chaldean National Congress and the current Chaldean Democratic Forum. The latter primarily supports Chaldean democratic rights within Iraq and aides Chaldean-inclusive political parties in Iraq. However, there is not yet a key figurehead or organization that inspires widespread political allegiance or is seen as a legitimate political representative other than, still, the Church.

Assyrian Political Organizations

The emergence of Assyrian political organizations marks a significant evolution in Assyrian nation-building. Their presence has taken the nationalism carried by the Assyrian Church and cultural institutions and appropriated it as an objective to be contested in the political sphere. Political organizations thus served to further secularize Assyrian nationalism, providing members of the ethnic community with formulations of long-term goals and ways to actively contest such goals. They

instituted an effort to define who Assyrians are that further supports an ethnic-based, multi-denominational understanding of the Assyrian nation.

It is perhaps easier to understand the focus placed upon cross-denominational unity by considering the challenges Assyrians will face if those factions fully splinter. Without a claim to Chaldeans, Assyrian nationalism loses claim to the overwhelming majority of Iraq's Christian population. Prior to 2003, the Chaldean Church was posed as the dominant Christian presence in Iraq given its larger population and base of its Church in Baghdad, as opposed to the Church of the East, which is seated in the U.S. and largely spread in diaspora across the globe. The efficacy of Assyrianism as a political project is curtailed without a sizable Assyrian population. Thus, the importance of a broader, ethnic-based Assyrian identity matters as much for practical political claims as it does for ideological and national ones.

Yet through the first half of the 20th century, as noted above, the Patriarch's leadership implicitly equated Assyrians with the Church of the East, demanding autonomy for this population, displaced as refugees from Anatolia into Iraq and displaced as refugees from the Middle East into America. As the international community remained unresponsive, the Patriarch transitioned his advocacy to acknowledging the permanency of diaspora, working instead to cultivate relations with leaders of states containing Assyrian populations to encourage the protection of Assyrian rights therein (Mar Shimun Memorial Foundation 2015). Observed here is a transition from traditional nationalism, the desire for a self-ruled *atra*, to diasporic nationalism, building a diasporic nation within respective states of resettlement. Dinkha was also nationalistic, but often less directly political, a position perhaps reflecting the political limitations under Ba'ath rule and as a diasporic Church.

There remains a struggle in rectifying the role of the Church with a diversified national identity. As political organizations' early works contested Arabization

policies, they too insisted upon the national and ethnic nature of the Assyrian name, aspiring to balance the importance of Christianity with the historical legacy of ancient Assyria (Petrosian 2006: 135-139). Building their parties on the legacy of nationalism and political advocacy forced upon Shimun, their presence argued for a passing of the national torch to professional political actors.

Present in the early iterations of Assyrian political organizations are a combination of unfulfilled League of Nations-era demands for territorial and political autonomy and the pro-democratic rhetoric of recognition and inclusion. The multi-decades presence these organizations have since sustained has legitimized them as representatives of the Assyrian community, albeit to differing constituencies, and positioned them as an existing voice against the Hussein regime when the 2003 War began. As was observed, political affinities do provide another wedge within the diaspora:

It's incredibly hard to organize the diaspora because historically we've been already divided by these identities, church lines or whatever. And if you aren't being divided by that, amongst Assyrians, you are divided by various political allegiances – whether you are more ADM or not, whether you are more AUA or not, et cetera (Abbo et al Interview).

There are multiple layers of internal wedges – ideological, religious, political – and thus multiple avenues for elite competition to play out. That differing ideologies and allegiances have come to exist and remain actively contested marks a significant evolution in the national movement. Moreover, as Abbo commented in this chapter's earlier quote, this nature of organizational jockeying demonstrates the absence of a political structure or external mechanism to define legitimate representation: diasporic boundary creation and the political representation thereof is solely the province of dedicated individuals.

In the AUA's American diasporic centers, local leadership is elected to coordinate advocacy work, maintain relationships with the local community and officials, and keep involved with local issues to assist where possible and to share concerns with the wider diaspora; central leadership often meets with political figures and bodies regarding policy and political aims (Tamraz Interview 2013). Leadership under the late Illinois State Senator John Nimrod in the 1990s pursued increased international political engagement, promoting the organization to become a member of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) and receive consultative status with the United Nations for AUA's Americas Chapter in 2013 (Tamraz Interview; UN Economic and Security Council 2013). Engagement with political officials was continued by Yonathan Betkolia, Secretary General since 2008, a founding member of the AUA under whom leadership has returned to Iran, where he also serves as a Member of Parliament; Emmanuel Kamber, who served as Secretary General from 2005 until 2007; and Carlo Ganjeh, AUA's Secretary of the Americas. The AUA has experienced some success in positioning itself as a leading representative of Assyrian causes given its international support and skill of its leadership, and offers a global voice for Assyrian issues, but is itself not a political party. As such, its purpose as a single representative of the Assyrian people has not been fully embraced by the whole diaspora as it is challenged by the rise of political organizations with competing ideologies.

The entirety of political disagreements between the most prominent political organizations in the diaspora, the BNDP and ADM, is outside the scope of this chapter; however, there are a few key differences relevant to their respective post-war advocacy. The BNDP's strong nationalist goals often prompt supporters to challenge the ADM as insufficiently nationalist or a corrupted entity; too supportive of the Kurdish government; or dividing the community by recognizing the Chaldean name. The ADM, by contrast, highlights its legitimacy earned from fighting Hussein and, later, as the only elected representative of the Assyrian, Chaldean, and Syriac

people in Iraq: its supporters contend the BNDP is simply a product of the diaspora and is unsuccessful in Iraq; that the BNDP's positions are mere rhetoric because it has not been elected to work in Iraq's political structure.

The more nationalist of these parties, the Bet-Nahrain Democratic Party (BNDP), founded by Sargon Dadesho, is guided by its motto of 'An Autonomous State for Assyrians in Bet-Nahrain' (BNDP 1976). The BNDP's efficacy at achieving tangible political outcomes was nonetheless exceedingly limited given its location in the U.S. and Iraq's unwelcomeness towards non-Ba'athist activity. In this sense, the BNDP is perhaps better framed as a diasporic political organization rather than an Iraqi political party, a purveyor of Assyrian statehood demands and long-distance nationalism for those in diaspora.

In 1983, Dadesho formed the Assyrian National Congress (ANC) as a political umbrella organization incorporating the BNDP and the little-known, Modesto-based Assyrian American Leadership Council. Dadesho wrote of founding the ANC that the Assyrian people suffer from a 'vacuum of leadership', a role the ANC aspired to fill (Dadesho 1988: 93).¹⁸ Its founding was likely motivated by several factors, including the ability to lobby the U.S. government, from which the BNDP is more restricted as a registered as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. The ANC also fits in the following typology of a lobbying organization because it claims to serve as a representative and policy-maker on behalf of the community.

Indeed, Dadesho has emphasized building cultural understanding and national pride as the foundation to his long-term national strategy, under which he urged diasporic pockets globally to push for cultural autonomy and civic and political rights in their

¹⁸ Dadesho's reputation as an anti-Ba'athist dissident was solidified when, in 1990, an attempted assassination ordered by the Ba'ath regime was thwarted by the FBI and Dadesho was awarded a \$1.5 million court settlement against the Iraqi government (Pasztor 1998).

own separate states. This emphasis is echoed frequently throughout Dadesho's writings of the 1970s and 1980s for *Bet Nahrain* magazine. A 1975 editorial, for example, 'The Awakening of Assyrian Nationalism', outlines a three-stage national movement that began with the formation of the AUA, is followed by the pursuit of minority rights in the homeland, and ultimately leads to a reunification of the dispersed Assyrian people in an Assyrian homeland (Dadesho 11).

Thus, there was a conscious effort by Dadesho and the BNDP/ANC to create a national movement within the Assyrian diaspora. Dadesho wrote Assyrians need to build 'The concept of "DIASPORA NATIONALISM", the idea that the Assyrians - despite the lack of a geopolitical homeland - still constituted a distinct nationality' (Dadesho 93, emphasis in original). This phrase is adapted directly from Urofsky's aforementioned work, in which he notes Jewish socialists adapted 'Diaspora nationalism' in the absence of a homeland (Urofsky 1976: 32-33). This lent itself well to Dadesho's ideology, that a diaspora could maintain and propagate a scattered nation until a state could be achieved, using liberal democratic rights and institutional completeness to protect diasporic people and culture. Diasporic nationalism, thus, is used to compensate for the absence of a state. Dadesho's use of this concept is telling of the influence of the Jewish experience to other diasporas. Given the endurance of the American Jewish diaspora, it is hardly surprising other populations would emulate the Jewish model. That Dadesho exercises a conscious effort to emulate diasporic nationalism underscores the centrality of organizations like the BNDP to creating a diasporic consciousness and projecting political and national aims on behalf of that consciousness. The BNDP, then, embodies localism, diasporic nationalism, and long-distance nationalism.

To this end, the BNDP often positions itself as the guardian of a pure Assyrian identity, sometimes literally, having used the banner 'Bet Nahrain Democratic Party: The Guardian of the Assyrian Nation' at its annual congresses. The ANC's motto of

'Let Us Unite And Gather The Fragments That Nothing Be Lost' and goals in support thereof asserts Assyrian identity and rebukes the policies of rival organizations viewed as too accommodating of the Chaldean identity, and rebukes the Chaldean-identifying population itself (Dadesho 2006; Assyrian National Congress 2000). It opposes the use of a hybrid name, such as Assyrian/Chaldean or ChaldoAssyrian, and criticizes organizations that do as dividing the nation, with shades of suggesting treasonous or 'Ba'athist' intentions. For example, Dadesho filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Census Bureau in July 2000 in a failed attempt to thwart a compromise agreement between the Census Bureau, Chaldean organizations, and Assyrian organizations to change the 1990 'Assyrian' ethnic designation to that of 'Chaldean/Assyrian/Syriac' for the 2000 Census. Other Assyrian organizations, including the AUA and ADM, accepted this compromise after prolonged protest to avoid having 'Chaldean' listed as its own designation (Hanna Interview; Kulish 2001). Although the courts ultimately dismissed the lawsuit, the suit served a larger purpose to rally BNDP supporters around a shared outrage, a grievance that is still referenced today.¹⁹

The ANC, like the AUA and AANF, holds an annual convention that attracts supporters from across the diaspora and local politicians, and issues a yearly resolution directing advocacy for the coming year; the content of these resolutions typically reiterate a consistent agenda with the ultimate goal of Assyrians reunited in their homeland (For example, Assyrian National Congress 2001). Desiring an international presence, over the past two decades the ANC has also sought, but not yet achieved, consultative status with the UN (UN Economic and Security Council 2014; UN 2000). Thus, whilst the BNDP/ANC pursues institutional completeness in

¹⁹ Assyrian National Congress of America v. Bureau of the Census, 3 March 2000, U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California, which was dismissed on summary judgment October 5, 2000. The ANC's Motion for Reconsideration was denied 15 November 2000.

its local area of California, it simultaneously seeks political influence and national credibility to shape Assyrian nationalism across the diaspora.

The BNDP's origins represent an entirely different experience from the formation of the Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM or Zowaa). The ADM emerged from Iraq, the product of Ba'ath repression and displacement. Its motto, 'A free democratic Iraq and recognition of the Assyrian national existence', calls to more pragmatic objectives of the Ba'ath era from which it emerged. Such pragmatism proved attractive to those who were skeptical of a national pursuit or considered it unfeasible, as a member of San Jose's ADM Chapter commented:

I decided to get involved because, like I said, the only thing we have left for the Assyrians is really back home. Everyone in the diaspora...we're all going to go and melt...I wanted to help somehow, and this is the group that really - even though it's a political group - it's the only group that's really working for our cause. And the cause is basically very simple. And that's how they started: it was only a few handful of people, and they revolted in a way against the government of Saddam Hussein and went to the mountains...the only thing they were asking for is the recognition of the Assyrian identity or the ethnicity. As the Arabs are recognized, the Kurds are recognized, so should the Assyrians (ADM Interview).

Here, both an understanding of the ADM as the legitimate remaining Assyrian voice in Iraq and as acting in furtherance of a simple, reasonable demand - that of ethnic recognition - are presented. The ADM's history as a persecuted institution further strengthens its reputation within the diaspora. ADM supporters were targeted by Ba'ath authorities; its founders were murdered by Hussein's regime, the martyrdom of whom is well-known amongst ADM supporters. Yonadam Kanna, ADM's Secretary General, was sentenced to death in absentia twice by the Iraqi government in 1984 for charges of acting against the government. The violent repression eventually led ADM into an alliance with Kurdish nationalists. A faction of the ADM became militarized, fighting alongside the Iraqi Kurdistan Front against Iraqi forces following

the Anfal campaign. ADM officials, including Kanna, were elected to Kurdish Parliament beginning in 1992, holding four of five Assyrian-allocated seats (Petrosian 136-137). This alliance was highly controversial amongst Assyrians who remembered the Kurdish history of attacks on Assyrian villages and participation in the Armenian Genocide; at the same time, such actions legitimized the ADM as a pro-Assyrian entity literally on the frontlines against Hussein.

The ADM's position as an Iraqi-based organization was fundamentally different than the BNDP's diasporic origins. However, underscoring the importance of the diaspora and its resources, ADM established a direct presence within the American diaspora. Whereas the BNDP was able to embed itself into a key Assyrian population center through the provision of ethnic services and cultural events, the ADM faced a different challenge of integrating itself and attracting a dedicated membership while maintaining the supremacy of its central control in Iraq. It established international party offices, including chapters in Michigan, Illinois, and California, whilst maintaining a centralized structure that allows chapters guided autonomy to engage with the local population and local officials (ADM Interview).

The ADM's structure emphasizes the transnationalism of the Assyrian community. In essence, it recognizes the Assyrian nation is diasporic, acting under the pretense of a diasporic structure that can be tapped into, cultivating long-distance nationalism from its diasporic members towards political claims in Iraq. It is foremost an Iraqi political party, and acts and responds as such: it pursues a diasporic network and engagement, but also attempts to avoid alienating Iraq's larger Chaldean population. As one member noted, after the 2003 War, the ADM changed its policy regarding the Chaldean name in a direct effort to accommodate Chaldeans, recognizing the need to be representative of Iraq's demographics (ADM Interview). That democratic inclusion was central to ADM's ideology positioned it as more able to cede recognition of Chaldeans than its counterparts. Thus, whilst the ADM is a national

Assyrian party in the sense it seeks to represent the Assyrian nation and pursues policies on its behalf, it rarely uses the rhetoric of a territorial or separatist nationalism. Its nationalism, rather, works within the confines of the Iraqi state and the KRG, rather than being confined by them - a tension encountered by the grand territorial rhetoric of the BNDP, for example.

The ADM, as a political entity, pursues relationships with the U.S. because of the government's sustained involvement in Iraqi affairs. Kanna and other senior ADM officials meet with the State Department and Members of Congress who represent Assyrian populations; likewise, the ADM structure encourages its supporters and local officials to do the same. It was through the success of diasporic engagement that the Bush Administration recognized the ADM in 2002 as an official democratic opposition movement under the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998 (P.D. 2003-05). Simultaneously, as the next chapter considers, the Bush Administration began including Kanna in gatherings of the official Iraqi opposition as a direct result of diasporic lobbying.

Additionally, while the ADM cultivated status as the preeminent Assyrian political party in Iraq, it expanded its reach after 1991 with the formation of the Assyrian Aid Society (AAS) to solicit diasporic financial assistance and administer humanitarian aid and reconstruction projects in Iraq following the Gulf War. AAS was one of the first organizations recognized by the UN to help coordinate reconstruction projects and food and medicine distribution in the war's aftermath, and later gained official UN consultative status in 2011 (Babella Interview; AAS UK Branch 2007). AAS has since developed and administers Syriac-language schools in Northern Iraq and the KRG, the only such schools in either area.

ADM thus pursues a measure of institutional completeness in Iraq through constructing Assyrian institutions, schools, and relief programs, and the American

diaspora aids in that process. Yet it does not fully pursue a similar structure in the U.S. and its efforts are instead more targeted to supporting its Iraqi needs and political agenda, the foundation of which is a continued Assyrian presence in the *atra*. It is strengthened by support from the diaspora, but its accountability lies within the Iraqi constituency from which it is elected. Its success therein, consequentially, substantiates the ADM as an Assyrian representative to American policy-makers with whom it seeks influence. Thus, ADM supports diasporic nation-building by cultivating long-distance nationalism to Iraq, reinforcing the Assyrian nation is a transnational nation with a tangible homeland and offering an ideological and practical purpose for diasporic engagement.

The popular appeal of these parties grew because they sought tangible change by actively contesting the Iraqi state for the rights of Assyrians in ways that the church or other diasporic organizations could not. That members in the diaspora remain highly engaged in debating the merits of such political organizations speaks to the parties' success in positioning themselves as harbingers of Assyrian nationalism; it further speaks to a desire of the wider diaspora to be politically involved.

Nationalism and political demands provide ideological purpose for the nation and connectivity across the diaspora. This marks a meaningful development in building a diasporic nation confined by yet transcending American borders.

Chaldean Political Organizations

The Chaldean community's post-Iraq War development in many ways parallels that of the political organizing which occurred in the Assyrian community in the 1970s, compelled by external forces in Iraq and in pursuit of differing political ideologies. Yet Chaldean-specific political organizations - the Chaldean National Congress (CNC) and the Chaldean Democratic Forum (CDF) - appear disinclined to display a nationalism comparable to that found in their Assyrian counterparts.

Historically, like the Assyrian Church, the Chaldean Patriarch served as the representative of the Chaldean community. Successive Patriarchs used their role to ensure the continued freedom of worship and safety of Church followers; in an Iraqi context, the Patriarch's role was not dissimilar from the advocacy undertaken by leaders of religious minorities in authoritarian states (McCallum 2007). Unlike Assyrianism under the Ba'ath Party, a Chaldean movement to secularize representation and form political parties outside the Church did not develop. Rather, following the removal of the Ba'ath regime, the community saw the Chaldean Bishops emerge to advocate for the rights of Chaldeans as an ethnic group and saw Patriarch Delly seek inclusion in the democratic and constitutional process (Bremer 2006). Activism has continued amongst Church officials regarding what they see as an absence of Chaldean representation: in 2012, for example, Delly issued a statement criticizing the ADM, stating Kanna, as an elected Member of Parliament, represents himself and the ADM only and could not speak for all Iraqi Christians (Chaldean International Congress 2012).

Yet there is a shift within the Church regarding this role as Sako appears disinterested in questions of ethnicity and identity, despite leading the foremost Chaldean institution. Although the Patriarch emphasizes the sectarian nature of Chaldeanness, other church officials continue to understand Chaldean in an ethno-sectarian context, wherein both Church membership and ethnic criteria are salient boundary criteria. As noted previously, this latter understanding is found in the narratives around Chaldean identity favoured by Bishops Jammo and Ibrahim, who have also acted as political advocates for Chaldean interests. Ibrahim observed there is some tension within the Church over its non-spiritual role and whether the Church in the U.S. is becoming too political (Author Interview Notes 2013). He rejected this notion, affirming that to talk about identity, nation, and traditions is an appropriate role of the Church and its leaders; that it is the Church's duty to discover and share

the history and culture which are integral to the Church and the Chaldean people: in essence, it is the Church's role to aide and sustain the Chaldean nation. He felt those in Iraq who express concern over the secular influence of the Church do not understand the level of freedom in the U.S. and that the experience of the Church is different than the repression experienced in Iraq: here, they are 'free to think' (ibid).

It was awareness that a Chaldean voice was absent in the lead-up to the Iraq War that the Chaldean National Congress (CNC) formed. Ghassan Hanna, a co-founder and former Secretary General of the CNC, recalls of forming the organization:

We created it as an identity, trying to get the Chaldeans into the policy, get the Chaldeans into feeling pride...And that's how my relationship with Bishop Jammo was. We needed a pride. This group was disconnected. You talk to them, they're all calling themselves Arabs. Those who live in Kurdistan say, "I'm Kurd." They don't know (Hanna Interview).

The CNC called for unity within the diaspora and with the homeland; to support use of the Chaldean language, raise awareness of Chaldean history, and reverse the effects of Arabization; to support democracy and democratic principles of inclusion in reference to the looming Iraq War; and to 'strive to rebuild national pride in our people' (Chaldean National Congress 2002). The use of 'rebuild' is interesting given the absence of a prior expression of Chaldean national pride and the recent evolution in thinking of Chaldeans as a nation: displayed here, rather, is an effort to unify Chaldeans through building an ancient historical narrative, a sign of a transition from creating historical and cultural narratives to building national claims around those narratives.

However, while Chaldean identity has prevailed, the CNC itself was less successful within the Chaldean diaspora. Hanna has since come to believe the weakness of Chaldean political institutions reflect the sectarian nature of Chaldean identity, suggesting nationalism ultimately cannot emerge from an identity built solely on

religion (Hanna Interview). To that end, he now feels the Chaldean identity will never be an ethnic identity because it is derived from a religious foundation.

Of course, a counterpoint is that the very purpose of boundary development is the construction of an ethnic or national identity; ethnic identity is a social construct whose criteria are relational and fluid. Rather, for a population frequently painted as politically disinclined, it is perhaps not surprising the first high-profile Chaldean political organization effort would not gain traction within the wider population, particularly without first creating nation-building institutions comparable to those of the BNDP, for example. The CNC did not present a viable alternative to the political parties in Iraq, challenged by its newness, the absence of a structure able to engage the population, and competition against organizations that have spent decades developing their message and building support.

Another effort would come after the Iraq War with the formation of the Chaldean Democratic Forum (CDF). The post-war climate brought into contrast differing diasporic ideologies, enabling CDF to position itself as a pro-Chaldean voice concerned by the idea of a national territory or autonomy. This has attracted the backing of the Chaldean Church and those who take a more ardent view of Chaldeanness, many of whom – although not all – believe Chaldeans are a distinct ethnic group. Found within the CDF is Chaldean long-distance nationalism to Iraq in support of political rights as equal members of the Iraqi state; CDF also favours a strong diaspora to further protect Chaldeans as a distinct group. This represents an ideology similar to the ADM, but at the same time exists in reaction to the ADM and Assyrian nationalism. Rather than pursuing a political platform in Iraq directly, CDF seeks ways to support the development of Chaldean political parties in Iraq and the KRG. Reflecting the significance of state borders, CDF instead serves as a voice on behalf of these organizations to the U.S. government and with Iraqi officials upon their visits to meet with American government officials and American diasporic

representatives (Barka Interview).

Demands for Chaldean recognition against the Assyrian framework ultimately challenge the boundary definitions upon which the multi-denominational, ethno-national Assyrian boundary was constructed. In this sense, Chaldean demands for recognition represent a constriction of the Assyrian-Chaldean boundary. This type of national assertion, without regard to territory or autonomy, is in a way characteristic of a quintessential diasporic nationalism. Here, diasporic elites pursue nation-building outside the traditional nation-state framework by which nationalism is commonly understood.

Thus, the Chaldean community is beginning to undergo a shift from political engagement led by Church officials to emerging political actors and organizations. In several respects, the interests of the Church and political parties are complimentary, as both seek to insert the Chaldean name into political discourse and generally seek a moderate, integrationist approach protective of liberal democratic rights. Diasporic nationalism and long-distance nationalism are thus emerging in a secular context, generating political ideas and claims on behalf of Chaldeans in the U.S. as well as Iraq.

ADVOCACY AND LOBBYING ORGANIZATIONS

As seen in the last section, nationalism, like identity, develops relevance 'during major political crisis when the institutional set-up of a society changes and new alliance structures might become politically relevant' (Wimmer 2011: 724). Changes to Iraq's national boundary first presented an opportunity to renegotiate Assyrian and Chaldean inclusion; the exclusionary nature of the boundaries that resulted again compelled diasporic action. Political activism arose from already-engaged individuals and organizations who saw the pressing need for a lobby structure to influence U.S.

governmental policy. Two factors in the post-Iraq War context were essential to the presence of these organizations: the opening of Iraq's political structure; and the nature of the U.S. political system as home to the diaspora, the administrator of Iraq, and its permissiveness of ethnic lobbying.

As explored over the next chapters, the challenges facing activism are myriad. Challenges cited by theorists like Ogelman and Saideman of internal competition, inadequate organization, and disinterest were furthered by the organizational jockeying that, as Abbo outlined, lacked an avenue for selecting legitimate representation (Ogelman et al 2002; Saideman 2002). Activism was directed primarily at the American government in part because of the U.S.'s involvement in Iraq, and largely because activists are Americans operating within the American political structure. The limitation of their reach to Iraq reflects the reality of caging: state borders both make possible and restrict diasporic activism (Mann 1993: 250-252). Caging, in a way, forms an internal boundary within the transnational Assyrian and Chaldean nation, based upon the realities of citizenship and distance that curates different experiences between members of the same nation. Moreover, diasporic activism reflects the peculiarities of long-distance nationalism, that activists who make political demands of Iraq do so on behalf of Assyrians and Chaldeans but are themselves unaffected by political outcomes and often possess no desire to return to Iraq – reinforcing, in turn, their role as American activists.

The Iraq War consequentially saw the emergence of organizations that were politically-engaged but with a role different than the aforementioned political institutions: those dedicated to advocacy and lobbying the U.S. government, with the frequent purpose of advocacy on behalf of those in Iraq or displaced from Iraq. Unlike nationalist political organizations, their goal is not to shape the opinion of the diaspora, but simply to shape policy outcomes. Interestingly, despite the absence of Chaldean-named political and advocacy organizations, Chaldean advocates have

been successful in orchestrating advocacy efforts with the U.S. and Iraqi governments, and at times have exhibited stronger influence than their Assyrian counterparts. In part, this is because advocacy is assumed by existing community leaders who often possess existing ties to local elected officials as constituents and an important electoral demographic (T. Smith 2000). Moderate Chaldean voices, the most politically successful, found common political ground with Assyrian interests, particularly regarding the need for liberal democratic rights and an administrative region for Iraq's Christians; by contrast, the most ardent-Chaldean voices are less organized politically. The contrast between the communities, in this sense, is less dichotomous as an Assyrian-Chaldean wedge, but rather is shaped by political aims, differences in long-distance nationalism, and different responses to boundary shifts.

Assyrian Advocacy

The post-war climate demonstrated long-distance Assyrian nationalism exists, and not just within the old guard of 1960s-era organizations. A range of organizations sought the mantle of political activism as diasporic activists formed new organizations to lobby the U.S. government on behalf of Iraqi Assyrians. The AANF, for example, aimed to represent the American-Assyrian voice, citing its membership as a mandate to represent the diaspora, a position challenged by objections from non-affiliated organizations (Jatou Interview). Other successful organizations like the humanitarian-focused Assyrian National Council of Illinois (ANCI) encourage Assyrian participation in politics, but are precluded by their missions from working as political organizations. The aforementioned, BNDP-affiliated ANC serves as an advocacy organization, lobbying congressional and State Department officials on behalf of the nationalist goals of the ANC/BNDP.

The first Iraq War-era advocacy-related organization was the Assyrian National Coalition, formed to present an outwardly unified voice for Assyrian interests to the

American government and Iraqi opposition. Representing an agreement between the ADM, AUA, and the Assyrian Democratic Organization, a Syrian-based political party whose diasporic support came primarily from Europe, the organizations agreed in July 1999 to unite political efforts in planning for a post-Ba'ath Iraq (ADM et al 1999). Members noted the BNDP participated in unity discussions but ultimately chose to withdraw from cooperation. The impetus here was not a unifying ideology but pragmatism in response to outside feedback that too many voices claiming to represent Assyrian interests negated the ability of any voice to garner meaningful attention.

The Assyrian Coalition was further supported by the Assyrian American League (AAL), created by Ronald Michael, an Assyrian surgeon from Chicago, with the guidance of former Congressman Michael Flanagan, a D.C. consultant and Michael's long-time friend, as the AAL's lobbyist (Flanagan Interview). The AAL presented itself as a national lobbying effort that was 'independent but solicits input from all Assyrian organizations' (Michael 2003). The AAL served almost exclusively in an advocacy capacity and did not engage members of the diaspora beyond seeking contributions to pay for its lobbying effort. Neither the Assyrian Coalition nor the AAL lasted far beyond the Iraq War.

The outbreak of sectarian conflict likewise saw a reactionary formation of organizations whose specific purpose was to serve as an ethnic lobby. Most prominent among them included the Iraq Sustainable Democracy Project (ISDP), formed in 2005 by the Assyrian Academic Society as a think tank in Washington, D.C., headed by Michael Youash, with the singular goal of developing research and policy for decision-makers to use in furtherance of Assyrian autonomy in Nineveh (Taimoorazy Interview; Jatou Interview). It was, at the time, the only such organization creating policy research for Assyrian issues. The Assyrian American National Coalition (AANC) was formed as a lobbying arm to compliment the ISDP's

think tank and drive policy-makers to support an administrative unit within the confines of the new Iraq constitution (Abbo et al Interview). Here, the effect of political and state boundaries was apparent: the ISDP and AANC recognized they could only support policy that was not in conflict with American or Iraqi law, which left the ADM's political platform as the only democratically-elected Assyrian voice in Iraq (ibid).

Political and ideological competition within the diaspora caused concern that ISDP's, and subsequently the ADM's, policy position could be overshadowed by other organizations. The perception was that pro-Kurdish influences, and sometimes pro-Chaldean organizations, were better funded and therefore better connected, and ISDP and AANC needed to put forward strong, substantiated policy arguments and mobilize grassroots support to counteract this trend:

The pro-Kurdistan faction within the Assyrian and Chaldean communities had a lobbying voice and a lot of money. And our response to that was, we don't need money, we need voters. So we became a grassroots organization, where I don't care if Joseph Kassab can write a check for \$10,000, I want to be able to get 1,000 constituents to vote someone in. And that, we felt, was more precious to a Congressman than a check. So, we really did the power of the people concept. Because we can't compete financially. We couldn't (Abbo et al Interview).

Highlighted is the significance of financial matters, an often unmentioned but integral component of the political process, and the different lobbying strategies organizations develop in consideration of these factors. Although ISDP was the only think tank-type organization in the Assyrian diaspora, it was established as a short-term project and was not active beyond 2011 (Jatou Interview). AANC remains somewhat active in lobbying Congress for targeted ways to support the Nineveh Plain; however, like most diasporic political organizations, it remains a volunteer-driven effort.

Thus, opening of the Iraqi political system gave another layer to elite competition. The U.S. government experienced firsthand the inter-organizational competition amongst Assyrian political actors when it sought to revive the Iraqi National Congress in 1999:

“They have dozens of organizations, and they all hate each other,” said an exasperated U.S. official. Last fall, when the Iraqi opposition assembled its warring factions for a CIA-backed convention in New York, Washington made sure five seats were reserved for Assyrians...“Unfortunately, we had 16 groups demanding those seats,” said the U.S. official. “Nobody was willing to give in. It was a nightmare” (Goldberg 2000).

The context of the looming war was significant to diasporic engagement as much as the willingness of U.S. policy-makers to engage with the diaspora, and consequentially furthered elite competition over diasporic representation, as well as ideological competition over policy aims. The opportunity to affect policy in the homeland provided an opportunity for diasporic elites to pursue power outside of the diaspora and influence state action directly, underscoring the politically-driven nature of nationalism.

Thus, over the past century, the Assyrian diaspora has undergone a diversification and professionalization of its institutions. Whilst Dinkha advocates with the U.S. and international leaders as the representative of the Church of the East, the singular influence of Shimun in the post-WWI era subsided and Assyrian actors, pushed by circumstances in Iraq, saw a need for political leadership to protect the Assyrian nation. The parallel of the Ba’ath era to the Iraq-War era is notable, as changing boundaries again spurred activism within the diaspora over contested notions of long-distance nationalism.

Chaldean Advocacy

At the time of the Iraq War, with the absence of a concerted Chaldean political presence, two main trends emerged from within the diaspora: the Church continued its role as a principle advocate, and existing organizations expanded their mission to include political advocacy. Chaldean advocacy was therefore often undertaken by the same individuals involved in civic institution-building.

The Chaldean Church unsurprisingly continued to advocate for Chaldeans, carrying its advocacy regarding the humanitarian toll of the Gulf War and international sanctions to advocacy regarding the humanitarian toll of the Iraq War. Political engagement was also used to seek political recognition of Chaldeans as an ethnic group from the American and later Iraqi governments. Hanna worked with Jammo and Ibrahim in the quest to achieve Chaldean recognition as a distinct ethnic group in the 2000 U.S. Census, the first official quest for the American government to recognize a Chaldean ethnic boundary. Sengstock, who provided testimony in support of the effort, recalled that the initial barrier was the Census Bureau's understanding that Chaldean was a religious designation, not an ethnic one (Author Interview Notes 2012). The debate and posturing herein would foreshadow the contestation over Chaldean recognition in the Iraqi constitution.

Additionally, advocacy emerged from community leaders. Joseph Kassab, then-Executive Director of CFA, reflected that he began to increase the organization's political engagement out of necessity:

CFA had never been a political organization until I myself walked into it [in 2005], and we tried to put images that it is not only a civic organization doing all the social and humanitarian work, but you also need to add to it some of the political work in order to have some success in the humanitarian and the civic work. Without it, you cannot achieve that. So that's why we

developed this relationship with our friends in the Congress and the Senate and Europe (Kassab Interview 2012).

Likewise, the Chaldean Chamber, which had cultivated governmental relationships regarding economic and business issues, expanded its advocacy to include foreign and domestic policy matters related to finding long- and short-term solutions for Christians displaced from Iraq. The politicization of community organizations has led activists to see their organizations as a counter-balance to the Church's political role. As Manna noted:

I personally think we need strong organizations like the Chamber, our Foundation, the Federation, at least to balance our church, because the church has led everything. They say they don't want to get involved in politics, but they do. And that doesn't necessarily mean we're on the right track (Manna Interview 2012).

The Chamber has come to possess a significant political presence: as Rudy Hobbs, then-Michigan State Representative, noted:

The Chamber, without a doubt, is the most prominent Chaldean organization. It has the Foundation, it has CASCA, it represents a ton of small businesses. It's out there building relationships and pursuing policy in ways that no other Chaldean organization has yet - at least not that I've come across (Hobbs Interview 2013).

The Chamber's success in building relationships with Michigan's elected officials and the Obama Administration was likewise volunteered in several interviews with community leaders as an example of ways in which community leaders are politically active. In this sense, the Chamber and its associated institutions have built legitimacy within the diaspora to represent their interests, and have professionalized their advocacy to cultivate favourable relationships with elected officials.

In 2006, in response to continued feedback from the State Department that the

community needed a coherent voice, the Chamber and CFA joined with two leading Assyrian organizations, AANF and ANCI, to create the Chaldean Assyrian Syriac Council of America (CASCA) as a politically-focused nonprofit dedicated to pursuing community interests with the American, Iraqi, and Kurdish governments and the international community, specifically the formation of an autonomous region in the Nineveh Plain (CASCA 2008). Kassab, who helped found the organization, noted this was one of the first efforts to bridge Chaldean and Assyrian organizations (Kassab Interview 2012). The Assyrian organizations soon withdrew their memberships over differences in policy and implementation; the remaining leadership is largely Chaldean, although not exclusively as long-time Assyrian activists like Robert DeKelaita remain involved. In 2013, the Nineveh Council of America (NCA) was formed to serve as CASCA's lobbying arm, much of which is managed by Manna.

Detroit's Chaldean leadership is thus formative to creating and giving voice to Chaldean political goals. The successes or lack thereof of its endeavors is likely to impact the fate of Chaldeans as a diaspora. Hanoosh noted that Detroit is 'home of a Chaldean elite whose powerful political and cultural influence has given shape and articulation to a modern collective Chaldean identity that resonates worldwide' (Hanoosh 2008: 227). While this is perhaps an overstatement of political prowess, Chaldean political engagement solidifies the presence of a Chaldean identity and is increasingly equipped to articulate the existence of its identity. As noted in the preceding section, the perception of a strong, well-resourced Chaldean lobby is shared by others in the diaspora. Elite competition to represent the diaspora is therefore present amongst Chaldean elites and between Chaldean and Assyrian elites.

Advocacy in San Diego took similar form, headed by Jammo and civic leaders. Arabo, for example, led a coalition that demanded El Cajon's then-mayor resign

following the aforementioned negative comments regarding the area's Chaldean residents. The coalition was comprised of community members and elected officials, including Congressman Juan Vargas, Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez, and State Senator Ben Hueso (Stickney and Fry 2013). Although a local issue, success in pressuring the Mayor to resign suggests that the Chaldean voice can be heard in San Diego through non-traditional means of ethnic organizing: in this case, utilizing professional and economic influence. The role of diasporic elites has become more pronounced as sectarian conflict in Iraq has reemerged and community leaders seek political and media attention to the crisis, tapping into political and social networks developed through civic engagement.

Arabo finds disunity to be a primary barrier to cultivating a more comprehensive Chaldean political voice. He indicates a solution is to improve messaging and diasporic unity through traditional means of organizing and working to elect Chaldeans to political office in the U.S.:

It all comes down to our weakness of our global fragmentation as a community. We're not united. Locally, you come to San Diego, we're united. Michigan, we're united, especially if there's a crisis, we come together. Globally, we're not united. And that's why we're saying, well if you get Chaldeans to embrace their heritage, get them into elected office, and when they get up the channels, as long as they don't forget where they came from, they will be our voice. Right now we don't have a voice that says, hey, you know, this is wrong.... We've gotten a lot of help from the Jewish community. They've been a huge, huge, huge asset and we would not nearly get as far as we did without them...It comes down to that basic principle of unity and same messaging. So we have a long way to go, but we're resilient, we're survivors: we'll get there (Arabo Interview).

Presented here is a long-term strategy of diasporic nationalism. In lieu of direct state power, politics provide an avenue for diasporic members to access and influence the state on behalf of diasporic issues. Politics also provide a means for elite competition over diasporic leadership to play out. Additionally, as found within understandings

of diasporic nationalism and institution-building, there are elements of modeling diasporic strategy after successful diasporas, in this case working with Jewish activists to develop strategies for more effective political engagement. Reinforced is the role of diasporic elites in planning for the diaspora's future and cultivating long-term political goals.

Shifts in Iraqi and domestic boundaries make the Assyrian and Chaldean boundary more salient, underscoring the transnational and local natures of diaspora. As evident by post-war developments in Chaldean institution-building, the diaspora underwent considerable growth in response to the war's aftermath. A connection between institutions and advocacy is therefore apparent. Strong diasporic institutions enabled a foundation from which individual advocates could stand and make political claims, backed by the weight of those institutions, their roles within the community, and the personal relationships they established with policy-makers. While perhaps counterintuitive in a political system that is driven by professional lobbies, this has nonetheless been successful in raising the political profile of the Chaldean community in a relatively short period of time.

CONCLUSION: LOCALISM, NATIONALISM, AND STATE CAGING IN DIASPORIC FORMATION

Through both experiences, there is a narrative common to the ways in which Assyrian and Chaldean nation-building evolved. Diasporic elites negotiate boundaries, cultivate national ideologies, shape diasporic and long-distance nationalism and the political goals that accompany nationalism, and lobby the government, mobilized to do so by changing Iraqi boundaries that affect the homeland population and by extension the diaspora. A correlation is seen between the degree of institutional completeness achieved and the resonance of Assyrian or Chaldean identity in a local population: institutions help make diasporic boundaries

and develop a national consciousness.

Boundary-negotiation and institution-building are the constant work of diasporic elites. Observed within the diaspora, in regard to Abbo's quote at the beginning of this chapter, are multiple efforts to create mechanisms to legitimize leadership and ideology. Political contestation absent a government or clear political structure instead takes place amongst diasporic organizations. Elites cultivate institutions and exercise political demands as part of American society: they aim to integrate whilst preventing cultural disappearance. To this end, elites pursue a strategy of boundary shifting rather than individual boundary crossing, hoping to integrate the diaspora as a recognized group that retains elements of its culture, language, and enough difference to give the diasporic boundary relevance.

In both populations, the ethnic church served as an early delineation of diasporic boundaries; however, this also facilitated an intra-ethnic boundary defined by church membership. Community members were frequently reliant upon the churches and their organizational frameworks to bring people together, provide humanitarian services, relay history, and preserve the language when no other structure existed - in short, to assume responsibility for building a nation in diaspora. However, early differences were apparent as the Assyrian boundary adapted to capture all aspects of the geographically and religiously diverse Assyrian migrations. Civic and political organizations emerged to provide a more institutionally-complete framework and create a secularized Assyrian boundary. Secular institutions emerged in the Chaldean community, but were not accompanied by a secularization of Chaldean identity; rather, ethnic and cultural criteria were added to the existing sectarian boundary.

Intra-diasporic boundary tightening between Assyrians and Chaldeans was aided by the distinct concentration of Chaldeans in Detroit. The Detroit community possessed

a mutually-reinforcing structure through interconnected church, humanitarian, and cultural organizations and a niche economic role that lent itself to boundary formation as Chaldeans in relation to Detroit's multiple ethnic groups. The San Diego community, although smaller and newer, appears to parallel this development, and much of its boundary-shaping is subsumed by the Church, Church-affiliated institutions, and well-connected individuals. The absence of national and political institutions, in contrast to the Assyrian community, enabled elites representing business and civic organizations to assume a political role. To a degree, this evolution has reinforced prevailing cultural assumptions of Assyrians as nationalists and Chaldeans as integrationists. As occurred in the Assyrian community, a negotiation between the role of Church leadership and the necessity of secular leadership is arising, a negotiation that is perhaps harder to resolve because of the unique role of the Chaldean Church to Chaldean identity.

A shared theme in Chaldean and Assyrian civic institution-building in the late 20th century is the correlation between nationalism, political mobilization, and the situation of co-ethnics in Iraq. In the Assyrian community, nationalism was triggered by the turmoil of the Ba'ath era and reinforced by the Iraq War; in the Chaldean community, its emergence came more gradually out of necessity following the war, and, as such, may still be emerging and evolving, negotiating understandings of what it means to be Chaldean.

Diasporic institutions thus provide multiple layers to engage members of the diaspora. To this end, organizations serve three key purposes in boundary-making: they provide alternative means for leadership or ideology of the diaspora to be contested; they provide reiterative levels to capture diasporic members not engaged with the prevailing institutional structures, from professional organizations to cultural clubs; and they provide ways for people to come together and remain connected. The overriding motivation in doing so is to forestall assimilation and to

build an *atra* intermixed within American society. In this sense, the nation is not a territorial state nor an autonomous subunit, but more akin to Anderson's imagined community, bound together by shared kinship and cultural traditions. It is fundamentally local, formed and sustained through interaction with local communities, and fundamentally transnational, projecting nationalism across the global diaspora and to the homeland, acting in response to political shifts that threaten the diaspora elsewhere in the world. Evident is the importance of state location: the American context shapes the initial formation of the diaspora, the ability to retain ethnic identity and cultural elements and to create social boundaries; and it shapes the future of the diaspora, both the assimilation that threatens disappearance and the means to counteract assimilation through a civil society permissive of institution-building and political advocacy on behalf of the local and Iraqi populations. This ongoing process of diasporic nation-building is thus driven by elites, whose work makes and continues the diaspora's presence in America.

CHAPTER V

THE PRECARIOUS CHOICE TO ASSIMILATE OR FLEE: THE DIASPORIC NATION AS TRANSNATIONAL

'In modern-day Iraq, Chaldeans have three choices: either convert to Islam, which they don't do; leave the country, which a lot of them did; or get killed, which some did. Too many.'

-Mark Arabo, President and CEO, Neighborhood Market Association (Interview 2013)

The Iraq War was premised on the brutality of Saddam Hussein, his threat to international security, and the promise of America to do better: to implement a democratic government that guarantees the freedom, equal rights, and protections of Iraq's citizens. Hussein's removal brought with it a tangible opportunity, for perhaps the first time since the formation of the Iraqi state, for democratic governance. For Assyrians and Chaldeans, this marked a fundamental redefinition of Iraq's national boundaries. Diasporic actors saw boundary shifts as a long-awaited opportunity for recognition as a people with linguistic, cultural, and religious rights and as equal members of the Iraqi state. Although the rhetoric of American officials rarely mentioned Iraq's Assyrians and Chaldeans by name, the Bush Administration's vision of a liberal, inclusive state echoed the long-standing hopes of this population.²⁰

The Iraqi state and the coalition government, however, would not prove to be so accommodating. Assyrians and Chaldeans fought to interject their aspirations into a national contest that was already outside their reach. Such contestation would later manifest into violent conflict, fueled by a general climate of impunity that both neglected the meaningful inclusion of Assyrians and Chaldeans into a post-Ba'ath Iraq and neglected the consequences their populations suffered. Iraq's social and national boundaries would not become more inclusive, but close around definitions of religion and ethnicity that Assyrians and Chaldeans did not possess. There are

²⁰ War memoirs of Bush Administration officials are notably absent mention of the Christian plight in Iraq (see, for example, Rumsfeld 2011; Rice 2011).

thus two stages of involvement for the American diaspora: the removal of the Ba'ath regime and the boundary opening it presented; and after ethno-sectarian conflict constricted Iraqi boundaries. The responding courses of action were uncertain and prompted questions of helping refugees to emigrate or to return to Iraq, of focusing on democracy or autonomy. Such debate continues through today alongside the omnipresent threat of renewed conflict.

The totality of the diaspora's efforts encompass national goals of securing their rights and necessary goals of responding to an immediate crisis. Gellner, in his blunt description of a nationalizing state, outlined three options available to a nation's minorities: assimilate, flee, or be killed (Gellner 1983). The diaspora pursued three independent but interrelated strategies which paralleled these options: to secure liberal democratic rights and the enforcement of those rights; to aid refugees and allow them refuge in the U.S.; and to find a way to end the bleeding of their population from Iraq.

Throughout this process, a central theme emerges: diasporic elites acting in response to changing Iraqi boundaries. This chapter thus considers three stages of boundary changes and corresponding diasporic action, with special attention to how such changes affected policy goals and the understanding of the Assyrian and Chaldean nation. First, it considers the lead-up to the Iraq War and mobilization of diasporic organizations, overwhelmingly Assyrian political organizations, to gain inclusion with the Iraqi opposition to shape the inclusion of Assyrians and Chaldeans in a post-Ba'athist state. Second, it considers the constitutional process and the importance of a well-designed democracy, liberal democratic rights, and recognition of the Assyrian and Chaldean national existence. And third, it considers the push to increase refugee admissions in response to the worsening post-war humanitarian crisis, and the efficacy of Chaldean actors on behalf of this issue.

These events demonstrate initial diasporic demands were centered primarily on liberal democratic rights and protections. It is suggested this focus was shaped by understandings of social boundaries in Iraq, in which assimilation was not a concern as it is in the West. Rather, protection of ethnic and religious rights would sustain the Assyrian and Chaldean nation in a democratic Iraq. Recognition ostensibly secured membership within Iraq's national boundaries, not just as citizens but as a people, using the state's laws to protect their inclusion. Without recognition, the quest for rights to self-administration, language rights, or autonomy would have little to build upon: recognition is not a grand national goal, but it an essential one, and may not have occurred without diasporic activism.

Boundary shifts in Iraq made ethnic identity amongst Assyrians and Chaldeans salient and correspondingly spurred political claims. Assyrian demands, demands emphatically inclusive of Chaldeans and Syriacs, were shaped in an environment in which political recognition was centered upon Kurds as a dominant minority and Shia and Sunni as branches of the Arab majority. Assyrian actors sought to define their population as a non-Arab, non-Kurdish ethnic minority, one with a unique culture, language, and history deserving recognition and protection. It is likewise for this reason the Chaldean demand for recognition as an ethnic group emerged, led by the Chaldean Church: it was an assertion as a non-Arab population as well as a non-Assyrian one.

In contrast to Assyrian activism, Chaldean mobilization appeared most prominently in response to the post-war refugee crisis. Elites reacted to contractions in Iraqi boundaries that violently pushed Christians from Iraq, creating a new wave of diaspora that was unrepresented and without anyplace else to go. Demonstrated is the reach and impact of diasporic nationalism as diasporic elites felt a special responsibility to pursue permanent refugee resettlement in the U.S.

An important backdrop to this chapter is the political environment in which diasporic actors lobbied. Political barriers between the U.S. and Iraqi governments blurred as the U.S. led the invasion and overthrow of the Hussein regime, became responsible for administration of post-war Iraq, and retained close military and political ties after official U.S. troop withdrawal. Diasporic actors thus witnessed their state of residence take control of their homeland, seemingly presenting a unique opportunity for the diaspora to make direct political claims of its homeland. Yet despite diasporic efforts, no such special consideration came from American policy-makers, and activists struggled for political recognition. The diaspora's experience demonstrates that a small, stateless diaspora is highly dependent on outside power structures - the Iraqi opposition, the American government, the new Iraqi democracy - and thus necessitated persistent activism.

This complication of state borders questioned, however, the degree to which the diaspora should make claims on behalf of Iraqi Assyrians and Chaldeans who, for the first time in decades, had the opportunity to shape their own political future - a future nonetheless intrinsically linked with the future of the diasporic nation. The limits of diasporic activism further demonstrate the reality of caging: diasporic transnationalism is ultimately circumscribed by state borders, in a way creating internal diasporic boundaries. States of residence affect culture, languages spoken, and citizenship, distinguishing diasporic experiences from each other and the homeland. The effects of this are evident by the measured political demands put forth by American diasporic actors, and the reality few in the American diaspora saw the advent of a democratic Iraq as a homecoming opportunity, but rather as an opportunity as Assyrian and Chaldean Americans to advocate for their co-ethnics in Iraq and the future of the Assyrian and Chaldean nation.

THE LONG QUEST FOR POLITICAL INCLUSION

'Erin, honestly, you know, we could have done a lot. I called it the best opportunity of a lifetime, and we lost it... The Kurds, they gained a lot. There was a time in history that we could have gotten something for our people and we didn't. And even our friends and allies, they didn't help us.'

-Joseph Tamraz, Assyrian Universal Alliance (Interview 2013)

The earliest priority to emerge from diasporic activists was that of liberal, democratic rights accompanying official recognition of Assyrians and Chaldeans as an ethnic group or ethnic groups. Ethnic recognition served a symbolic purpose as well as a necessary one: neither Assyrians nor Chaldeans had been recognized in an Iraqi constitution, reinforcing the image they were not fully or equally part of the state; and protection of their unique linguistic, religious, and cultural traditions relied foremost on recognition these very elements existed. For those nationalists who aspired to some measure of autonomy, this too was first predicated on ethnic recognition.

Diasporic groups quickly became aware the challenge this would present was compounded by rhetoric from the Iraqi opposition and American government that lumped Christians into a single, ethnically-ambiguous and implicitly-Arab entity whilst denying them an equal seat at the table to argue otherwise. Worried this would foreshadow exclusion from a post-Hussein state, several Assyrian organizations collectively lobbied the U.S. government for Assyrian inclusion in pre-war planning, an endeavour which ultimately spoke more to aspirations than outcome. The pretense of a single Assyrian voice, however, was further driven apart by the rise of a voice for Chaldean recognition, led largely by the Chaldean Church.

The opening of the Iraqi government thus presented an avenue for differing national ideologies to be contested, and marked the first real opening for diasporic activism to tangibly effect change in Iraq. Any capacity for engagement at that period laid

heavily with the diaspora, particularly in light of the American government's involvement in attempting to build a case for war and the absence of civil society under the Ba'ath era (Benjamin 2011). The U.S. government pursued two avenues to plan for the transition to democracy into which the diaspora sought entry: meetings of the Iraqi opposition, a coalition of the leading anti-Hussein organizations; and planning committees, specifically the State Department's Future of Iraq project. After the time spent by activists to participate in the latter and attain inclusion in the former, the payoff was disappointingly limited. The Department of Defense would essentially scrap the Future of Iraq reports and its cautions regarding democratic transition, and the new Iraqi government would remain dominated by the same individuals who headed the opposition and who possessed little attention for Assyrian and Chaldean issues. This section thus explores diasporic mobilization as the potential for boundary change in Iraq neared.

When Getting A Seat at the Table is Itself a Barrier

In the late 1990s, growing discontent from within the American government and United Nations over Iraq's failure to comply with UN weapons inspections created an environment for the U.S. government and Iraqi opposition groups to think realistically about how Hussein might be removed and how a new Iraq should be built. Such a turning point began with the passage of the Iraq Liberation Act (ILA) in 1998 to provide funding to opposition groups, and positioning regime change as an official part of U.S. policy toward Iraq; Charles Tripp cites the legislation's passage as tipping the scale in Washington toward bringing the end of the Ba'ath regime (Tripp 2007: 267; Katzman 2003). The Clinton Administration designated seven groups as eligible for funding for military assistance and training through the ILA: the Iraqi National Congress (INC), headed by Ahmad Chalabi; the Iraqi National Accord (INA), headed by Ayad Allawi; the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), headed by Masud Barzani; the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), headed by Jalal Talibani; the

Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution of Iraq (SCIRI), headed by Mohammad Baqr al-Hakmi; the Movement for Constitutional Monarchy (MCM); and the Islamic Movement of Iraqi Kurdistan (IMIK) (P.D. 99-13 of 1999). Aside from the Kurdish parties, which already operated in a relatively autonomous region protected by a No-Fly-Zone, no minority organizations were granted ILA designation.

In practical terms of what ILA funding was for and how it could be used, ADM was the only Assyrian organization that possessed something resembling a military and humanitarian infrastructure with the capacity to administer funds in Iraq. At the same time, organizations that received designation similarly lacked capacity as organizations could not make ‘inroads into Iraq’s “shadow state”’ (Tripp 267; Katzman 5-8). Yet designation aided the impression that said groups constituted the most important elements of the Iraqi opposition. The inclusion of a seemingly frivolous organization like the MCM, which sought the return of the Hashemite monarchy to the support of very few outside the MCM, and the SCIRI and IMIK, which sought an Iranian-style Islamic revolution, was contradictory to the democratic message the U.S. government put forward.

The feedback the Assyrian community received from Congressional representatives and the State Department alike stressed here and throughout these years that internal divisions and disunity presented a significant hindrance to their inclusion and ability to elevate their cause within opposition talks (Jatou Interview; Kassab Interview 2012; Nissman 1999). There may be some hypocrisy in allowing a disproportionate representation of Kurdish organizations within the opposition whilst instructing Assyrians to present a united front, but given the small size of the Assyrian population, they found themselves with little leverage. Thus, faced with the prospect of having no voice in the process, the ADM, AUA, and Assyrian Democratic Organization formed the Assyrian National Coalition to present an outwardly unified front, with the Assyrian American League (AAL) forming as an advocacy arm, to

pursue inclusion in opposition talks, recognition of Assyrians as a unique people in any future constitution, and the explicit protection of their rights within Iraq (ADM et al 1999). The utility of the 'Assyrian Coalition' label was more a public show of multi-organizational support rather than representative of a particular national ideology.

The decision of the BNDP not to participate with the coalition was unsurprising. The BNDP, like many opposition groups, existed in relative isolation from Iraq's geopolitics, focusing its efforts where outcomes were tangible: on the diaspora and institution building therein. The BNDP identified itself in relation to and against other Assyrian organizations, and Dadesho built a reputation on his staunch nationalism. Surprisingly, by 2002 the Assyrian Coalition began listing the BNDP amongst its members, citing Shimon Khamo as the BNDP's head. Public statements and meetings featured Khamo representing the BNDP, including the AANF Convention in August 2002 and the London Opposition Conference in December 2002 (Zinda 2002a). A lawsuit filed by Dadesho's BNDP against Khamo ultimately forced Khamo to change the name of his organization to the Bet Nahrain National Alliance in April 2003, following which the new BNA faded from political involvement, its relevance perhaps less useful after the war and the transfer of focus to within Iraq (BNA 2003). As such, Dadesho's BNDP/ANC remained outside the coalition efforts.

In line with a renewed focus on regime change, the U.S. moved to reconstitute the ILA-recognized but fragmented INC, an umbrella organization formed with U.S. assistance in 1992 to facilitate cooperation amongst opposition groups (Tripp 266-267; Katzman 2-5). In October 1999, the first opposition-wide meeting in seven years was held with an estimated 300 attendees, from which a seven-member leadership council and sixty-five member central council were selected (Middle East Intelligence Bulletin 1999). Although the Clinton Administration stressed the

opposition was still developing, and several organizations did not attend, Assyrians nonetheless faced barriers to participation and lacked meaningful representation within the leadership council that formed: three Assyrians, including Emmanuel Kamber, were appointed to the INC's Central Committee, but none received a position on the leadership council (Goldberg 2000; Zinda 1999; Nissman 1999). Assyrian activists worried they were already being marginalized and sought congressional intervention, and Representatives Anna Eshoo of California, Rod Blagojevich of Illinois, and Frank Wolf of Virginia²¹ wrote the State Department expressing concern that Assyrians were not given an equal voice and requested Assyrian inclusion in future deliberations about Iraq (AINA 1999).

Several factors are notable at this stage: Assyrian political activists are highly aware of changing circumstances or the potential for change, and are consequentially jockeying for influence; the Chaldean community lacked a comparative level of political engagement or organizations to engage on its behalf; and Iraqi opposition groups were already moving to shape the state in their own national image, which effectively excluded Assyrians and Chaldeans from equal membership. Fanar Haddad observed encroaching sectarianism was not the natural byproduct of Ba'ath removal, but a result of the failure to make state identity resonant: Iraq was not, he argues, a 'house of cards' kept standing by the brute force of authoritarianism; rather, sectarian contestation was driven by economic competition, external influence, and, perhaps most significantly, competing and contradictory myth-symbol complexes for cultural ownership of the nation (Haddad 2011: 2-3; 10).

For Chaldeans who tended towards the apolitical, there was not an obvious reason to mobilize at this stage. The rhetoric of Assyrian politicians and the Iraqi opposition

²¹ Eshoo and Blagojevich represented the Chicago and Turlock/Modesto Assyrian and Chaldean populations, and Wolf, although not representing a significant diasporic concentration, frequently worked on behalf of Christian issues (Wolf Staff Interview 2012).

was democratically-focused, which Chaldean leaders supported. The situation itself did not suggest urgency, but appeared as yet another performance of anti-Hussein discontent. By contrast, that Assyrians were seeking involvement even if opposition talks could be another fruitless effort underscores that they already possessed national claims to make and institutional structures from which those claims mobilized. The different stages of political activism are thus apparent in this period.

The events of 9/11, however, produced an unexpected turn of the Bush Administration's attention to Iraq and moved the idea of a deposed Hussein from a parlor debate to a seeming inevitability. President Bush's claim in his January 2002 State of the Union that Iraq, Iran, and North Korea constituted an 'axis of evil' quickly renewed American engagement with the Iraqi opposition and escalated bureaucratic planning within the Administration (Bush 2002a; Clarke 2004: 272-274). Assyrian activists resumed pressuring their congressional representatives for a voice in the process.

Congressional engagement underscores that the Assyrian Coalition ably positioned itself as the quintessential representative of the Assyrian diaspora, building upon the fact Assyrians comprise an important constituency for Chicago-area representatives. In March 2002, Blagojevich and nineteen House colleagues wrote to the Bush Administration requesting 'the need for official constitutional recognition for the Assyrian community as a distinct, indigenous people in any future Iraqi reforms' (Blagojevich et al 2002). The letter referenced the Assyrian Coalition specifically and their work for a secular, democratic Iraq despite the 'systematic terror campaigns' and assassinations of Assyrian political leaders orchestrated by Hussein's regime.

Activists also engaged Congressman Henry Hyde, who too represented a portion of the Assyrian community near Chicago and had become Chairman of the House International Relations Committee. The AAL worked with Hyde's office to advance

the Assyrian issue within the State Department. As Flanagan noted, the goal of the AAL, on behalf of the Assyrian Coalition, was:

Principally to make sure that the American government was knowledgeable and cognizant of Assyrian interests before, during and after the 2003 coalition invasion of Iraq...This level of advocacy with the United States Government exclusively was necessary because as the principle occupying power, the United States needed to make provision for the Christian community generally and the Assyrian community specifically in future rule-making and treatment of the Iraq populace during the time before the Iraqi constitution was written and adopted (Flanagan Interview).

Hyde wrote to the State Department in April 2002 expressing his concern for the future of Assyrians in Iraq and inquiring as to their treatment under the Ba'ath regime; the letter received a reply in May confirming awareness of Hussein's Arabization policy, but stating 'all Iraqis suffer under the current government' and expressing confidence in the protections provided by the KRG and the commitment of Kurdish administrators to equal treatment for all religions and ethnicities (Kelly 2002). The State Department's response, in short, was relatively dismissive of the Assyrian plight as non-exceptional to the struggle faced by all Iraqis. The emphasis on Kurdish benevolence suggested the Administration lacked an historical context of Assyrian grievances as much as a current context of ongoing land disputes with Kurdish authorities. The professionalization of the Kurdish lobby and its influence on U.S. policy-makers is a concern that would carry through to the present, fueled by Kurdish claims to the Nineveh Plain and the tense relationship that resulted. Flanagan noted, 'the Kurds were absolutely the "favorite children" of the Pentagon', a relationship that undoubtedly sidelined Assyrian efforts (Flanagan Interview).

Assyrians were omitted from an Iraqi opposition gathering arranged by the State Department in August 2002. Hyde again wrote Secretary Powell the day prior to the meeting to request an invitation be extended to Kanna, noting Kanna has been chosen by the Assyrian Coalition to serve as their representative. The letter marks a

stronger use of language than Hyde's March letter, stating:

These people are not of Arab descent; they are Christian and are ethnically dissimilar from the other major groups in Iraq. The Assyrians have been coalition partners of the opposition for nearly twenty years. They mobilized a militia both before and during the uprising after the Gulf War, and maintain an armed observation force in Northern Iraq to this day. They have paid their dues in blood and are entitled to the fruits of their efforts...It would be a mistake to start the process of determining the aftermath of Iraq without the representation of one of the most significant minority groups in Iraq (Hyde 2002).

The utility of the ADM's armed struggle is clearly emphasized here as an asset to its, and by extension the Assyrian community's, anti-Hussein credentials. The message speaks to the Bush Administration's 'with us or against us'²² mentality: implicit is the contention Assyrians are entitled to be part of the post-Hussein effort not just because they are a minority with past grievances, but because they have fought Hussein for years.

It appears at this juncture that the rise of the ADM to the forefront of Assyrian institutions was perhaps inevitable. It possessed the strongest transnational ties with devoted American supporters and a military, political, and humanitarian network in northern Iraq. This in turn presented the strongest argument for the ADM as the voice of the Assyrian community in opposition talks. Additionally, and perhaps equally as significantly, the ADM professed a moderate ideology that coincided neatly with the goals of democratic inclusion presented by the Administration. It lacked majorly divisive policies, such as autonomy and territorial claims that would spark immediate contention from the other opposition leaders, and offered a more neutral position than a nationalism in competition with Kurdish or Shia aspirations (Tripp

²² This saying is colloquially used to describe the Administration's mentality. Direct sources include an address to a joint session of Congress: 'Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists'; and a press conference: 'You're either with us or you're against us in the fight against terror' (Bush 2001a; Bush 2001b).

246-7, 264-5; O'Leary and Salih 2005).

ADM officials also engaged with the opposition directly to seek inclusion. For example, in June, the ADM wrote opposition leaders protesting their exclusion, noting, 'Assyrians are unable and unwilling to support any opposition group or envisioned future Iraqi governmental reform that does not entail the fundamental rights of recognition and broad-based fair representation' (Assyrian Coalition 2002). The letter also warns against 'token representation' of Assyrians and stresses the Assyrian Coalition is the most representative body of the Assyrian community. 'Token representation' likely referenced Kurdish parties who claimed their Christian members sufficiently represented the Assyrian community. A product of the August meeting, however, was an agreement to host a conference of the extended opposition in London, to which Assyrians were invited and allocated three-percent of the total seats. This totaled eight representatives of the 265 total participants, underscoring both the popularity of involvement and girth of the opposition (Zinda 2002b).

To gauge their inroads into the Administration's support, the mention of Assyrians in official statements and speeches took symbolic significance. Bush did not mention Assyrians in his speech to the UN in September 2002, stating instead, 'If the Iraqi regime wishes peace, it will cease persecution of its civilian population, including Shi'a, Sunnis, Kurds, Turkomans, and others' (Bush 2002b). Turkey's interest in Iraq's Turkoman community and the Bush Administration's ongoing, albeit ultimately unsuccessful, effort to solicit Turkey's support of the war undoubtedly facilitated mention of Turkoman. Assyrians did not have an outside state to advocate on their behalf, another factor that played to their disadvantage (Kamber Interview).

However, two days after the speech, Kanna was invited to begin participating in opposition meetings alongside the 'big six': the INA, INC, CMC, SCIRI, KDP, and PUK. The ADM's press release celebrating the invitation stated it 'represents the first

instance that Assyrians will participate in the more intimate and critical leadership cycle of major opposition groups' (ADM 2002b). Additionally, a month after the UN speech, Bush recognized Assyrians specifically in a national address, stating, 'The oppression of Kurds, Assyrians, Turkomans, Shi'a, Sunnis and others will be lifted' (Bush 2002c). This language hardly represents a call for special rights, but rather an acknowledgment of ongoing oppression alongside the other components of Iraq. Still, official mentions mattered because it 'put the AAL on the map with the federal government...Even DoD had to pay some attention after a manifest observation by the President of the Assyrians as an important minority' (Flanagan Interview). Further, on 9 December 2002, the Administration officially extended ILA designation to the ADM, along with five other organizations, including another minority group, the Iraqi Turkmen Front, and the Free Officers Movement to which the BNDP was aligned (Katzman 10-11).²³ ADM designation was credited to the urging of the diaspora, and provided the ADM with new standing entering the London Conference.

The Assyrian London delegation, popularly referred to as the Assyrian G8, consisted of Kanna, who the G8 elected the principle Assyrian representative, and Yonan Hozaya of the ADM; Dadesho of the ANC/BNDP; Praidon Darmoo of the AUA; Nimrud Baito of the Assyrian Patriotic Party; Romeo Hakkari of the Assyrian Democratic Party/Bet Nahrain Democratic Party of Iraq; Emanuel Kamber of the INC and AUA; and Albert Yelda of the Iraqi National Coalition. The delegation reflected the international scope of the diaspora as only Dadesho and Kamber were from the U.S. The conference had few tangible outcomes, but affirmed in its official statement 'the need to guarantee [Assyrian] equality with others and the need to assure their legitimate national, cultural, and administrative rights according to a specific legal

²³ In June 2002, Dadesho, as head of the ANC, signed a cooperation agreement with the Free Officers Movement, a group of former Iraqi military officers, under the slogan 'Iraq First...Iraq for all Iraqis' and calling for a united, democratic, plural Iraq (Al Salhi and Dadesho 2002). Uncharacteristically for the BNDP/ANC, the agreement contained no mention of Assyrians specifically.

formula defined and enshrined in the constitution' (Iraqi Opposition Conference 2002). Additionally, the statement recognized Assyrians amongst those who contributed to the 1991 uprising and called for eliminating the 'racist and unfair' policies the Ba'ath regime enacted against Assyrians, Kurds, Turkoman, and Shia.

Receiving this level of recognition was meaningful to activists. As one diaspora editorial noted, 'For the first time since the creation of Iraq, Assyrian people were declared as a people with political, cultural, and administrative rights equal to all other factions of that country under one single historic identity, that of Assyrian' (Zinda 2002a). It was a long-awaited, albeit largely symbolic, first step.

A secondary outcome of the conference was the designation of a sixty-five member Central Committee tasked with preparing an acceptable transition to a democratically-elected government in Iraq. Two Assyrians, Kanna and Yelda, were appointed to the Committee. The opposition's urgency to form a government, arguably aspiring to secure themselves a place therein, would play out at the Central Committee's Salahaddin conference in February 2003. Eager for a post-Hussein era to begin, the attendees formed yet another committee, this a committee of six to prepare for a transitional regime that stopped just short of announcing itself as a provisional government (Katzman 12). Representation within the opposition thus came full circle with five of the six-member committee having served as heads of the original unified opposition organizations: Talabani, Barzani, Chalabi, Allawi, Baqr al-Hakmi; along with Adnan Pachachi, an Arab nationalist and exiled former Iraqi official. For all the work of the Assyrian community to attain equal recognition over the previous years, for its success in gaining recognition by the Bush Administration, they found themselves back where they had begun, with the same individuals tasked with determining the status of Assyrians in a future Iraq.

When Chaldean Mobilization Appeared

It is notable the above analysis rarely mentioned Chaldean organizations. The contrast between Assyrian and Chaldean activism is highly apparent. As Chaldean activists note through hindsight, reflecting characterizations of Chaldeans in relation to Assyrians, neither the diaspora nor the population in Iraq historically tends to be politically active: 'We had a history as Chaldeans of being passive when it comes to being engaged in politics, meaning whoever's in control, we're very passive don't want to make a lot of noise. The Assyrians, on the other hand, are very nationalist, want to fight for their rights' (Manna Interview 2012).

Chaldean advocacy thus took longer to mimic the mobilization of Iraq's other communities. As the sense grew that war was inevitable, Saad Marouf, then-Executive Director of CFA, and Bishops Ibrahim and Jammo wrote the Bush Administration in December 2002 to request Chaldean recognition, demonstrating the role of the Chaldean Church as a purveyor of a Chaldean ethnic boundary (Marouf et al 2002). The basis of the Chaldean argument presented at this stage would be reiterated throughout Iraq's democratization process: Chaldeans outnumber Assyrians in Iraq and therefore are as deserving of recognition. Chaldeans, like Assyrians, also suffered marginalization in Iraq, where their schools were closed, language rights diminished, and history lost to Arabization. Mobilization was spurred by concerns of boundary encroachment from the Iraqi opposition and fear of Chaldean disappearance. While some Assyrian leaders argue the Church inflamed Chaldean identity for self-preservation, and certainly the Church had an interest in self-protection, the history of the Chaldean community in Detroit suggests Chaldean identity already was pervasive; it had just not been politicized. The Church's response, rather, echoed that which was readily understood by Iraq's other minority groups: a democratic Iraq brought opportunity to protect one's identity by enshrining it in the constitution. As Flanagan recalled, 'It is far more than

a “name” issue. These groups do not play well together and are always glad to talk about their numbers *en gross* but never work together in particular... [it] is a rift that is very apparent to the people involved’ (Interview 2014).

In January 2003, Bishop Jammo issued his call for a Chaldean Renaissance, to which Assyrian nationalists responded critically. The CNC cited such criticism as strengthening the merits of its cause, noting, “Taking advantage of the (till recently) absence of Chaldean political groups, and in an attempt to bolster their influence, Assyrian organizations engaged in wide acts of lies and deception by claiming that Chaldeans are somehow a “religious sect that belongs” to their small Assyrian community’ (Chaldean News Agency 2003a). By dismissing Assyrians in the U.S. as a small population primarily from Iran, the CNC defined Chaldeans in contrast to Assyrians, drawing again upon the Chaldeans’ size and ties to Iraq to claim legitimacy and further constrict the Assyrian-Chaldean boundary.

However, Chaldeans who went to lobby the U.S. government learned the government thought the Chaldean Church was pro-Ba’athist. This presented a stark contrast to the ADM’s history of actively fighting Hussein’s regime. Hanna recalled that as it became apparent war was inevitable, the need to combat the perception Chaldeans were aligned to Hussein’s regime was a primary motivation for the CNC and Church officials to meet with the Administration:

We have a patriarch, Bidawid, who gave the impression to the American administration that he’s pro-Saddam. And Saddam was sending him to several government official meetings, mediated with the U.S. bishops at the time about the embargo and all that kind of thing. And I said, you know, the American administration thinks that the Chaldean Church is pro-Saddam, and we have to tell them that this fellow, if he’s doing it whether he’s under pressure or whether he thinks it’s better this devil than another devil, whatever his reason, the impression is there, and you need to open a door, and your position is to help the church, help the people (Hanna Interview).

The Administration's assumption was shaped by then-Patriarch Raphael I Bidawid's condemnation of the Gulf War and the sanctions that followed. Like his predecessor Patriarch Cheiko, Patriarch Bidawid sought a favourable relationship with Hussein's regime; however, as with many leaders of minority religions in autocratic societies, it is difficult to assume the extent to which such relationships are genuine or are designed to protect one's faithful. His tenure confronted an even more precarious political situation as the Iran-Iraq War's aftermath and international sanctions drastically decreased the standard of living across Iraq. Hussein, confronted by a weakening regime and rising Shi'a movements, became increasingly repressive, turning to his own tribal base for renewed support, and increasingly prone to diatribes against the 'Christian West', language that put Chaldeans at risk of retaliation from the regime and the growing Islamist presence (Saouli 2012: 121-123; Travis 2010: 407-411). Comments such as 'Saddam gives us what we want, listens to us and protects us' cultivated criticism of Bidawid as a Hussein apologist (Adenekan 2003). The absence of an engaged Chaldean political party or diasporic-wide advocacy precluded an alternative narrative from being put forward.

The Chaldean community was divided in support of the looming war, but it would be false to equate opposition to Hussein loyalty. The Chaldean Church, like the Catholic Church, opposed war and used its churches to communicate its opposition to its followers. Ibrahim stated at the time, 'I am asking the bishops of the United States to speak out strongly against a war--not only to issue a statement; a statement is not a big deal--but to speak out strongly from the pulpit, every bishop in his cathedral, to tell the people we should not go to war in Iraq at this time' (National Catholic Reporter 2003). Similarly, newspaper reports prior to the war noted the opposition of some Chaldeans to invading Iraq stood in contrast to the excitement for Hussein's removal from many in the country's Arab community (Cohn 2003; Walt 2002). Most Chaldean emigration occurred under Hussein's regime, and most of the diaspora openly opposed the regime. Rather, their opposition cited possible repercussions

against Christians as a primary concern. Anthony Shadid similarly found Christians in Iraq were especially fearful of an Iranian-style Islamic revolution (Shadid 2005: 180). Hanna recalls of meeting with Administration officials regarding such concerns:

At that time, the main concern was, you know, being people from the land of Iraq, we know Islam better than anybody because we've lived and we've seen the other part...it looks at everybody as a religion...So if the Americans come, that means you're going to be screwed because you belong to them. And we were concerned from that backlash...And here, of course, they didn't give a damn. Absolutely. They didn't care. That's another experience. So, that was our main thing that we want: if you guys are going to rebuild, we believe in you, but take care of our side. Be willing to understand how things are, be willing to understand what you're getting into (Hanna Interview).

Notable was the impression at this early stage that the Administration 'didn't give a damn' about potential post-war consequences, an opinion reiterated by many in the diaspora in hindsight. To critics of the Administration's handling of the war, the absence of meaningful concern for such outcomes coincided with its poor management of sectarianism. It recalls an observation from Richard Clarke that the groupthink and disabuse of nuance that characterized the Administration meant it was unlikely anyone had a chance to argue war would both make the U.S. less secure and increase the lure of radical Islam within Iraq and perhaps the Middle East (Clarke 243-244; See also Al-Ali 2014; Galbraith 2006; Stansfield 2005).

Although the CNC was a relatively nascent organization at the time, it nonetheless demanded prior to the Salahaddin Meeting that Chaldeans, 'the absolute majority of the Christians in Iraq' be included (CNC 2003a). Echoing language used by the Assyrian Coalition, the CNC stressed the opposition, without Chaldeans, did not represent the true ethnic fabric of Iraq. Indeed, over the course of their advocacy, Chaldean requests were almost identical to those of moderate Assyrians: Chaldean advocates echoed the same notes of democratic rights, indigenous rights, and

religious freedoms. The utility of this argument, that a democracy must recognize and protect minority rights, is that it is difficult to envision a premise under which rights could be denied to Chaldeans whilst extended to Assyrians. For Assyrians to contend that those who identify as Arab Christians or Kurdish Christians do not represent Assyrian interests, there is a difficult hypocrisy of arguing Assyrians represent Chaldeans against Chaldeans who claim otherwise. The logic of the Assyrian argument for their own recognition unintentionally made the case for a Chaldean one. Chaldean efforts effectively aimed to distinguish themselves as a separate ethnicity alongside, not under, the Assyrian ethnic umbrella.

Chaldean advocacy resulted in a partial success at the Salahaddin meeting, after which Chaldeans were recognized in the meeting's statement but, like the Assyrians, did not receive representation in the six-member subcommittee. In the final statement, the last from the opposition before the war, the Committee reaffirmed:

Iraq's national unity on the basis of democratic, parliamentary, federal and equal citizenship to all Iraqis, be they Arabs, Kurds, Turkomens, Assyrians, or Chaldeans...A future Iraq will be for all: Arabs, Kurds, Turkomens, Assyrians, Chaldeans and other ethnic minorities (Coordination and Follow-up Committee 2003).

Working with the opposition would only go so far because ideologies and national visions were already in place and were being contested amongst the opposition's Shia, Sunni, and Kurdish factions. The Assyrian and Chaldean fate laid in the hands of the U.S. and its willingness to insist democratic principles be upheld.

Given the short period of Chaldean mobilization prior to the war, it was not obvious whether their advocacy was successful within the Administration. At the Atlantic Summit on 16 March 2003 between the U.S., U.K., Spain, and Portugal, which set a deadline for the war that would begin three days later, Chaldeans were mentioned in the final declaration, which stated, 'All the Iraqi people - its rich mix of Sunni and

Shiite Arabs, Kurds, Turkomen, Assyrians, Chaldeans, and all others - should enjoy freedom, prosperity, and equality in a united country' (Atlantic Summit 2003). For the first time, those who would lead post-war Iraq symbolically recognized both the Assyrian and Chaldean communities as part of Iraq's ethnic makeup. However, the statement's language simply follows the language used by the Salahaddin conference, and is not indicative of policy. Without inclusion in planning discussions or Iraq's new government, the ability to negotiate for Chaldean rights was largely negated. The American administrators to Iraq would demonstrate an unfamiliarity with the Chaldean population, indicating that the appearance of progress in the U.S. did not necessarily translate into progress in Iraq, a reality reflecting the disjointed bureaucratic preparation for Iraq's democratic transition.

The point of outlining the above efforts is to demonstrate how difficult it was from the beginning for activists to gain a meaningful seat at the opposition's table, and the nature of early political demands. Although expectation for stateless diasporas may assume the constant push for territorial autonomy, this was largely not the case: early Assyrian demands prioritized liberal democratic inclusion. In part, this reflects that assimilation is not a concern in Iraq as it is in the U.S., and such protections in turn would enable a measure of nation-building within the homeland. For Assyrians who worked for so long up to that point to be seen as a unique part of Iraq, their inclusion in the opposition, and recognition by the opposition and the Administration that they are indeed a unique nation in Iraq represents the success of their persistent advocacy efforts. For Chaldeans who only began to claim an ethnic boundary, their recognition as a unique ethnic group represents a quick acceptance of a portion of their goals, but also a superficial one: their recognition would be undermined by the failure of meaningful inclusion. Diasporic mobilization was thus responsive to pressures on Assyrian and Chaldean national boundaries: the Assyrian Coalition sought political engagement to rectify long-held grievances of being an unrecognized nation; the later Chaldean engagement sought to avoid marginalization by already-

mobilized groups.

THE COMPLICATED QUEST FOR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS

'It's true you get freedom, but you have to know how to use the freedom...In order for democracy to take place in a country like Iraq, it should have been spoon-fed; it should have been gradual.'

*-Joseph Kassab, Founder, Iraqi Christians Advocacy & Empowerment Institute
(Interview 2012)*

The shape of Iraq's democracy would prove consequential to Iraq's future sectarian relations and the place of Assyrians and Chaldeans therein. Once the Bush Administration set itself to the certainty of war, its departments began planning for the much-cited transition to democracy. The State Department provided an avenue for diasporic involvement through its Future of Iraq project, which directly engaged Iraqi emigrants and experts in post-war strategy. The questions raised throughout the planning process regarding the structures and institutions best suited to the long-term presence of minorities remain highly salient to the current problems in Iraq and to understanding Assyrian and Chaldean marginalization.

This section considers how Assyrian and Chaldean understandings of Iraq's sectarian dynamics shaped their constitutional expectations, and how the opening of the political system led to contestation over Assyrian and Chaldean recognition as national components of Iraq. Ardent Assyrian nationalists who for the first time saw the Assyrian name appear in an Iraqi constitution threatened to vote against ratification because Chaldean was listed alongside. Significant is the continued contrast between Assyrian and Chaldean mobilization: whilst Assyrian interests remain represented by political organizations and by Kanna, who worked directly with the interim Iraqi government, Chaldean interests remain represented largely by leadership in the Chaldean Church. Thus, national mobilization through the constitutional drafting process remains a continuation of its state prior to the Iraq War.

The Importance of Democratic Design

The State Department convened the Future of Iraq group in April 2002 to bring together approximately 200 Iraqi emigrants who specialized in areas of law, education, human rights, the environment, and other areas relevant to planning (Schmitt and Brinkley 2002). It was subdivided into seventeen working groups, fourteen of which met prior to the war. The actionability of these plans varied considerably, from multiple strategic options for a transition to democracy to vague suggestions on public health; nonetheless, they collectively represent the only pre-war planning that sought to both engage Iraqis directly in the process and address the comprehensive scope administering a post-Hussein Iraq would entail (State Department 2005). The planning would later be discarded by the Department of Defense when it was granted control over post-war reconstruction instead of the State Department. However, the project itself and the democratic debate found therein are significant.

Assyrians and Chaldeans were well-represented amongst the participants, including Dadesho on the Civil Society Capacity Building Working Group; Kamber on the Democratic Principles and Procedures Working Group; Yelda on the Defense Policy and Institutions Working Group; Edward Odisho on the Education Working Group; John Kanno, an engineer who hosted a public affairs show on AssyriaTV, on the Economy and Infrastructure Working Group; and Peter BetBasoo, the co-founder of the online Assyrian International News Agency, and Ramsey Jiddou, a Michigan-based Chaldean chemist, on the Water, Agriculture, and Environment Working Group (State Department 2005). An AINA article, assumedly written by BetBasoo, applauded the strong representation of Assyrians in the project, suggesting it reflected the high proportion of Assyrians and Chaldeans amongst the Iraqi population in the U.S. (AINA 2002). However, given that this argument would not carry in support of Assyrian inclusion elsewhere, it may also reflect the active

involvement of Assyrians and Chaldeans in public life combined with a simultaneous push from some Members of Congress to include Assyrian representatives in pre-war planning activities.

The most significant debate to emerge from the Future of Iraq discussions and the Iraqi opposition talks alike, in terms of Assyrian and Chaldean interests, was the ideal structure of Iraq's democracy. The absence of a clear answer would fundamentally challenge the constitutional drafting process and the rush to complete the constitution left many issues unanswered that have since been polarizing to democratic progression (Al-Ali 2014). The particulars of this debate are inextricable from that of the Assyrian and Chaldean place in the Iraqi state.

The initial Democratic Principles and Procedures report demonstrates an understanding of minority issues, the risk of minority exclusion that could result from certain federal structures, and a mindfulness of an inclusive system, all of which would be comparatively absent from the post-war transition. Here, the influence of Assyrian and other minority members of the group are apparent. Kamber, reflecting on his work with both the Future of Iraq project and the Iraqi opposition, recalled, 'We were looking for equality, for democratic values, for the rules of law...I fought for [minority rights] to be included in the final report, and then later in the constitution of Iraq because we believed that the best way for Iraq to build a civil society is to be based on democratic principles and rules of law' (Kamber Interview). Understood is the opportunity to reshape Iraq through remaking national boundaries inclusive of ethnic and religious minorities.

Notably, the report stressed the need to develop civil society and civic institutions, which had been neutered under Hussein, and cautioned against holding national elections before allowing local government systems and political parties sufficient time to develop (NGO Coordination Committee for Iraq 2011; Democratic Principles

Working Group 2002). This approach echoed that of theorists like Andreas Wimmer, Jack Snyder, and Donald Horowitz who contend the most likely way for a plural society to avoid ethnic or sectarian conflict in its transition to democracy is to first give society the chance to develop cross-sectional cleavages and a functioning civil society (Wimmer 2002; Snyder 2000; Horowitz 1985). However, it soon became apparent from within formal discussions of the Iraqi opposition and the American government, particularly from the strong insistence by Kurdish parties, that it was likely Iraq would have a federal structure in which other nationalities are able to pursue a measure of self-rule. This approach largely ignored Assyrians as a component of Iraqi society. Kamber stressed that how Iraq's government is structured consequentially shapes the place Assyrians must demand within it:

If Iraq is going to be built on federalism, I think the Assyrians should have a region to protect themselves. If it was a central government, then we don't need to have that because we will have essential rights wherever we are. But if there is federalism, then why not the Assyrians - they are living on their ancestral land - to have some protected area for themselves?...If you're going to divide the country, you change the system, then the Assyrians should have a region too...Let the Assyrians live in peace and protect their language, their culture, their religion (Kamber Interview).

This sentiment is indicative of the line walked by Assyrians navigating internal Iraqi boundaries. Present is the belief Assyrian identity and culture are strong enough that the right to practice their culture and religion, teach their language, protect their land, and develop civic institutions, coupled with the staunch protection of these rights, is enough to preserve the community in Iraq. There is less concern over assimilation in part because their Christianity continues to minimize the risk of full assimilation as found in Western countries, and in part because such protections would preclude another Arabization campaign by the next government.

Fundamentally, Assyrians and Chaldeans in Iraq are not at the same risk of assimilation as Assyrians and Chaldeans in the West, as evident by the longevity of their presence therein; they are, however, at risk of marginalization and persecution

should society not fulfill its democratic promise.

As Kamber noted, context matters. The rights guaranteed to Assyrians in comparison to the rights guaranteed to other ethnic and religious groups is determinative of whether such rights will actually be guaranteed and protected. Revealed here are two potential shapes a post-Hussein Iraq could have taken: a civic nation founded on diversity, inclusion, and universal rights; or a shared external boundary subdivided into iterations of separate ethno-sectarian nations (Mann 2005; Kymlicka 1995). In essence, if Iraq were to have a strong central government that guarantees equal rights and the universal enforcement of those rights, Assyrian culture and language would likewise be protected. However, if the Iraqi government were to be federated, a proposal championed by then-Senator Joseph Biden as Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, granting the Kurdish region special rights and creating a structure for Shia and Sunni regions to emerge, there is neither a sizable territory left where Assyrians constitute a majority to claim exclusively for themselves, nor an authority to guarantee and protect their rights and interests (Biden and Gelb 2006). In the former scenario, democratic rights represent protection of Assyrians as much as all minorities in Iraq. In the latter scenario, Assyrians would again be subject to the forces of assimilation, repression, and perhaps expulsion; there is no entity with a vested interest in or obligation to their protection. Such a scenario is inherently detrimental to Assyrians because it allows Iraq to be painted as a country of three factions – the Shia majority, the Sunni minority, and the Kurds in the north – and overlook the presence of any other demographic.

Also affecting Assyrian and Chaldean calculations was the Kurdish effort at boundary expansion through ethnic and geographical means. Concern over such marginalization was exemplified by a draft constitution adopted by the Kurdish Parliament in November 2002. The draft proposed a United Republic of Iraq

consisting of two federated territories: the Kurdish region and the remaining Arab region (Kelly 2010). The arrangement reinforced a common worry amongst Assyrians and Chaldeans alike regarding their proximity to Kurdish nationalism and their survivability therein. The draft language was especially concerning when considering the ADM participated in local and parliamentary government in the KRG. The ADM enumerated its objections, specifically that listing Kurds and Arabs as the two main nations while categorizing other nations as 'national groups' denoted an inferior status; further, the draft failed to specify the rights of national groups or provide any process of implementation of national rights; and, as was becoming an unavoidable point of contention, the draft identified 'Assyrians and Chaldeans' despite ADM objections to the 'and' as dividing the Assyrian Chaldean people (ADM 2002a). The ADM took particular offense to the failure to address Assyrian issues, noting that because of its membership in the Parliament, it hoped its colleagues 'would have taken into consideration the level of our alliance and long tormenting struggle as fraternal nations, the justice of our cause and the persecutions that have been inflicted on the Assyrian people over centuries' (ibid).

The Kurdish draft presented an early example of the countervailing national forces that Assyrians and Chaldeans faced. The democratic system the Kurds proposed reflected ambitions for their own equal rights within Iraq on par with the Arab community, and for some semblance of autonomy. Kurdish boundaries were defined in exclusively ethnic terms. Theoretically this allowed room for religious freedom and practices within the region; however, as evident by the ADM's response, this is insufficient to a people seeking recognition. Moreover, as Assyrians were acutely aware, religious protections are only useful as long as the balance of ethnic to sectarian identity remains unchanged: a rising Islam movement, for example, could easily upend boundary criteria.

Despite Arabization policies enforcing a common Arab ethnicity, Ba'ath repression

instead created dormant and repressed visions of ethno-sectarian entitlement eager to correct past wrongs and lay claim to the Iraqi state, drawing national boundaries that would come to be defined by sectarian identity. As Haddad commented, ‘the sanctions-era was in essence the incubator of post-2003 Iraqi society’, cultivating raw and traumatized ethno-sectarian identities that would give way to ethno-sectarian claims to power (Haddad 1; Stansfield 141). The post-Ba’ath government failed to make state identity more prominent and valuable than sectarianism: as Galbraith observed, ‘the fundamental problem of Iraq is an absence of Iraqis’ (Galbraith 2006: 242). Kamber found the planning and maneuvering of the other Iraqi opposition leaders reflected this:

I break the silence when I was in one of the working groups in Washington, and then these guys start talking about all these Shia, Sunni, Kurds...I say, well guys, I am Assyrian too. If you are going to talk about the Kurdish right, I need to talk also about the Assyrian right. And this where, actually, all these democratic values and the dream of establishing a civil society in Iraq, I thought: it’s gone...All these groups, they were trying to control the government, and they hadn’t really thought that what we fought Saddam for years is the idea to have a democratic system, rule of law, control, rule of democratic election (Kamber Interview).

Even at this preliminary stage, it was apparent the opening of Iraq’s political structure was encouraging mobilization along sectarian lines. Outside powers were disinclined to correct for this through cultivating other, non-sectarian understandings of the state. Zaid Al-Ali found the U.S. actively focused on developing a constitution and government along ethno-sectarian lines, negating what could have been an effort at unity-building as a multisectarian, multiethnic Iraq (Al-Ali 2014). Thus, it is difficult to see how anything short of a strong outside or neutral hand in designing and implementing a political process that specifically sought to undercut these national and sectarian elements could have avoided sectarian conflict. Even if Assyrians and Chaldeans had been better organized, more unified, or more forceful, they were without power or institutions capable of influencing the outcome. As the

previous section addressed, to simply be recognized as part of Iraq and included in opposition talks required tremendous effort and resiliency: the barrier was not that these groups were simply without power, the barrier was also that those who held power were disinclined to help. Evident is a correlation between elite action, claims to power, and boundary formation - and thus the necessity of sustained diasporic engagement. The repeated barriers encountered to arrive at that point, coupled with Iraq's historical legacy of undermining its minority communities, were blunt reminders that an outcome favourable to Assyrians and Chaldeans was not guaranteed.

The Dilemma of a Comma: 'Chaldeans, Assyrians' As Iraqi Nationalities

As envisioned by pre-war planning efforts, one of the criticisms of Iraq's post-war structure is that it attempted to be a hybrid of centralized democracy and federalism, and, as a result, has become effectively neither democratic nor accountable. This enabled a strong Kurdish region in the north, while Shia and Sunni factions and infighting dominate the central government, sidelining minority issues and protections. This arrangement was precarious for Assyrians and Chaldeans: their requests for rights and better protections thereof went largely ignored because divisions and power struggles curtail the central government from operating effectively.

The assumption that the State Department was going to oversee Iraq's reconstruction proved erroneous, and the early planning done by the Future of Iraq group was essentially shelved. General Jay Garner, the first administrator of Iraq, was to put together a team to coordinate between the various planning efforts from the State, Defense, and Justice Departments, which he described as being 'done in the vertical stovepipes of those agencies', lay the groundwork, and hand control of Iraq to a presidential appointee who would then continue reconstruction and transition power

to the Iraqis (PBS Frontline 2003). However, almost immediately President Bush replaced General Garner with L. Paul Bremer III as Administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority (PBS Frontline 2006). The diminished role of the State Department was consequential for Assyrians and Chaldeans as State officials were more responsive to and understanding of the community, whereas Defense officials 'couldn't have cared less' (Flanagan Interview).

By many accounts, pre-war planning anticipated a prolonged war, a humanitarian crisis, and the possible use of chemical or biological weapons; when this did not occur, planning was not adequate to the environment encountered. The early stages of Bremer's tenure indicated there was an intent to allow society to normalize. The seven-step plan Bremer previewed in the Washington Post stated bluntly, 'At the present elections are simply not possible. There are no election rolls, no election law, no political parties law and no electoral districts' (Bremer 2003). His memoir further stressed the need to develop 'shock absorbers' that enable democracy to take root, from civil society to a free press to political parties (Bremer 2006: 19). Powell urged the interim Iraqi government 'to be fully representative of all Iraqis, north and south, Sunni, Shi, Kurd, Turkmen, and Christian', with Bremer commenting that such a composite was 'not going to be built overnight' (Bremer 43).

A calculated transition was soon curtailed by the Bush Administration's desire to transfer power and end its non-military role in Iraq. Negative domestic and international public opinion grew with escalating conflict, attacks on U.S. forces, and the ever-growing cost of war, revealing both the limitations of American power, as George McGovern and William Polk suggest, and the reality the U.S. never adequately planned for how it wanted to administer Iraq, as Peter Galbraith argued (McGovern and Polk 2006: 94; Galbraith 89). Gareth Stansfield further argued these challenges shifted U.S. policy from long-term nation-building to short-term state-building, effectively bypassing the difficult but necessary tasks of building civil

society and cultivating a cooperative political culture for the visible benchmarks of democracy, namely elections and a constitution (Stansfield 152). Key Iraqi figures also pressured a transfer of power, including Ayatollah Sistani who in 2003 issued a fatwa demanding elections be held and Iraqis be responsible for writing their own constitution, challenging American plans to appoint a governance council; the struggle of American administrators to resume basic services, including regular electricity and water, further developed animosity toward the continued U.S. presence (Tripp 283-289; Department of Defense 2008; Oxfam 2007).

The transition of power ultimately went through several stages of governing bodies before the permanent structure, which typically saw one Christian serve on each governing iteration. The Iraqi Governing Council governed from July 2003 through June 2004 underneath the CPA, where its primary duty was to pass an interim constitution, the Temporary Administrative Law (TAL), and appoint a cabinet to help administer Iraq's government. Kanna was appointed to serve on the IGC and Behnam Polis served as the Minister of Transportation. Following the transfer of sovereignty from the CPA, the IGC was replaced by the Iraqi Interim Government, which served from June 2004 to May 2005 and on which Pascal Warda served as Minister of Immigration and Refugees. The IIG was a caretaker government that lasted until elections in January 2005 voted in the Iraqi Transition Government, which was tasked with drafting the permanent constitution. Basimah Butros served as Minister of Science and Technology; additionally, six Assyrians were elected to Parliament, including Kanna as well as Ablahad Efram and Nuri Potrus of the Chaldean Democratic Union Party, Goriel Khamis of the BNDP of Iraq, and Jacklin Zomaya of the Assyrian Patriotic Party, all of whom were part of the Kurdistan List, and Wijdan Michael who was part of Allawi's secular list. A national referendum in October 2005 approved the permanent constitution and was followed by national parliamentary elections in December 2005 to select the first four-year term representatives to the permanent National Assembly. The National Assembly

replaced the IIG in May 2006, then a 275-member parliament to which three Christians were elected: Kanna, Efram, and Fawzi Hariri of the KDP.

A draft prepared by the Office of the Secretary of Defense in March 2003 indicates these representative bodies could have been more inclusive. Planned was a thirty-five member Leadership Council for an Iraqi Interim Authority to be tasked with establishing a constitutional commission and organizing local and national elections, specifying an Assyrian member and a Chaldean member should be selected through caucuses (Office of the Secretary of Defense 2003). This was later pared down by Bremer to the twenty-five member IGC, whose membership was appointed by the CPA rather than through caucuses or engagement of local Iraqis. Significantly, such paring down also eliminated a position for a Chaldean member as Bremer appointed Kanna to the IGC as the only Christian representative.

Rebuilding of Iraq came at a time when Chaldeans were facing several upheavals. The Iraq War accompanied the illness of Patriarch Bidawid, who died in July 2003, and indecision over his replacement left the Chaldean Church without a Patriarch until December 2003, when Archbishop Emmanuel Delly came out of retirement to serve as Patriarch (Manna Interview 2012). The delay, however, left Chaldeans without an important voice at a critical juncture. It is here the Chaldean Church mobilized to fill the void in lieu of a political representative. In May 2003, Bishops Ibrahim and Jammo drafted a 'Memorandum on Chaldeans in the New Iraq', stating Chaldeans:

Will accept to be represented only by Chaldeans speaking in the name of Chaldean organizations, and maintain everywhere that they shall reject any non-Chaldean, political or otherwise, individual or organization, claiming to represent them. Nevertheless, Chaldeans are ready to work in harmony and collaboration with all the other ethnic and religious groups in Iraq, particularly with the Assyrians, provided that the Chaldean identity is recognized and preserved (Chaldean News Agency 2003b).

This is a direct assertion of Chaldean ethnicity against Assyrian inclusion. Similarly, the CNC sent multiple letters to American officials with the hope of securing Chaldean representation and of securing language providing for Chaldeans' ethnic and political rights (Hanna Interview).

Such efforts were unsuccessful. Bremer recalls in his book that he met soon after announcing the IGC with then-Archbishop Delly, who protested that neither he, nor any Chaldean, were selected:

Iraq's small Christian community, like most sectarian splinters in the country, was fragmented. There were the Chaldeans, who appeared to outnumber the Assyrian Christians, but who were not as well organized and less active politically. In keeping with the objective of the smallest representative body possible, we had room on the Council for only one Christian.

We had chosen a representative of the Assyrian Christians and anticipated this would cause unhappiness with the Chaldeans. We were right, for that night the Bishop's heart was not overflowing with Christian love (Bremer 99).

Bremer does not offer an explanation as to why only one Christian representative was chosen, other than a generic narrative of wanting a small Council. This passage marks Bremer's only mention of Chaldeans in his memoir. Reiterating the stereotype Chaldeans are politically disinclined, he presents a shallow understanding of the community and its concerns, and the justification he presents can only be seen as arbitrary by Chaldeans, particularly when contrasted with his and the Administration's rhetoric of democratic inclusion. The American government cared less for the complexities of fully representing Iraqi society.

In response, nineteen of the twenty-two Chaldean bishops, including Bishops Ibrahim, Jammo and Delly, issued a strongly-worded declaration urging the new government to guarantee the rights of Iraq's Christians, 'first among them our

Chaldean people', and to include a Chaldean representative in the constitutional drafting process, stating:

We were and still are mystified that, despite our appeals, your administration ignored, since the beginning up to the present day, these facts. Unfairly, the Temporary Council of Government was formed without any Chaldean presence and the structure and members of the new government have been announced without any participation of Chaldeans in the name of Chaldeans as well. That is an injustice committed against our people, for which we protest hereby explicitly and insistently (Chaldean News Agency 2003c).

Even under this democratic opening, the Chaldean Church was still the primary voice for Chaldean issues. On the one hand, this might suggest the Bishops' demands stood in contrast to the viewpoint of mainstream Chaldeans; on the other hand, other Chaldeans did not effectively counteract such advocacy. Chaldean boundary criteria, 'who' Chaldeans are, faced an opportunity for redefinition with the end of a repressive Arab-centric regime, and the Bishops' lobbying represented early groupism claims in response to new boundary shifts (Brubaker 2004). The salience of Chaldean as a religious identity paled when placed alongside the ethnic-based demands of Assyrians, Arabs, and Kurds – and Turkoman, Mandeans, and other minority groups. Church leaders in essence presented a claim that Chaldean identity had fissured from Assyrian. Blurring the Chaldean boundary to one based on ethnicity was perhaps a means to protect Chaldean identity in relation to Iraq's complicated ethno-sectarian composition.

Subsequently, the ADM, acting in its role as a political party, organized a conference that took place in Baghdad from 22-24 October 2003. The 'Chaldean Syriac Assyrian General Conference' received widespread attendance from Iraqi and diasporic political parties and activists (ADM 2003). With the motto 'Our Unity and Our National and Patriotic Rights in Iraq', the Conference called for 'ChaldoAssyrian' to be the official ethnic designation of the Chaldean, Assyrian, and Syriac people in

political usage and ‘Syriac’ to be the official linguistic and cultural designation. Recalling the appearance of Assyro-Chaldean at Versailles, this political effort again aimed to keep Chaldean actors within the Assyrian ethno-national structure, again to the discontent of staunch Assyrian nationalists for diluting the Assyrian national name. Although this controversial decision represents an attempt to reach out to Iraq’s Chaldean-identifying population, Chaldean Church officials and Chaldean nationalists who sought a separate Chaldean designation did not recognize its outcome (CNC 2003c).

The ADM’s effort, aided by Kanna’s role in the IGC, resulted in the inclusion of the conference’s language in the temporary constitution. Section 53(D) of the TAL provided that:

This Law shall guarantee the administrative, cultural, and political rights of the Turcomans, ChaldoAssyrians, and all other citizens.

The signing of the TAL, Iraq’s first democratic constitution, was an important symbolic moment for Iraqis. Holding additional symbolism for Assyrians, Kanna was the last member of the IGC to sign the TAL, leading to photos of him raising the document in celebration reprinted in newspapers across the globe.

Yet not all Assyrians in diaspora were happy with the TAL. Dadesho and the BNDP, for example, waged protests and sent letters to the Bush Administration accusing the ADM and the ‘unelected’ IGC of ‘ethnocide’ for supporting the ‘fabricated’ ChaldoAssyrian nation (Dadesho 2004). At this stage, as the CPA transferred power to Iraq, the role of diasporic activism was perhaps less necessary within Iraq, underscoring the reality of state borders and distance, of diasporic members not being part of Iraq and removed from the benefits and consequences of policy. Although violence in Iraq was increasing, there was nonetheless an appreciation that

the Iraqi community, for the first time since Iraq became a state, had the opportunity to pursue their own interests and act on their own behalf. A boundary between those organizations like the ADM who are actively part of Iraq and those who were based in diaspora was thus apparent.

By the time the final version of the Constitution was drafted, the ‘ChaldoAssyrians’ usage was changed to ‘Chaldeans, Assyrians’, listed as separate nationalities alongside each other. The outcome reflected the demand of the Chaldean Church, not Assyrian moderates. Thus, Article 125 of Iraq’s Permanent Constitution of 2005 states:

This Constitution shall guarantee the administrative, political, cultural, and educational rights of the various nationalities, such as Turkomen, Chaldeans, Assyrians, and all other constituents, and this shall be regulated by law.

Additionally, Article Four of the constitution provides for language rights, designating Syriac as an official language in administrative units where Syriac-speakers comprise ‘a density of population’, and guarantees the right to Syriac-language education in public schools. Lastly, it provides for religious freedom in Article Two, Part Two, which states somewhat awkwardly:

This Constitution guarantees the Islamic identity of the majority of the Iraqi people and guarantees the full religious rights to freedom of religious belief and practice of all individuals such as Christians, Yazidis, and Mandaean Sabians.

As an Iraqi constitution, the appearance of the Assyrian and Chaldean names was historic. As a democratic constitution, there were several flaws. First, any guarantee of religious freedom was fundamentally undermined by the provision placing Islam as both the official religion of the State and a foundation source of legislation, and further stating no law may be passed that contradicts Islamic principles. Nearly every diasporic organization, in addition to other religious and civic organizations,

shared its deep objection to this provision with the American and Iraqi governments. Second, the guarantee of national administrative rights is without a context for implementation, leaving the details to a divided legislature. Such ambiguity reflects that the constitution was rushed, not only in the context of Iraq but in comparison to other states: South Africa, for example, took seven years to finalize its constitution; Iraq was given three months, and the U.S. government intervened to block a potential six-month extension (Al-Ali 1621). Given the arduous challenges of writing a constitution in a post-totalitarian state, as al-Ali outlines, American officials, in concert with a select few Iraqis, largely had the final say in the outcome to ensure the document was finished within that timeframe: the religious emphasis from the original, Iraqi-produced draft agreement was scaled back and contradicted to make it more palatable to the U.S., minorities, and secularists; provisions restrictive to women's rights were similarly eliminated or scaled-back (Al-Ali 1636-1792).

In addition to obvious structural concerns, diasporic objections to the constitution often cited the recognition of Chaldeans as dividing the Assyrian nation on sectarian lines. The BNDP's party platform has since reflected its goal of protecting 'the sole Assyrian identity in the Iraqi constitution' (BNDP 2006). The AUA declared its rejection of the constitution because it subdivides the Assyrian people while at the same time relegating Assyrian rights into a subcategory of national groups as 'second-class citizens' to the Shia, Sunni, and Kurds (AUA 2005b; Kamber 2005). The ADM similarly expressed frustration, noting, 'The ADM struggled for more than twenty-six years to institutionalize our ethnic identity in the constitution. Since its establishment in 1979, the ADM considered the national unity of our people as sacred that could not be compromised...we must point to this great imbalance and flaw that is not accepted at all' (ADM 2005).

Some in the diaspora blamed Kurdish interests for the language change; for example, AINA wrote, 'The departure from the unifying formula of the TAL is believed to have

been a key demand of -and subsequent gain by- KDP warlord Masoud Barzani. A major element in the KDP's policy towards Assyrian Christians has been their formal division into smaller, demographically less significant, rival communities' (AINA 2005). The ADM instead held Church officials responsible for interfering in politics and inserting a sectarian agenda (ADM 2005). Chaldeans, certainly, could not have secured their recognition without the advocacy of Church leadership nor the support of politicians within the drafting process. However, there was little acceptance that behind the Chaldean quest for recognition were ordinary people who understood themselves as Chaldean and sought to sustain an identity they arguably held since the formation of the Iraqi state.

For all the years of effort, the aforementioned provisions comprised the extent of provisions specific to Assyrians and Chaldeans. The constitution had many flaws: it was rushed, the structure of Iraq was both ambiguous and uncertain, it failed to clarify key provisions, it was passed amongst a society in which sectarian tensions were increasing. It was these flaws that would prove most detrimental to Assyrian and Chaldean interests, both immediately and in the long-term.

In the grand scheme of Assyrian and Chaldean history, its persecutions and displacements and struggle to stay afloat through tides of nation-building and Arabization, their recognition in the Iraq Constitution was a significant marker that they too exist in Iraq. The challenge of being a stateless minority is exemplified by the prolonged effort to be recognized as a component of Iraq following already prolonged efforts to gain inclusion into the opposition. In the context of an Iraqi state with ethnic-based federal units, recognition of Assyrians and Chaldeans as nationalities with 'administrative, cultural, political, and educational' rights provided a necessary legal foundation upon which other national goals, including a self-administered unit, become tangible. There was thus widespread Assyrian and Chaldean diasporic support for this basic goal. The point of divergence regarded

recognition of a Chaldean nation. A key difference between the communities is highlighted throughout this process: that of Chaldeans as a less political entity in which the Church continues to play an essential role; and of Assyrians as a diaspora with an engaged long-distance nationalism towards Iraq.

Whilst the relationship between the diaspora and Iraq, and the diaspora's care for what happens in the homeland, is evident throughout this process, the advent of a democratic Iraq provided an opportunity for Iraqi Assyrians and Chaldeans to be responsible for their own advocacy. Yet a critical misstep of all sides proved to be the extended focus on the terminology and the divisiveness of a comma: by October 2005, when the constitutional referendum took place, at least seventeen churches had been bombed and internal displacement was growing; the conflict would increase over the next year, resulting in a massive refugee crisis (AINA 2014a). The torch of Assyrian and Chaldean advocacy would again be returned to the U.S. as the diaspora was faced with responding to the direct consequences of sectarian conflict.

THE CONTINUING QUEST FOR REFUGEE AID

'We care about refugees because of the seed of fear that lurks in all of us that can be stated so simply: it could be me.'
-Arthur Helton (2002: 7)

As sectarian conflict grew, coalition forces and the nascent Iraqi government were ill-prepared to respond to the persecution and mass displacement of Iraq's Christian population. It was expected the U.S., as the initiator of the conflict, administrator of Iraq, and a refugee-receiving state, would assume responsibility for aid and resettlement; however, the unwillingness of the Bush Administration to acknowledge the refugee crisis instead exacerbated the humanitarian toll. The confluence of these factors instilled a rallying point for diasporic actors to mobilize alongside human rights activists and refugee aide agencies. Mobilization was directly fueled by the disproportionate representation of Assyrians and Chaldeans amongst Iraq's displaced

and the humanitarian plight that resulted. Various aid agencies estimated Christians comprised somewhere between 15 and 40 percent of the refugee population, a rate far disproportionate to their less than five percent share of Iraq's population (Harper 2008: 171; USCIRF 2007).

Pre-war Iraq was not a mercurial society kept from exploding into ethno-sectarian conflict by the lid of the Ba'ath regime. As Peter Galbraith observed, it is hard to say exactly when conflict began, with political assassinations and destruction of religious institutions occurring intermittently through the war's first years and escalating drastically after the bombing of the al-Askari Mosque in Samarra in February 2006, after which reprisal attacks intensified and Baghdad neighbourhoods became segregated on sectarian bases (Galbraith 175-178; Saouli 132; See Appendix I). Targeting of Assyrians and Chaldeans escalated approximately one year after the war began with the first recorded church bombing in June 2004 in Mosul, after which attacks persisted through the fall (AINA 2014a). By 2006, reports of sectarian-based persecution were so frequent as to necessitate a special investigation by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom outside of their normal investigative schedule, the results of which prompted a rare special report calling for increased U.S. attention and placing Iraq on USCIRF's Watch List (Cassidy and Chaudhry Interview 2012; USCIRF 2006). By 2007, displacement had reached such proportions that the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Antonio Guterres, labeled it 'the most significant displacement in the Middle East since the dramatic events of 1948', noting 'one in eight Iraqis have been driven from their homes', with approximately 2 million having fled outside Iraq and 1.9 million internally displaced (UNHCR 2007).

To all diasporic groups, humanitarian aid was an immediate priority. To compensate for the shortcomings of the U.S. government's response, Assyrian and Chaldean organizations and churches mobilized aid and assistance programs: humanitarian

assistance remains a consistent priority within both communities.²⁴ However, as the crisis spanned years, with no opportunities for permanent settlement in the countries of first refuge, it forced the question of what to do long-term for national survival.²⁵ A distinct Chaldean effort consequentially emerged to engage American policy-makers on the question of refugee admissions. Refugees represented a new wave of displacement, but whose route was formidable and unknown; here, the Chaldean diaspora argued permanent resettlement was the moral and humanitarian responsibility of the U.S. Furthermore, American resettlement would allow Assyrian and Chaldean refugees to resettle in areas with established Assyrian and Chaldean communities, providing an opportunity to keep those displaced part of the diasporic nation.

This section specifically considers the role of Chaldean advocacy in pursuing a path for refugee resettlement as it marks a unique point of mobilization, inserting a secular Chaldean voice into diasporic politics. Notably, advocacy at this stage sidestepped questions of ethnicity, urging aide to Chaldeans, Assyrians, and Syrians, Iraqi Christians, and religious minorities generally. Whilst this marks a point of contrast with previous Chaldean activism, it also reflects the drastically different circumstances, reacting to unfolding events and coinciding with heavy periods of sectarian violence, peaking in 2007 and again in 2010. Thus although advocacy was not centered upon an ethnic argument, Chaldean activism arose from Chaldean civic organizations and strengthened the standing of Chaldeanness as an identity on behalf of which activism occurs and which possesses an institutional network capable of mobilizing and sustaining activism.

²⁴ Such programs and organizations include ANCI, AAS, CALC, Chaldean and Middle-Eastern Social Services, Adopt-a-Refugee, Assyrian Church of the East Relief Organization, Aid to the Church in Need.

²⁵ Refugees were often unable to obtain permanent status in countries of first refuge (Lebanon, Syria, Jordan) or effectively access employment or education.

The nature of Chaldean diasporic nationalism arguably facilitated support for refugee resettlement, as belief in the need for autonomy has not been a driving component of Chaldean nationalism. However, support for prioritizing refugee admissions was not universal, particularly as the crisis persisted. Some in the Assyrian community and the Chaldean Church condemned the push for refugee admittances as a desire to empty all Christians from Iraq. While the AUA, for example, supports those who chose to leave Iraq, its primary goal is to help Assyrians remain in the Middle East (Tamraz Interview).

Over time, and with waning U.S. aide, tensions between humanitarian imperatives and long-term national interests became apparent and highlight the struggle of diaspora in such difficult circumstances: will aiding emigration lead to a loss of the nation; is it fair to encourage others to stay while living in the safety and luxury of diaspora; will those who emigrate be lost to assimilation? As Assyrian activism almost instinctively rallied to support national rights in Iraq, the more nascent Chaldean engagement followed a multifaceted, more politically feasible trajectory of supporting targeted goals in Iraq, from security to improved elections, and increasing refugee admissions; it is this latter policy in which Chaldean activists found success. Refugee policy was consequentially pursued simultaneous to demands for an autonomous region within Iraq, which will be discussed in the next chapter.²⁶

The challenge activists would encounter in advocating for refugee issues had two stages: the first was the disinclination of the Bush Administration to acknowledge the crisis; the second was a full acknowledgement of the humanitarian toll by the Obama Administration, but a framing of the issue as one left to be solved by Iraqis. The

²⁶ The question of return or resettlement is a point of contention amongst diasporic actors as much as those displaced: a November 2014 survey of internally displaced minorities in northern Iraq found 56 percent of respondents hoped to return to their homes under international protection, and 42 percent hoped to resettle in another country (Nineveh Center for Research and Development 2014).

latter was unsurprising given growing opposition to the war from the American public and President Obama's stance against continued engagement as a campaign platform. In December 2008, President Bush and the Iraqi Government agreed to the U.S.-Iraq Status of Forces Agreement, which outlined the withdrawal of U.S. combat troops from Iraqi cities prior to July 2009 and of all U.S. military forces from Iraq prior to December 31, 2011. After taking office, Obama affirmed U.S. troops would leave Iraq by the end of 2011 (Obama 2011). Politically, although the Obama Administration actively engaged with the American diaspora, troop withdrawal coincided with disengagement from Iraq-related issues (Khedery 2014). Barriers to political engagement were thus significant: it became not so much a barrier of access, but a barrier of efficacy. Assyrians and Chaldeans alike were disadvantaged by the importance of Iraq: because Iraq was politically consequential to both Administrations, they lacked power to capture influence regarding Iraq to shape policy outcomes.

The Bush Administration's Refugee Reluctance

Under UNHCR guidelines, a refugee has three options after displacement: to voluntarily return to one's home country; to integrate into the country of first asylum; or to be resettled to a third country when either of the first two options are unviable: typically, less than one percent of all world-wide refugees are resettled (UNHCR 2014). The challenge of resettlement was compounded by the reluctance of the Bush Administration to acknowledge Iraq's ethno-sectarian conflict. Between 1 April 2003 and 28 February 2007, a total of 687 Iraqi refugees were admitted, including just 202 in FY2006 (Margesson, Sharp, Bruno 2007: 12). Initial estimates for FY2007 admissions predicted the U.S. planned to admit only 500 Iraqi refugees despite the reality of approximately two million refugees (Senate Committee on the Judiciary 2007). For comparison, by October 2007, Sweden, a state that did not support the war, had accepted more Iraqi refugees than the U.S. (Stiglitz and Blimes

2008: 5).

Pressure from the international community, particularly Iraq's neighbours who bore the burden of responding to an influx of hundreds of thousands of refugees each, and domestic pressure from Congress were responsible for changing admission policies, particularly Senator Ted Kennedy who publically criticized the Administration's neglect of the displacement crisis just prior to becoming Chairman of the Immigration, Border Security, and Citizenship Subcommittee after the 2006 elections (Kennedy 2006). Senator Ben Cardin, chair of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, reflected in hindsight that 'without the international community raising this issue as frequently as it has been raised, the progress that has been made to date would not have been as much' (U.S. Helsinki Commission 2010). As L. Craig Johnstone, then President of Refugees International, testified before Congress, the international community largely felt the responsibility for responding to the refugee crisis lay on U.S. shoulders: 'Where it hasn't been an ally of ours, they'll say this was a U.S. war and the U.S. should pick up the costs associated with it' (ibid). It was frequently noted by refugee advocates that after the collapse of South Vietnam in 1975, the U.S. urgently accepted 134,000 Vietnamese refugees; in the years since, over 900,000 Vietnamese have received refugee status (Rikoski and Finer 2009). Similarly, in 1996, under Operation Pacific Haven, the U.S. airlifted 6,600 Iraqi Kurds who supported U.S. humanitarian operations in Iraq to Guam out of concern they could face repercussions from the Ba'ath regime (Department of Defense 1997).

As the context of these examples foreshadowed, a core pillar of advocacy for refugee admissions became focused on aiding those whose lives were in danger for their work in support of coalition war efforts. This narrow interpretation of deserving refugees moved focus away from aiding persecuted minority populations. However, the legislative process to address admissions provided an opportunity to roll in special provisions, and diasporic activism was thus necessary to urge extending

refugee provisions to minorities who were otherwise overlooked in this conversation.

In October 2005, estimating 10,000 to 40,000 Christians had already fled Iraq, Delly called on the U.S. to help: 'I pray that Western governments, including the United States, take pity on these Iraqis and at least offer them a stay permit for those who are already there and, if possible, a visa' (Quoted in Glatz 2005). At this stage, the Chaldean Church supported refugee resettlement. In addition to displacement, an immediate problem was the denial of asylum to approximately 3,000 Iraq Christians, including 2,000 in Michigan, for those whose asylum petitions, due to backlogs in the immigration system, had the misfortune of being processed after Hussein was officially removed (Denha-Garmo 2006). Additionally, a technicality in immigration law considered payments made to release a kidnapped relative as aiding terrorism, leading to several instances of Christians being denied refugee admission.

CFA created Operation R4 (Research, Relief, Resettlement, and Re-empowerment) and in July 2006 began surveying those who contacted CFA for assistance regarding reasons for leaving Iraq and life in the country of refuge (CFA 2007). The purpose of this data was to document that Christians were fleeing Iraq because of force. From July 2006 through March 2007, CFA processed approximately 4,000 survey results representing almost 12,000 refugees, in which over 90 percent of respondents cited religious persecution or discrimination as cause for leaving Iraq, with over half stating the respondent or a family member had been a victim of violence or torture; additionally, over 64 percent of responses indicated family reunification was being sought (CFA 2007). Data from this study was shared with the State Department, congressional officials, and UNHCR. At the same time, under the leadership of Bishop Ibrahim and Michael George, CFA formed an Immigration Committee headed by Steve Garmo, which sought to look for specific legislative options. One avenue considered was an expansion of the Lautenberg Amendment of the 1990 Foreign Operations Appropriations Act, which facilitated refugee processing on humanitarian

grounds for certain religious minorities, particularly the Jewish community, in the Former Soviet Union (Author's Personal Notes 2011; P.L. 101-167). In 2004, the amendment was expanded to include certain religious minorities, particularly Jews and Baha'is, in Iran (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society 2014). Given the very recent extension to Iranian minorities, there was hope a similar extension could be made to Iraqi religious minorities, although this ultimately proved unsuccessful.

Chaldeans in Michigan principally lobbied the state's senior Senator, Carl Levin, Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, to include provisions for persecuted religious minorities in broader refugee legislation. In 2006, Levin included an amendment to the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act to provide status for the 3,000 asylum seekers whose petitions were processed after April 2003 who were otherwise eligible for asylum as members of a persecuted religious minority in Iraq (S.Amdt.4186 to S.2611 of 2006). Although the bill passed the Senate inclusive of such language, it died in the House; similar efforts were undertaken again the following year. Demonstrating Levin's urging of this issue with his colleagues, in a hearing of the Senate Judiciary Committee in January 2007 on 'The Plight of Iraqi Refugees', Kennedy specifically noted in his opening remarks that some Iraqis 'such as the Chaldean Christians' were suffering persecution and that 'I want to make a special note of the Chaldean Federation of America. They have a statement, a comment here. Senator Levin has spoken to me about this' (Senate Judiciary 2007: 5, 48).

CFA's submitted testimony stressed that repatriation to Iraq, an emphasis of the State Department at the time, was 'impossible' for Iraqi Christians because of continued persecution, violence, and the inability of the Iraqi government to provide protection (Senate Judiciary 121-129). Citing data from CFA's surveys, Kassab urged Congress to make Christians eligible for special priority statuses that would expedite the admissions process; create a special designation for internally-displaced Iraqi

Christians; and pass Levin's 2006 legislation to aide the 3,000 asylum seekers.

Kassab's remarks addressed the name issue by using a general Iraqi Christian label and by recasting the community under the Chaldean label, stating 'Iraqi Chaldeans will be used as the general term to designate the Aramaic-speaking persons...also known as Assyrians and Syriacs' (Senate Judiciary 122).

Members of the diaspora sought help for family members displaced from Iraq, which encouraged activists to push for increased refugee admissions, and advocacy on their behalf required sustained effort from Chaldean leadership:

After the invasion in 2003, I went to Washington many times to help in getting this program started, this refugee program. Actually I was working with different groups at that time...even the Chaldean Federation when they started. Or first trip was to Washington, we went together with Joe – Joseph Kassab - and some other people there. At the beginning it was very hard to get this program approved and they found out there is no other way, so they open the door for our people to come...Not until 2006 or 7...I still have a big file of all these 400 people who applied (Barka Interview).

In February 2007, Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff issued an order allowing a case-by-case duress exemption for those who were forced under threat of hardship to provide material support to terrorist organizations, particularly kidnapping ransoms, but who otherwise posed no threat to the U.S. (Chertoff 2007).

In September 2007, the Senate approved a Levin Amendment to the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2008, which, noting the government 'has an obligation to help', called on the Administration to provide all refugee visas allotted for Near East/South Asia to Iraqis, as well as any unused portion of the worldwide allocation (S.Amend 2781 to H.R.2764 of 2008). Ultimately, the amendment was not included in the final bill.²⁷ By September 2007, the U.S.'s own Ambassador to Iraq issued a heavy

²⁷ As discussed in the next chapter, the final bill included language directing funds to assist Assyrians and Chaldeans in the Nineveh Plain (House Appropriations Committee Division J, H.R.2764).

critique of processing delays and inefficiencies that were both leaving refugees vulnerable and increasing insecurity; Administration officials, rather than initiate an inquiry or policy change, instead publicly dismissed the Ambassador's complaints as containing 'many errors' (Crocker 2007; Hsu and Wright 2007).

Such processing changes and increased refugee admissions were instead secured with the attachment of Kennedy's Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act to the FY2008 National Defense Authorization Act, which was signed into law in January 2008 (P.L. 110-181).²⁸ The bill facilitated the refugee process for two key populations: those who assisted the U.S. and those members of a persecuted group -specifically, vulnerable ethno-religious minorities- who have immediate family in the U.S. The bill addressed several problems noted in Crocker's critique, including opening refugee applications to those still inside Iraq, thereby removing the burden of fleeing to a neighbouring state, and allowing these groups to apply directly to the U.S. for refugee status, bypassing the lengthy UNHCR process, by extending Priority 2 status of 'special humanitarian concern' under Section 207(a)(3) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (Rikoski and Finer 2009). The provision allowing special processing for Iraqi refugees with family in the U.S. was imperfect, but still an asset to the Assyrian and Chaldean community.

The law further allowed the 3,000 Iraqis with rejected asylum petitions to reopen their cases to seek to remain in the U.S. Furthermore, it created a Special Immigrant Visas (SIV) category to allow 5,000 visas annually for Iraqis who worked for the U.S. The SIV removed the burden of proving a well-founded fear of persecution required for refugee status, allowing applicants to apply based on proof of service and an employer recommendation. While the SIV program is well-intended, it has not been

²⁸ Similar bill versions were introduced by Earl Blumenthauer (H.R.662 and H.R.2265 of 2007); Alcee Hastings (H.R.3674 of 2007; H.R.6496 of 2008); and Hillary Clinton (S.3541 of 2008).

well-implemented. Cardin noted despite the urgent nature of these applications, the average processing time for a regular refugee application from Iraq was one year and the SIV cases are longer; at the time of his remarks, only 2,145 SIVs had been issued (Helsinki Commission 2010). Processing has not met the program's intentions: as of May 2014, approximately 14,000 of the 25,000 allotted SIVs were issued, even though the program was intended to expire two months later (USCIS 2014; Packer 2014a). Processing delays remain a consistent issue as waiting periods for refugee petitions were approximately eighteen months by 2014 - until the fall of Mosul to ISIL halted processing (Packer 2014a).

There are two perspectives to considering the admissions that resulted from these combined provisions. The impact on growing the Assyrian and Chaldean diaspora is considerable, as is the impact on individual cities where resettlement has concentrated, such as El Cajon and suburban Detroit. From 2007 through 2009, an estimated 8,091 Iraqi Christian refugees arrived in Michigan and approximately 4,848 in San Diego, and around 1,000 in Chicago and Arizona each (Thierry 2010).²⁹ However, in the context of displacement, admission numbers are rather conservative. American doors have not opened to relocate TelKeppe to America. In terms of total Iraqi resettlement, exclusive of sectarian or ethnic background, 121,530 Iraqis were admitted as refugees or SIVs from 2007 through July 2014, the majority of whom resettled in California and Michigan (State Department 2014).

The Obama Administration's Benign Neglect

By 2009, the challenges facing refugees upon arrival gained some attention outside the Iraqi communities. A 2009 study found systemic flaws in the Iraqi refugee admittance and resettlement program because it 'does not break down barriers to

²⁹ Figures are specific to refugee and SIV admissions, and do not include Iraqis who arrived on other visas. Assyrian/Chaldean figures are difficult given visas are counted by citizenship; figures here reflect newspaper estimates derived from community resettlement agencies.

sustainable employment, employment services are not properly funded, English language training is insufficient, transportation is inadequate, and professional recertification is not viable' (Georgetown University Law Center 2009: 19). In part, this was because although Iraqi refugee admissions were still minor in the context of demand, they had nonetheless risen drastically: from FY2007, when congressional and international pressure escalated, admissions were at 1,608; by FY2008, they increased to 13,823 and exceeded 18,000 in both FY2009 and FY2010 (State Department 2014). Moreover, as Assyrian and Chaldean organizations found, the type of refugee arriving had greater needs resulting from trauma and lengthy periods of displacement, needs to which current programs were not readily-equipped to respond. Juliana Taimoorazy, founder of the Iraqi Christian Relief Council, stressed the challenges facing refugees after arrival refocused her organization from the Middle East to the U.S.:

We were formed to help strictly Christians in Iraq, but at the end of 2007, the doors really opened and a huge influx of Assyrians and Chaldeans started coming to the West. And we as a community weren't ready in Chicago to welcome them...Since 1980, when the Iran-Iraq War broke out; then the Gulf War; then it was the American war, the Second Gulf War; and then it was persecution. They have been so traumatized for the last 30 years...And, absolutely devastating, our nation is dying because our young are not being educated, refugee kids for five, six, seven, eight years – they left high school when they were 16, they get here when they are 24, they're not going to go sit next to a high schooler (Taimoorazy Interview).

Diasporic frustration over ongoing conditions in Iraq, delays in processing refugee petitions overseas, and the struggles of those who were resettled was palpable. The visit of Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Iraq and Special Coordinator for Iraq's Minority Communities Michael Corbin to Detroit in June 2010 resulted in a town hall attended by an estimated 650 to 1,000 people that was shut down by protests from attendees (Author's Personal Notes 2010; Dado 2010). Frustration was not just amongst diasporic elites but the wider diaspora.

The outrage was processing delays in Iraq and the sudden ability of Immigrations and Customs Enforcement to carry out deportation orders for Iraqis. Under the Immigration and Nationality Act, an individual who is ordered deported must first be given a travel document, such as a passport, from the country to which the individual is to be deported. Without diplomatic relations with Iraq under sanctions and until the new Iraqi government was capable of issuing travel documents, deportation orders for Iraqis languished. In 2010, travel documents were suddenly available and ICE began deportations to Iraq to the outrage of community members who felt forcing Chaldeans to Baghdad was essentially a death sentence. CFA, through its role in providing immigration services, received requests for assistance (Kassab Interview 2013; Author's Personal Notes 2010). Chaldean activists sought Congressional and Administration intervention to temporarily halt the process. Senator Levin and Congressman Sander Levin wrote to and met with Administration officials to convey the severity of the situation facing Christians in Iraq, noting their grave concern for the safety of those deported and requesting a delay in deportations until security improves (Levin and Levin 2010).

Here, diasporic engagement facilitated change in Administration policy. As Eric Schwartz, then-Assistant Secretary of State, testified before the Helsinki Commission in response to a question about UNHCR's concern that Iraqis had been deported by several European countries: 'We believe that all returns to Iraq at this point should be voluntary. That's including, of course, anyone who is deemed to fear prosecution, under no circumstances should that person be returned...We have a different perspective on this issue than some of our European friends' (Helsinki Commission 2010).

Chaldean civic leadership emerged to advocate on behalf of the wider diaspora and those in the U.S. The success of their advocacy is observed in the advocacy carried

out by members of the Michigan congressional delegation. In addition to the assistance mentioned above, Michigan Congressman Gary Peters and Senator Debbie Stabenow introduced the Domestic Refugee Reform and Modernization Act to improve administration and planning of the resettlement program (Peters 2011; HR.1475 of 2011; HR.1784 and S.1850 of 2013). In 2009, Senator Levin and Peters introduced companion resolutions, S.Res.322 and H.Res.944, calling on the Administration to do more to aide Iraq's ethno-religious minorities, including improving security, and supporting economic- and civic-building programs. Both Resolutions passed their respective chambers, passing the House by a vote of 415 to 3 in February 2010 and the Senate with unanimous consent in August 2010 (Congressional Record 24 February 2010, 5 August 2010). While Resolutions are non-binding, their passage can serve as a political tool, demonstrating the commitment of its supporters to a particular issue. In this case, it showcases the relationship between Chaldean advocates and members of Congress; further, it showcases Chaldean advocates as advocates for those in Iraq.

The new role of Chaldean civic organizations as political actors on behalf of a Chaldean diaspora is significant. Political engagement was mobilized in response to the refugee crisis and increasingly exclusionary Iraqi boundaries, even though they were not inherently political organizations. The rallying of the wider Chaldean community on behalf of Chaldeans in Iraq thus marked a key pivot in the Chaldean community toward political activism on behalf of the global diaspora.

CONCLUSION: THE INADEQUATE SOLUTIONS OF INCLUSION AND EMIGRATION

Backlash for sustaining refugee admissions arose from two infrequently-aligned voices: Assyrian nationalists and the Chaldean Church in Iraq. Their opposition reflects mutual concern that resettlement threatens the permanent disappearance of

Assyrians and Chaldeans from Iraq. Sako, as Archbishop of Kirkuk, contended the West 'should help Iraqi Christians to remain in their homeland rather than investing resources in assistance programs that actually encourage their escape' (Quoted in Agenzia Fides 2012). By late 2014, as Patriarch, he openly criticized American leaders who encouraged refugee admissions, stating:

In America they put baskets with asylum request forms on church altars during Mass, as if the migration of thousands of Iraqi Christians to the US was something to ask God's blessing for. That's a strange thing to do and only confuses people's faith. Unfortunately, some members of the clergy turn into businessmen instead of remaining shepherds of souls. They think in business instead of evangelical terms, even in relation to faithful. To some they are just numbers who can help priests beef up numbers of Catholics in the areas over which they have jurisdiction (Quoted in Catholic World News 2014).

The selfish intentions ascribed to Chaldean priests is surprisingly harsh particularly given the mass ongoing crisis, but highlights the tense uncertainty over the future of the Chaldean Church and its ability to save its roots in Iraq. Lay diasporic members, by contrast, are often sympathetic to letting refugees come to the U.S. as they themselves have, questioning why elites would argue against emigration, presenting political differences within the Chaldean Church and with Assyrian nationalists (Bacall and Bacall Interview; Jatou Interview; Babella Interview). Diasporic leaders are highly conscious of the tension of urging coethnics to remain whilst arguing so from the safety of the U.S.:

Why would you stay? And then you go on the net and look on Facebook, and you see ninety percent of your family living in Detroit with their nice homes, or in California, and why am I here? What the hell am I doing here? So it's really challenging for the people who are staying. It is an existential issue for us. And as they leave, I mean, one generation, two generations, maybe three - and then what? It's really difficult to maintain your culture and language and heritage in diaspora (Jatou Interview).

Should the Assyrian and Chaldean exodus from Iraq continue, the worry is the nation

will inevitably assimilate into mainstream American society.³⁰ However, distance also makes diaspora more able to take an ideological, long-term perspective, understanding why anyone would leave but understanding the nation cannot have a homeland without its people living there to stake claim: here, departure itself poses an existential threat.

As the plight of Iraq's Christians continued, even as antagonisms between Shia and Sunni waned, and as the Obama Administration disengaged from Iraq, it was increasingly apparent refugee admissions were not a solution adequate to meeting need, and diasporic elites turned focus to other strategies. Kassab left CFA in 2013 and formed the Iraqi Christians Advocacy and Empowerment Institute (ICAE), which advocates with the Iraqi and Kurdish governments to support programs to help Christians return and remain in Iraq and the KRG. Kassab turned focus to Iraq-based programs because of frustrations with an inadequate refugee resettlement system. At the same time, he expressed frustration with those who were quick to criticize resettlement efforts, stressing that telling refugees to stay without simultaneously working for immediate, concrete ways to help them make a life is not a solution:

A lot of people have been accusing me that I'm emptying Iraq of its Christians. Well, yes and no. When people decide to leave, nobody has a say in that issue: you cannot leave or you stay. Because if you do, then if something happens to him, you're going to be responsible for his blood...But it is important for Assyrians and Chaldeans who say that we are emptying from Christians from Iraq, the question that needs to be addressed to them is this: what have you done for these refugees - for these Iraqi Christians - to stay there and not to leave? (Interview 2013).

Reflected in this tension is the way in which elite competition is manifested into issues of ideology and policy, with the implication that it is much harder to make policy and try to enact change than to critique policy that is made. Here, the decision

³⁰ This dilemma was further echoed in author interviews with Tamraz 2013; Taimoorazy 2013; Hanna 2013; Abbo et al 2013.

to refocus efforts from refugee admittances to in-country return reveals a pragmatic assessment of resource availability, ongoing challenges, and political feasibility, including disinterest compounded by language, cultural, and employment barriers to integration upon arrival. This represents a choice to work within and push back against Iraq's narrowed national boundaries, and a reprioritization of diasporic nationalism to a focused long-distance nationalism centered on integration.

Illuminated are the fundamental changes that took place after 2003: the first tangible opportunity to influence Iraqi politics in generations, and the wholesale need to tangibly help co-ethnics. As expressed throughout this chapter, the challenge of being a small minority, lost in the broader scope of the Shia-Sunni conflict and Kurdish aspirations, routinely marginalized Assyrian and Chaldean needs. The effort to gain inclusion with the Iraqi opposition to the effort to force a response to sectarian cleansing both strengthened and frustrated diasporic organizations and altered their long-term calculations regarding prospects for Assyrian and Chaldean inclusion within Iraq. Gellner's assessment of the choice of displaced peoples to integrate, flee, or pursue a nationalist option is a succinct encapsulation of the options available as crisis escalated. Found within diasporic activism is a negotiation of these choices, informed by nationalism and concern for the immediate and long-term needs of the Iraqi community. Diasporic activism thus furthers diasporic nation-building by enacting political goals and aid for Assyrians and Chaldeans as a global, diasporic nation.

CHAPTER VI

NINEVEH AS A HOMELAND, A HARBOUR, A GHETTO: DIASPORIC LONG-DISTANCE NATIONALISM TO IRAQ

*'It appears you Jews are about to get yourselves a state...Can you spare a corner of it for
an old neighbor?'*

-Assyrian activist to Hayim Greenberg, 1943

The turn to the Nineveh Plain as a permanent solution for Iraq's Christians appears, in retrospect, almost an inevitability given the confluence of events that betrayed the promise of liberal democratic rights and equality, instead permitting a political structure that marginalized ethno-religious minorities from influence and left unchecked violence that sought to disappear ethno-religious minorities from society. The failure of the international community to properly meet the refugee crisis, coupled with the overarching failure of the American and Iraqi governments to provide for the long-term security of the Assyrian and Chaldean people, left most activists with the belief there may be no other option for survival than some form of self-rule. These events have subsequently pushed the long-standing but isolated nationalist goal of an Assyrian homeland from an ideological pipe dream to the forefront of diasporic policy objectives.

Assyrians and Chaldeans now encounter an Iraqi boundary that is exclusionary, enforced by violence, marginalization, and attacks on Christian businesses and livelihoods. The question of how to survive and provide for one's family became more than a theoretical exercise but a day-to-day worry. Recognizing the lack of resettlement options outside Iraq and that it may be a generation or more before displaced families consider returning to their homes in Baghdad, the Nineveh Plain presented a territory in which Christians could be comparatively safer whilst remaining in their homeland. Positioning the Nineveh Plain as the *atra* of Assyrians and Chaldeans thus represents a narrative combining several factors which substantiate its importance to the population: the role in national imaging as the

ancestral homeland of the ancient Assyrian Empire; the geographic concentration of historically Christian villages from which many in the diaspora themselves emigrated; and the reality that many Christians have fled into the Nineveh region following conflict in major cities like Baghdad and Basra. Diasporic long-distance nationalism centered on the Nineveh Plain as it aptly became the territorial standard for calls for autonomy, administrative rights, or self-rule in some capacity.

Found in this objective is what Gellner described as ‘the quite special and acute problems faced by diaspora nationalisms’ (Gellner 108). In addition to the aforementioned choice to flee, assimilate, or stake a national claim somewhere, the particular challenges confronting those who choose the latter option include ‘problems of social transformation, cultural revivification, acquisition of territory, and coping with the natural enmity of those with previous claims on the terrain in question’ (ibid). Nineveh is the Assyrian and Chaldean ‘residue of an ancient territory’ upon which activists who have chosen to pursue the nationalist option stake their claim.

Revealed within debate regarding Nineveh is the diversity of national ideology within the diaspora; ideologies stressed by an unfolding, precarious situation with no certain outcome. A self-administered Nineveh is not and has not been a singular national goal. Varying support reflects different understandings of new Iraqi boundaries and their permanence. To many Assyrians, it is precisely a national goal, their long-denied homeland now necessarily interpreted within the confines of modern nation-state boundaries. To less-nationalist Assyrians and many Chaldeans, it has become a necessary safe haven, the least bad option in an increasingly unfriendly and apathetic Iraq. To others, particularly within the Chaldean Church, it is instead a dangerous marginalization of ethno-religious minorities into an enclave easily overran by neighbouring extremists.

Shown here is that nationalism, like identity, develops relevance 'during major political crisis when the institutional set-up of a society changes and new alliance structures might become politically relevant' (Wimmer 2011: 724). Whilst diasporic nationalism challenges the traditional nationalism framework of a nation-state demand, found in crisis is a resurgence of long-distance nationalism for autonomy. It is through crisis, the shift in political and social boundaries, that long-distance nationalism became defined by the need for self-protection and some measure of power to make self-protection possible (Breuilly 1993; Smith 2010). Diasporic actors try to meet the challenges Gellner outlined of pursuing the nationalist option by drawing on claims of indigeneity, presenting moderate policies that accommodate other ethnic groups and position autonomy as politically reasonable, and navigating internal competition to broaden consensus amongst Assyrian and Chaldean actors themselves.

The purpose of this chapter therefore is to examine the centralization of diasporic efforts to gain political control over the national homeland. It first looks at diasporic attitudes for and against autonomy in the Nineveh Plain. Found herein are three strains of thought: long-distance nationalism, which argues for autonomy as a necessary political project; pragmatism, whose argument for autonomy stems from the absence of other feasible solutions and its economic and social benefits; and integrationism, which argues against autonomy out of fear of isolation and preference for inclusion within a civic or civil-type nationalism in the Iraqi state or Kurdish region. It is notable the majority of diasporic approaches evolved out of pragmatic concern; the nationalist option was, until the post-war environment, a less central priority. The confluence of events and ideology prompted by Iraq's closing boundaries were therefore significant to diasporic mobilization and the turn to nation-building within Iraq. This suggests national ideologies are not stagnant, but shaped by internal and external factors and the boundary shifts they produce. Moreover, these are not tightly-bound, singular approaches. National and pragmatic

perspectives are both often drawn upon by diasporic organizations to substantiate the argument for autonomy. However, the persistence of a romantic, idealized Assyrian nationalism helped provide a basis and consciousness from which a more tempered, realistic policy could be derived.

This chapter also addresses the legitimacy of Nineveh as an autonomy project, and diasporic activism and the barriers encountered in furtherance of the project. It examines how diasporic actors work for change in Iraq through engagement with American policy-makers. The intent is not to imply that this has become a universally-endorsed goal; however, it is a broadly-endorsed goal, one which has become a key rallying point for political activism and is more visible because of diasporic activism in pursuit thereof. Diasporic advocacy is largely responsible for pushing the question to a topic of discussion amongst key stakeholders in the U.S. and within the diaspora itself. Indeed, a significant diasporic achievement was in building a degree of consensus across the diaspora. As was noted, by 2007:

The largest and the most active Assyrian Diaspora and Iraqi groups -- including the Assyrian American National Federation, the Chaldean Chamber of Commerce, The Assyrian National Council of Illinois, The Chaldean Federation, the Iraq Sustainable Democracy Project, the Assyrian Universal Alliance, the Assyrian Democratic Movement, the Assyrian Democratic Organization are all united under the same fundamental principle: That at the bare minimum, Assyrians in Iraq need a secure area -- however they are able to structure it -- to allow their population, culture, language, and faith to flourish (Canon 2007).

In contrast to the previous reticence of Chaldean organizations to become politically engaged, Chaldean organizations emerged as active on all sides of policy debate.

Nineveh Plain autonomy is an existential question, the weight of which activists are highly aware. Such political differences are ideological, attributable to the nature of statelessness and the absence of an external validator of diasporic leadership or

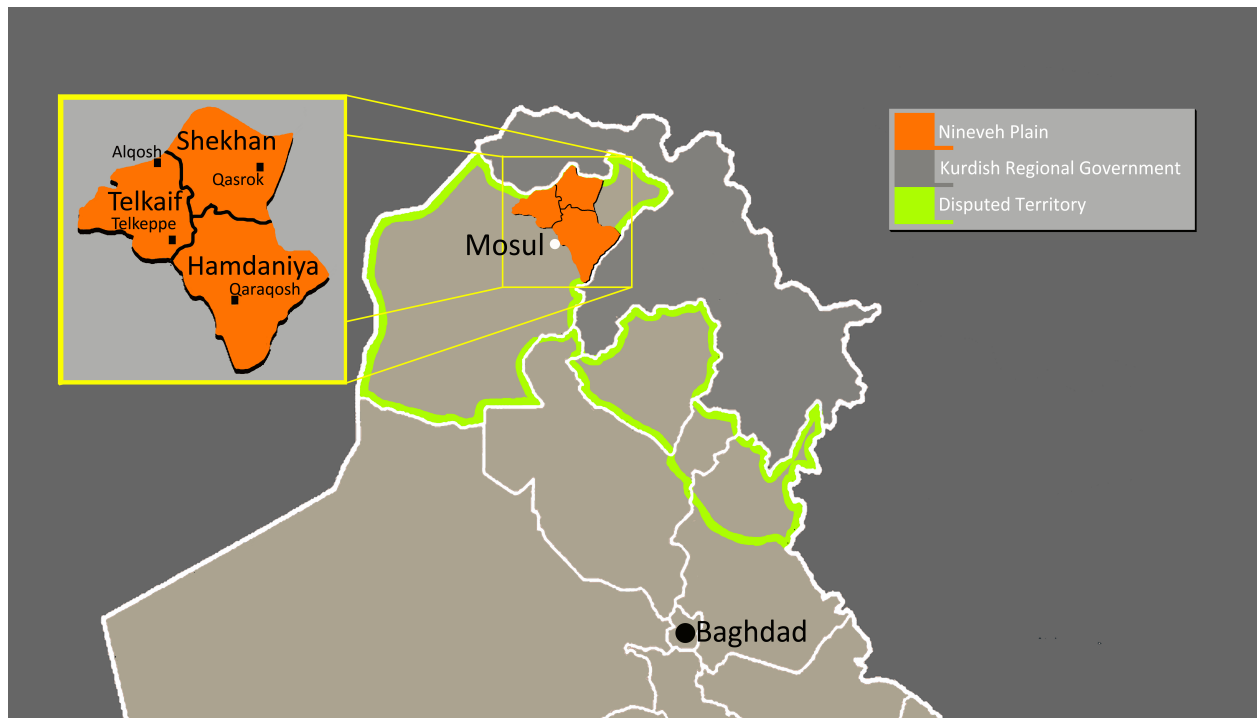
political claims. Despite expectations such tragedy would bring diasporic actors together, united by a common cause, this has largely not happened beyond generalized agreements. Rather, as Brubaker observed, ‘groupness may *fail* to crystallize, despite the group-making efforts of ethno-political entrepreneurs and even in situations of intense elite-level ethno-political conflict’ (Brubaker 2004: 12). Elite competition manifested through organizational jockeying persists, particularly as actors compete to insert their voice in the political process and find they are frustrated by the difficulties in gaining political momentum and interest.

THE CASE FOR THE NINEVEH PLAIN AS A HOMELAND

Gellner observed that for diaspora nationalisms pursuing a nationalist option, ‘the acquisition of territory was the first and perhaps the main problem’ (Gellner 106). Certainly, the current demand for autonomy is not as simple as drawing a border around a region that is *de facto* Assyrian and Chaldean in all but formal recognition. The Nineveh Plain region itself is a complex mix of ethnic groups, religions, and native languages, none of which have previously been institutionalized and thus all of which vie for a place in local society. While accurate population statistics are both currently and historically difficult given the mass displacement of people to and from the Nineveh province, which houses the Nineveh Plain, and the lack of comprehensive census data, the local demographics of the Nineveh Plain were recently estimated to be 40 percent Christian, and approximately 90 percent ethnic or religious minorities overall (Nineveh Council of America 2013). This figure represents significant concentrations of Iraq’s Turkoman, Yezidi, and Shabak communities atop the Assyrian and Chaldean population. Claims to self-governance are innately in competition with overlapping claims from the Kurds and these other ethnic groups, and, consequentially, the claim of Assyrian and Chaldean indigeneity becomes imbued with increased significance as it is staked against the region’s diversity and contestation over the greater Nineveh region’s boundary.

Thus, key villages that are almost exclusively Christian and ancestrally Christian, primarily the districts of Telkaif, al-Hamdaniya, and Shekhan, have become central to the autonomy map and to Assyrian and Chaldean narratives.

Figure 1: Nineveh Plain Region



Map modified from Rafy 2011

This area, particularly the villages of TelKeppé and Alqosh, are significant as the recent homeland of many emigrants and refugees. A 2008 survey of Christian IDPs in Nineveh found 80 percent of respondents reported familial or legal ties to the Nineveh Plain (Youash 2011: 2). The International Organization of Migration reported that, in 2010, 35 percent of the greater Nineveh province's internally-displaced population was Christian (International Origination of Migration 2010).

Much of the Nineveh Plain is largely agricultural, and has struggled to provide services, housing, and education to meet the needs of incoming IDPs (Babella

Interview; Youash 2011; Myers 2010; Human Rights Watch 2009). Mosul remained one of the most dangerous areas of Iraq because of ongoing sectarian conflict and territorial contestation, and minorities were frequently displaced (USCIRF 2013, 2012; Myers 2010; Steele 2008). The Nineveh Plain offered an imperfect refuge, comparatively safer but not immune from violence.

The Nineveh region's complicated ethno-sectarian fabric, like that of Iraq as a whole, has challenged the modern Iraqi State since the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. At the time of setting Iraq's borders, Mosul was comprised of 'Arabs, Kurds, Nestorians, Chaldaeans, Yezidis, Turcomans, Bajwans, Chabaks, Jews, and Sarlis...interlacing of such extent that it is practically impossible to lay down ethnical, linguistic or religious boundaries' (Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society 359). Assyrians post-WWI were understood as refugees in search of a homeland; this, coupled with Arabization-centric education, carried the perception to successive generations of Iraqis 'that Christians are foreigners and not the original people of Iraq' (Bacall and Bacall Interview). Whilst such sentiments of Assyrians as a population displaced into Iraq and not *of* Iraq have waned over the decades, it is nonetheless a narrative nationalists have consciously or unconsciously sought to counter by drawing upon their ancient ties to Mesopotamia as well as their shared ethnicity with Chaldeans and the ancient presence of Christianity in Mosul. That the Assyrian Empire's roots were in Nineveh is foundational to Assyrian and Chaldean understandings regarding their indigeneity in Iraq, supported further by the presence of ancient Assyrian sites and artifacts across the region, most notably in the city of Nimrud.

To this end, the Nineveh Plain serves as an idealized homeland, the *atra*, and as a source of national pride significant to the diasporic conscience. Narratives regarding ties to antiquity are frequent when presenting a case for autonomy. For example, the Iraq Sustainable Democracy Project (ISDP) noted, 'For over six millennia, the

Assyrians have made the Nineveh Plain their home - being the indigenous people of Iraq. Much of their contribution to human civilization as sons of Mesopotamia is found in their lands on the Nineveh Plain' (ISDP 2008: 3). Similarly, the Nineveh Council of America notes, 'Iraq's Christians trace their ethnic origins as the very first inhabitants of Mesopotamia and Iraq's dwindling indigenous population' (Nineveh Council of America 2013). Yonadam Kanna draws upon this narrative by referring to Assyrians and Chaldeans as the 'children of Babylon and Nineveh' (Lewis 2003; Nowicki 2002). Assyrians and Chaldeans have drawn their national boundary criteria upon this narrative as descendants of ancient Mesopotamia; they have formed their Gellnerian national claims upon the belief autonomy in the Nineveh Plain will make congruent the nation and the (sub)state.

However, recognition as a component of Iraq with tangible roots in the Nineveh Plain has faced negation from land policies over the past decades. The Anfal campaign of the 1980s sought to nullify Kurds and Assyrians through forced removal from Northern Iraq; more recently, Kurdish actors have claimed much of the greater Nineveh region as their own. To reverse the effects of the Kurds' own displacement and consolidate land claims along the established KRG border, including Nineveh, Kurdish relocation to formerly Assyrian villages has occurred, fueling land contestation and furthering Assyrian displacement. The Assyria Council of Europe stated Kurdish leaders were able to extend their reach across the border into the Iraqi state under the guise of providing security and stability as Iraqi politicians were preoccupied with sectarian conflict (Assyria Council of Europe 2010: 17; Human Rights Watch 2009: 5). Human Rights Watch similarly found there appeared a 'two-pronged strategy' of inducing minorities to support a Kurdish presence through financial aide, patronage, construction of infrastructure, homes, and churches, and through repressing those who opposed the Kurdish presence through pressure from the peshmerga and militias, intimidation, and arbitrary arrests (Human Rights Watch 9).

For its part, the Kurdish government disputes such allegations, noting, for example, that more than 105 Christian villages destroyed by the Ba'ath regime have been rebuilt by the KRG since 1991 and that 'the KRG has done more than any other body in Iraq to protect Christians' (KRG 2009).

However, it remains that Kurdish leaders are undertaking their own nationalizing projects in sometimes overlapping proximity to Assyrians and Chaldeans.

Geographical contestation fuels cultural and symbolic contestation. Assyrian and Chaldean leaders express worry cultural and archeological artifacts are being reappropriated as Kurdish. For example, the Duhok Province's Directorate of Antiquities brochure for the ancient Kharusa ruins do not mention the site was part of the ancient Assyrian Empire or contain mention of Assyrians (Directorate of Antiquities undated). CASCA members expressed a similar observation, noting local Kurdish authorities did not allow a cross or tribute to Raban Boya, an important figure to the region's Christians, at the ancient Boya shrine, and that the shrine's 'very identity is being undermined' as Muslim Kurds re-identify it as their own (DeKelaita et al 2010). Such acts, albeit symbolic, contribute to minimizing one nation's cultural claims on behalf of another.

Thus, as Paul Brass observed, cultural forms, including narratives of indigeneity and symbols and myths derived from antiquity, are used as 'political resources for elites in competition for political power and economic advantage' (Brass 15). Given the diversity of the Nineveh region, the complicated Assyrian and Chaldean history of migration, and ongoing land contestation with the KRG, claims of indigeneity are important to the Assyrian and Chaldean narrative. It makes legitimate the *atra*. It is the belief in both this indigeneity as a unique nation and the practicality of autonomy therein as the only viable Assyrian and Chaldean homeland that form the basis of the goal for Nineveh Plain autonomy.

DIASPORIC PERSPECTIVES TOWARD AUTONOMY

With activism attuned to an autonomous Nineveh Plain, the Assyrian national goal has come full-circle from a century ago. The parallel between the post-Iraq War hope for autonomy and that of the post-WWI period is pronounced: mass tragedy and displacement bearing out the realities of statelessness; an Iraqi state increasingly exclusive of minority populations; a schism of communal opinion between those who prefer to quietly integrate and those who prefer the nationalist route; and the viability of autonomy challenged by a host of political, demographic, and geographic factors. Both periods fueled demands for autonomy in response to an increasingly threatened national existence. The contemporary tragedy suggests itself the heir to this legacy, a carrying of the League of Nations-era torch for a homeland. However, whereas the Simmele Massacre prompted a sustained inquiry into making an autonomous Assyrian enclave somewhere in the world, the international community has not yet responded in kind to the plight of the 21st century, nor has the U.S. government displayed a dedicated interest to securing relief.

With the failure of the national project, subsequent impermeability of Iraq's borders, and reality of displacement, attention of Assyrian and Chaldean diasporic elites turned to diasporic nationalism and building the diasporic nation. Diasporic mobilization for autonomy, consequentially, was not a mass, singular moment. For some activists, those nationalists who long carried a torch for a homeland, mobilization appeared at the first opportunity of a political opening; for others, rising conflict changed their political and national calculi, and autonomy was motivated by an existential fear. Diasporic nation-building had rested on the foundation that the Assyrian and Chaldean population was rooted in Iraq. The redrawing of Iraq national membership along ethno-sectarian lines, and the violent enforcement of that boundary, perhaps irrevocably changed this foundation, and the question diasporic

actors confronted is whether nation-building in diaspora is enough. For most, the fear is that the nation cannot be sustained without roots in the homeland.

Such calculations reflect differences in diasporic long-distance nationalism, and are shaped by practicality and political opportunity as much as by ideology. This section therefore considers diasporic perspectives regarding autonomy. It finds within the diaspora three ideological streams: traditional nationalism, the understanding of Assyrians as a stateless nation embodied by a quest for self-rule over the homeland; pragmatism, the understanding that some measure of autonomy is the best option to retain the Assyrian and Chaldean population in Iraq and, in essence, retain the Assyrian and Chaldean people; and integrationism, the understanding that Assyrians and Chaldeans are part of the Iraqi state or KRG, discomfited by the idea of autonomy or separation. The scope of these ideologies is not mutually exclusive: national understandings change in response to internal and external circumstances. This section, and this chapter, therefore do not find an Assyrian-Chaldean dichotomy, as Assyrian and Chaldean nation-building goals are often aligned, but find wedges within each population.

As one activist described, the totality of diasporic perspectives can be seen as a continuum or distributive scale, with ardent nationalists on one end and opponents on the other. He finds the majority of the global diaspora has come to support a region in some capacity:

The difference has been the extent of such an administrative unit. I think if you did a survey of 100,000 Assyrians worldwide, I think you'll find a distribution of answers. I'll give you an example. I was in Australia...and [the AUA] said 'Yeah, we know about this but we don't subscribe to it.' 'Really? Why?' 'It's too small.' The literal translation was, this is a bird's nest. This is a bird's nest, what basically means it's really small and just enough for use and we want a great Assyria. So they have a lot more grandiose plans...And at the other extreme, we go to Detroit and we pitch the same thing, and they go, 'You guys are nuts. We're few, we have millions around

us, and my family's not there, they're in Baghdad, they're in Detroit.' They don't have that tie and they're like, 'We should just be good citizens. If they tell us we're Arabs, if they tell us we're Kurds, we're Kurds, just to survive'...So it's a distribution. There are ones that say, no, that's a bird's nest, and some that say this is even grandiose. But I think if you charted it, it would be roughly a Gaussian distribution. The majority are going to be, yeah, an administrative unit, makes sense (Jatou Interview).

The range of opinions, as described here and as found throughout interviews with community leaders, runs from an uncompromising Assyrian nationalism to a liberal Iraqi nationalism. However, the perception amongst Assyrians that the Detroit Chaldean community is strongly against any form of autonomy is highly pervasive. As noted below, while the Chaldean Church is the strongest voice against autonomy, organizations like the Chaldean Chamber and CFA actively support a Christian-majority province and at times have come to express rather nationalist sentiments in their advocacy. This section thus seeks to unpack these positions as responses to boundary changes and national understandings.

The Nationalist Argument

Shared amongst all major Assyrian political actors is an understanding that an Assyrian nation exists and there is an argument to be made its homeland is anchored in Nineveh. Underlying nationalist support for autonomy is the struggle against the statelessness of the Assyrian nation as shaped by the legacy of minority and marginalization: the Assyrian experience under Saddam Hussein and the Ba'ath Party demonstrated that residence in the homeland alone is not enough to successfully preserve the nation. It is here that Assyrians and Chaldeans speak of a cultural genocide, of the concerted state effort to negate their culture, language, and history with a state-enforced narrative of what it means to be 'Iraqi' (Donabed and Mako 2012). The overthrow of the Ba'ath regime ushered in a new wave of marginalization, as qualifications for membership into the Iraqi state became

increasingly reserved for those who are Arab and Muslim. The current plight consequentially inspired a new era of nationalism in the traditional Gellnerian or Breuilly sense, which would lay the foundation for renewed diasporic activism. Here, again, ‘nationalism is conceived as the anecdote to nationalism’ (Cheyfitz 2014: 111).

Reclamation of Assyrian territory was a foundational element to early AUA and BNDP ideology. AUA affirms its ‘mission is perpetual through eternity...to regain the Assyrian national and territorial rights’ (AUA 2014b). The quest for territorial rights is presented as a legacy that brought forth the AUA’s overarching purpose: made here is a clear expression of traditional nationalism. Similarly, the BNDP’s national ideology is noted in previous chapters; its *Bet-Nahrain Magazine* regularly featured national calls to arms, at times in rhetoric that evoked religious elements, drawing upon the Christian element of Assyrian identity:

[This] is an inspirational movement, mobilizing a downtrodden people, offering them a glimmer of a future, an alternative to the oppression and humiliation. *Bet-Nahrainism* is an opportunity for the rebirth of the Assyrian people as a cultural force and it can lead the Assyrians to their ancient claim of a national homeland (Dadesho 1988: 92);

Not long ago, we were a semi-independent nation, at a time when many existing nations were not on the map...As the crucifiers of Christ divided His garments among themselves, so did our adversaries and our “friends” in taking our country; like Christ who was crucified and buried so were we. But, as Christ arose so shall our Assyrian nation arise again! (Dadesho 1988: 6).

A report entitled the ‘Assyrian Case for Autonomy’, first circulated amongst the diaspora in the 1980s, attempted to situate Assyrian autonomy ‘in the Mosul area’ as the unfulfilled promise of the League of Nations, observing the Assyrian presence in Mosul was the primary reason the vilayet was given to Iraq, and the League tasked the new state with protecting the rights of Assyrians (BNDP 1982: 9). It further noted Iraq was signatory to international treaties recognizing the rights of peoples to self-determination, again drawing upon the notion of an unrepresented, indigenous

people.

Rights of indigeneity are central to the territorial component of the nationalist claim. As noted earlier, AUA joined the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization; in Iraq's constitutional drafting process, AUA urged the Iraqi government to recognize Assyrians 'as the Indigenous people of Iraq' and to create an administrative region for Assyrians on 'the land of their ancestors' (AUA 2005b). Such ideals have tapped into the nationalist discourse, with organizations like the AANC noting Assyrians need administrative rights as 'an endangered ancient culture that literally bridges modern humanity to the dawn of civilization...it is in ethnicity with its inevitable ties to geography that a people's inherent and indigenous rights to survive derive' (AANC 2014). Intermittent efforts to advocate for the national claim occurred between the post-WWI era and the Iraq War, including sporadic meetings the AUA held with the Ba'ath Administration in the 1970s to push the issue in spite of obvious challenges (Yonan 1996). While unsuccessful, that this advocacy existed reinforces that national demands for autonomy have persisted and carried amongst a segment of diasporic nationalists. At the same time, this advocacy was a relatively inactive cause within the diaspora, and a stark contrast is seen in political advocacy for autonomy prior to and following the Iraq War.

The post-Iraq War environment was thus formative to elevating autonomy as a mainstream, political goal. As the previous chapter detailed, early diasporic action focused largely on inclusiveness and democratic rights; however, there was underlying this a nationalist voice urging special national rights in the constitution. It is unsurprising ethnic recognition would coincide with an increase in nationalist sentiment. Removal of Ba'ath rule also lifted cultural restrictions, enabling civic efforts to increase ethnic expression from the use of the Assyrian language in public schools and local governance to the celebration of holidays and cultural events, all symbolic markers of national identity. Such national sentiment has fueled displays of

national symbols. As Waleeta Canon, a founder of the AANC, observed, the quest for autonomy is a national effort founded on the understanding of a unique

Assyrianness:

In Iraq, Assyrians have spent decades building and running their Assyrian language schools. They salute the Assyrian flags which fly over official and public buildings, and wrap themselves in it in nationalist fervor and defiance. They have built Assyrian civic groups, cultural groups, and student groups to keep the Assyrian identity, culture, and language alive in their Homeland. This isn't a flight of fancy: it is an organized effort to assert their ethnic identity (Canon 2007).

This presents the Assyrian nation, repressed by the Ba'ath regime, as seizing the advent of a democratic state to reclaim its ethnic identity through cultural, symbolic, and linguistic expressions. The importance of protecting national and cultural markers, and the fear they will be lost to assimilation, likewise fuels the belief a national project is necessary for its preservation:

We're continuing to advocate for an administrative unit in the Nineveh Plain, where we have enough numbers and enough towns and villages that we could have a self-sustaining community that could thrive. We're not looking for ghetto, to be honest; we're not saying, people that live in the capitol, in Baghdad, in Erbil, all come here and make this little ghetto in the middle of a sea of the Middle East. But at least there's a place that can really maintain the culture. We see it as a well or a spring that maintains the culture and language, and people will move into the cities, will move to diaspora, but that will be the source of our existence (Jatou Interview).

Jatou taps into the connection between diasporic nationalism and long-distance nationalism toward the homeland: the need for roots, a 'source of existence', to sustain and save -and, in a sense, validate- the Assyrian nation in perpetuity. The challenges facing Assyrians today are different than past crises because the community can no longer isolate itself in the Hakkari mountains, because of the permanency of dispersal -- and because it is feared this push from Iraq may be final.

It is argued here the reason the nationalist ideology has gained support, and is likely to continue to do so as persecution persists, is that the need for 'roots', and the fear the Assyrians and Chaldeans will cease to exist without roots, is almost universally expressed by diasporic elites: it is 'really easy to melt' in America (Tamraz Interview). Indeed, the worry Assyrians cannot survive in diaspora alone is a driving force for the most basic national claim: the right of existence.

From the Chaldean perspective, autonomy is seen less as the fulfillment of a denied state or denied rights to autonomy, in part because narratives of the Ottoman genocide and Simmele massacre are less prevalent in the Chaldean diaspora. However, there is an underlying belief that Chaldeans constitute a unique component of Iraq, and there has emerged a nationalist-leaning argument for autonomy from Chaldean activists that shares the belief Assyrians and Chaldeans are one people with a right to their homeland. This is most strongly articulated by the Chaldean Chamber and its affiliated organizations, CASCA and NCA. However, this nationalism has taken a unique form as it does not claim a separate Chaldean nation and has not embraced the guise of a solely Assyrian one. Rather, it takes ambivalence towards the name or identity label whilst stressing that Chaldeans and Assyrians need to remain in Iraq to survive in diaspora. As Martin Manna described his position regarding autonomy:

The reason I am in favour of creating this province is because without it, eventually we'll become extinct. The reality is, our language will die out; if we don't have any roots in Iraq, there will be no existence of Chaldeans or Assyrians...So that's my position, not necessarily the community's position, but that's why I'm thinking if I want to maintain and preserve our identity, we need a homeland. And again, it goes back to, look at the Jewish community. We're a similar community but without Israel (Manna Interview 2012).

Presented here is a nationalist understanding of Iraq's Christian communities. It is not as succinctly nationalist an argument as those which claim a right to self-rule, but

similarly contends Assyrians and Chaldeans represent a unique people and a province is perhaps the last option for national preservation. Their national existence had become incompatible with Iraq's ever-narrowing boundaries. This is very much akin to the argument made by Assyrian nationalists, the Gellnerian need to make the national and political congruent.

Thus, evident throughout the nationalist argument is a stateless diasporic nation seeking self-rule. This is not just a desire for Assyrians and Chaldeans to be in Iraq or the homeland, but to have political control over that territory and its people - fundamentally, a quintessential, traditional nationalist claim for congruency and state power in the guise of Gellner and Breuille. Pragmatic outcomes, such as the socio-economic benefit to the community, are intertwined with, but secondary to, the larger, overarching point of the Assyrian (and Chaldean) nation, and its right and need to exist.

The Pragmatic Argument

The pragmatic argument shares the nationalist belief that Assyrians and Chaldeans are a unique people; however, it is less a staunch ideology than a belief that reliance on the Iraqi state for security and protection of liberal democratic rights is simply no longer a viable solution: as corruption, marginalization, and violence continue, something must be done to keep the community safe and respond to the crisis of displacement. Here, arguments made by moderate Assyrian and Chaldean voices encompass the need for security, a 'safe haven', equal treatment, and opportunity. In a sense, pragmatism brings out a reluctant nationalism, one disinclined or apathetic toward national autonomy but making national claims because humanitarian need and the social, economic, and political dysfunction of Iraq compel it.

The pragmatic embrace of autonomy, then, is not distancing from early post-Hussein

goals of liberal democratic rights; rather, following the argument Kamber presented regarding a federal Iraqi state, it became the only way to secure those rights for Chaldeans and Assyrians. Themes of discrimination, of the early promise of such rights remaining unfulfilled, feature prominently as a cause for autonomy, particularly when seen in comparison with the Kurdish experience:

Originally, there was supposed to be part of Iraq some freedoms, some rights, but unfortunately we did not get things that were promised...the United States, they promise a lot of things, they haven't done anything. Before America went into Iraq, there were so many dialogues, you know? Promised a lot of things, but they did nothing. And they went to Iraq and everything's changed...The promise was we would have rights like everybody else...they helped with the Kurds, but they did not help us (Tamraz Interview).

Again, there is a high awareness that the Kurdish minority has been given special status to protect and preserve its nationhood, and that Assyrians and other minorities have continuously been overlooked. This contrast recalls the pre-war planning efforts and the barriers Assyrians and Chaldeans encountered in obtaining equal recognition. The reality that the KRG has uniquely protected Kurds from renewed ethno-sectarian cleansing and provided the ability for nation-building is a lesson for Assyrians and Chaldeans, and point of contrast to the protections afforded to Iraq's other minority populations.

Pragmatic arguments thus tend to be responsive to the crisis at hand. The preservation and safety of the community, quality of life, and opportunity are commonly-cited concerns, especially amongst organizations working in or with direct ties to Iraq, where such struggles are witnessed firsthand. The understanding that basic rights were not enough is widespread throughout the diaspora and is heavily informed by past experiences of marginalization. As Natalie Babella of AAS observed from her trips to Iraq:

You know, discrimination is still there; persecution in many ways is still there.

We need our basic rights. And although on the surface it says, okay, you do have them – but where are they? It's very much needed for our people to have that safe haven, that government, that they can help build our community there. Really, I think they've been hit in the head like a million times that sometimes they're scared to try something. Sometimes they're scared to apply for a job because they know it won't work (Babella Interview).

Discrimination, marginalization, and lack of opportunity are common themes that underscore a pragmatic case for autonomy. Underscoring why nationalism seeks state power, the disconnect from constitutional provisions to government policy in practice is evident. Babella further elaborated that her visits reinforced the need for a region to help make life easier:

The organization leaders there told me they applied for this irrigation project. It was 2012, he told us it's been five years that the project has not been approved, and probably not even touched...So things like that really convince me that yes, we do need a region...No one can take care of us like we can... We're the indigenous people of the land, most of the land is ours...So yes, I think it's needed to help our people, to mobilize our people, to give them the opportunity to succeed in jobs, gain education, just live happily....And that country's so fertile, it's so full of opportunities...There's so much potential for everybody there, but definitely Assyrians. I think they've struggled too much. They definitely deserve that region (Babella Interview).

This argument is particularly resonant because AAS navigates Iraqi politics and bureaucracy to conduct its operations in Iraq. Operating the country's only Assyrian-language schools offers a unique perspective on the possibility Assyrian and Chaldean language, culture, and other national markers can persist absent a region. Likewise, Hanna of the CNC, who worked with the U.S. Military during the Iraq War, today understands autonomy as a means to combat discrimination and ensure fair treatment and opportunity for Chaldeans. He noted Chaldeans are not the sole majority of the Nineveh Plain's population but its concentration at least offers opportunity for employment, security, and better treatment, and will ensure provincial funding is administered directly to the Nineveh Plain, correcting the

comparative neglect under the current Nineveh province. As he commented:

We could, most important, grow a new generation of Chaldeans who know power...we can create our own books, can make decisions...If we can get the province - aye, that's the greatest achievement...Without holding the land, you can't make it. (Hanna Interview).

Echoing a core point shared with nationalists, is the need to 'hold the land'. Found herein is an echo of Breuilly, the hope Chaldeans will gain a measure of power and, implicitly, the dignity that comes with it. Many elites similarly concluded conditions on the ground needed to be improved so those who wished to return to Iraq could live there safely, as noted by Kassab in turning his focus from refugee admissions to in-country programs. Security and economic development in Nineveh remain a key focus.

Chaldean support for autonomy commonly centers upon these arguments of necessity: necessity for the survival of their people and necessity of the economic development and liberal political ideals such a province would bring to Iraq. Found within this approach are CASCA, CFA, and the Chaldean Chamber, the Detroit-based organizations which first mobilized around the refugee crisis and since expanded their mission to include the creation of an autonomous province. CASCA, as an advocacy project, tasked itself with building support for autonomy from within the diaspora, the U.S. government, the Iraqi and Kurdish governments because it 'views the Nineveh Plain and adjacent areas where our people live as an essential and critical Last Stand of our people in cultural, political, demographic, linguistic, and religious terms' (CASCA 2008; also see DeKelaita 2008). CASCA and the NCA, its lobbying arm, make practical and pragmatic claims to round out the logic of a province: it will bring development and investment; it will provide a multicultural, moderate region in Iraq; it will provide a safe haven for Christians and - notably - other minorities, allowing hundreds of thousands of refugees to return to Iraq

(Manna Interview 2014, 2012; Nineveh Council of America 2013). The potential economic contributions are likewise emphasized in the NCA's policy statement:

This Christian segment of Iraq will become a cosmopolitan link to many Iraqi Christian segments of the world, which can and will contribute to a bright future for Iraq...This area will have great potential for achieving high standards in education, social living, culture and tourism, as well as developing and promoting a culture of tolerance and peace that will benefit all of Iraq (Nineveh Council of America 2013).

The use of a pragmatic, politically-appealing argument is unsurprising as the Chamber and CFA are not nationalist movements and have showcased a preference for policy that responds to a particular need rather than policy shaped by a specific ideology. As noted in the next section, this has not always seen the support of the whole Chaldean community, particularly those who are fearful an autonomous region might increase insecurity. Chaldean leaders are highly aware of this concern, and respond by stressing a province does not exclude remaining part of Iraq; as Manna commented, 'We've always said that all of Iraq is ours, we will always be part of the Iraqi family. But why not have an opportunity for self-governance?' (Manna Interview 2014). The presence of such debate within the community is significant because it is, at its core, a debate over long-distance nationalism, of how Chaldeans fit into a post-Hussein Iraq. The pragmatic argument found here sees integration as possessing shortcomings: either it is not enough to protect the community, or it is too idealistic to be conceivable.

Uncertainty towards the region was apparent in an interview comment made by Joseph Kassab, as Executive Director of the CFA, who framed his support of territorial autonomy as a matter of supporting what those in Iraq want:

Is the idea right or wrong? I don't know. To myself, I cannot judge that. But what I can judge is, we definitely need our people to survive, we need them to prosper, and we need them to have the use of the country's resources. This

is not happening. So whatever - and this is my opinion now – whatever works out well to support those three, or to provide those three elements, I'm happy with (Kassab Interview 2012).

Here, there is not a similar underlying national sentiment, but a determination that if this will help and it has the community's support, it is worth pursuing.

A pragmatic approach is not just found in moderate Chaldean discourse, but amongst moderate Assyrians, most notably the ADM, which initially viewed the question of autonomy as non-essential. Its representative to the U.S., Lincoln Malik, wrote of the diaspora's 'wish that the clock turn back 2,500 years, and we live in the glory that was Assyria. We don't much talk about this secret dream, but we adorn our houses with pictures and reminders of that glorious past in silent testament to this sweet but wishful dream' (Malik 1999). He implicitly contrasted this attitude with that of the ADM, noting, 'Zowaa offers a progressive and pragmatic political program for achieving our legitimate national rights...Our commitment is to build a better tomorrow for our people under the banner of "Democracy in Iraq" and "Affirmation of our national existence in our homeland"' (ibid).

ADM policy began to officially change in 2003 following its General Conference, when attendees endorsed a self-administered region in the Nineveh Plain (ADM 2003). Although Kanna and ADM officials have worked in pursuit of the Nineveh Plain goal, including the language contained in Article 125, Kanna's preference remains for a non-ethnic administrative unit, having stated, for example, 'Our people are sometimes emotional saying "autonomy for Christians." This is creating hatred and sensitivity, making things much worse. You cannot do something on an ethnic or religious basis' (Quoted in Manna 2010). Rejection of an ethnic argument is surprising given ADM is an ethno-national party, yet unsurprising given its nationalism has not sought self-rule. Expressed here is both a political calculation and a position consistent with ADM ideology: there is concern that extreme political

demands may further hostility towards Assyrians and Chaldeans and negate any opportunity for self-administration before it has a chance to move forward, as well as an underlying preference for Assyrian integration across Iraq that, at its core, has rejected carving out an exclusively-Assyrian territory. As the most prominent Assyrian politician in Iraq, who works within Iraq's political system, there is a necessity of framing political claims within legal parameters. As Alan Mansour, ADM's Director for the U.S. and Canada, has commented, 'When you are a minority you play by the rules and do what the constitution allows you to' (Quoted in Wiswell 2008).

Consequentially, the ADM has preferred a limited administrative area in accordance with Article 125; this position was modified in 2011 following a conference amongst leading Assyrian and Chaldean political organizations, in which attendees, including the ADM, agreed to work towards establishing a province. At the same time, ADM officials pushed for other, more immediate means to support Assyrians and Chaldeans. Significant amongst this is the pursuit of Assyrian security forces:

Recent events in Mosul are confirming the need for a self-protected area for the Chaldean Assyrian Syriac people in Iraq...Due to our status as minority in Iraq the toll of these events is much grater than our counter parts. Therefore, self-protection for the Nineveh Plains and surrounding areas is necessary to maintain peace and balance amidst Iraqi political and security conflicts (ADM USA and Canada Branch 2008).

Thus, while the ADM officially endorses a self-administered unit, concern remains amongst its members for short-term security, and for long-term national rights should Assyrians become a minority within the region (ADM Interview). NCA shares similar concerns (Manna Interview 2014). This hesitation reflects in part long-distance nationalism that differentiates these organizations from more nationalist organizations. However, a pragmatic approach to autonomy also leads to the awareness of ways in which autonomy is not a perfect solution, but perhaps the least-

bad solution.

Given the political divisions which exist, nationalist organizations routinely question the commitment of pragmatists to advancing autonomy. Dadesho, for example, has criticized the ADM's commitment to Nineveh as superficial, noting, 'The ADM has given up on its original objective to get back our national rights in Iraq. They are not asking for our national rights anymore, they are only asking for educational and administrative rights in Iraq' (Quoted in Salerno 2005). Likewise, despite several years of CASCA and CFA outreach to American and Iraqi policy-makers in support of autonomy, the perception remains that such advocacy is superficial or inclined to change. In a sense, this is perhaps accurate, as the support of these organizations for autonomy is not the product of a deep-seated nationalism, and could change as political and socio-economic factors change. This underscores the calculation to align nation-building with autonomy is a pragmatic one, balancing response to the situation at hand with long-term interests.

For those who see the Nineveh Plain as a solution to harbour those who are displaced, the desired results are similarly pragmatic, focusing on how to achieve autonomy in a feasible fashion rather than an ideal fashion. There is a fear Assyrians and Chaldeans are caught geographically and ideologically between two unfavorable outcomes and have nowhere left to turn. Hence, although this goal is less a traditional nationalist demand for territorial and political alignment than it is a quest for a measure of power to provide security and opportunity, it nonetheless reaffirms a nationalism desiring control of the mechanisms of the state.

The Integrationist Argument

Despite such efforts to frame the issue as the best last-chance solution for Christians to remain safely in Iraq, the idea has not been sold across the diaspora. The

Chaldean Church has been one of the most prominent opponents, with religious officials expressing concern such a province would create a 'Christian ghetto' that isolates Chaldeans from the rest of society and renders them vulnerable, in an already contested land, to outside attack (Sako 2007a). The question of safety is a foremost concern amongst those who oppose a province; Jacob Bacall noted that the Christian community is simply unable to protect itself at the scale a province would require: 'I personally feel this is a trap for the Christians, because, as I mentioned to you earlier, we had this small town we couldn't protect and we had a church we couldn't protect, among others...It's a trap' (Bacall and Bacall Interview).

Found within the integrationist rejection of autonomy is a questioning of the feasibility of a territorial unit. Bacall, echoing a common sentiment, questioned autonomy as a long-standing national dream tempered by the reality of Iraq's demographics: 'Almost every Assyrian I have known, always everybody talk about Nineveh and getting Nineveh back. I mean, come on...Nineveh, in the heart of Iraq, surrounded by a sea of Muslims' (Bacall and Bacall Interview). Noting the poverty, unemployment, and underdevelopment of the Nineveh Plain region, there is doubt thousands of displaced Christians can relocate to a region that is already unable to provide for the population currently there. There is also concern state officials will have little incentive to make protection and integration of Christians outside the region a priority, potentially further marginalizing those still living in Baghdad or elsewhere.

Whilst Delly and the American bishops gave a pretense of neutrality mixed with skepticism, Sako has long been an ardent opponent of autonomy because of security and marginalization concerns, as well as a belief that Chaldeans belong in Iraq:

We Christians are a fundamental component of the history and culture of Iraq. We are a significant presence in the social and religious life of the country and we feel Iraqi. We have resisted threats and persecution and have

found ways to continue to live and bear witness to the Gospel in our land without ceasing being loyal citizens even at the cost of the lives of our fathers, brothers and sons (Sako 2009).

Here, the Patriarch articulates a measure of Iraqi nationalism, affirming the future of Iraq's Christians is that of the future of Iraq. The explicit goal is for Christians to remain a part of Iraqi society. Sako stresses such a goal is attainable through pluralism, integration, national unity, and for moderate Muslims to reject intolerance (Sako 2009; Sako 2007a, Sako 2007b). This opinion has been echoed by other Chaldean Church officials, including the Archbishop of Baghdad, Shlemon Warduni, who has commented on the need for a unified Iraq: 'There is just one Iraq, one Iraqi population, that is composed of multiple ethnic groups and religions...We will be the richer when the Arab, Chaldean, Assyrian, Kurdish, Turkish cultures will be able to live together' (Quoted in Servizio Informazione Religiosa 2009).

This position rejects Assyrian/Chaldean territorial nation-building for a plural, liberal Iraqi nationalism. Present here is a difference in interpretation from the nationalist viewpoint: both ideologies recognize fundamentalism has always existed in Iraq, but whilst nationalists conclude self-rule is perhaps the only remaining means for preservation, the integrationist viewpoint concludes society can again normalize with the work of dedicated moderates and social construction. As Warduni further commented, 'We have lived here for centuries, Christians and Muslims, but the fundamentalists, who have always existed everywhere, have broken a certain balance and undermine harmony...We don't give up; we sow the seeds of friendship so that we may soon harvest a new peace' (Quoted in Conte 2008).

The CDF is similarly disinclined towards national or territorial claims, finding the idea of a Christian region to be incongruous with the Chaldean place in Iraq. This viewpoint likewise understands Chaldeans possess a claim of indigeneity, but with a different conclusion:

For me, first, we are Iraqi people. And we are citizens of Iraq. Our people are there – I call them the Native Indian, like we are the native, indigenous people. So this kind of isolation, I don't like it... Why I should have my corner, and you have your corner, and if I come to your corner, you're going to fight with me? We don't need that...I don't know how long we can survive there and if we can survive, but we'd like to do that as much as we can, and we are trying to do that to push even the American government to help our people, to end the discrimination, and to give us our rights. And like every other group that lives in Iraq, we have to have our own name preserved (Barka Interview).

Instead of drawing on indigeneity to support territorial claims, indigeneity is instead used to reaffirm a desire for integration within Iraq, protected by liberal democratic rights.

Just as the continued Iraqi crisis affected perceptions toward autonomy, the Church's position might similarly affect perceptions toward integration. For diasporic activists who see their role as representing Chaldeans in Iraq, the Church is undeniably an important voice. Kassab, who seemed to possess reservations regarding autonomy as noted in the previous section, expressed his underlying concerns of creating another group-specific geographic boundary:

The Nineveh Plain autonomy or province is like you're creating a country inside a country. We don't want that. We already have that. We already have the KRG and we have the Iraqi government. And if we do that, then the Sunni will do that, then the others will do that, then it will be a big, big mess in Iraq (Kassab Interview 2013).

Instead, his new organization favoured what he saw as a middle ground approach, of how to have some form of self-rule to protect minority rights and interests without creating a 'ghetto'; Kassab referred to his new project as Special Administrative Autonomy, a form of semi-autonomy that allows minority villages to form a federal association for administering their villages, aspiring to protect cultural autonomy

through a structure disassociated from a single territorial unit (Kassab Interview 2013). This extra-territorial design recalls in some ways the nature of a diasporic nation, but one provided with specific legal administrative rights. The end game, essentially, is for a multicultural state, for a civil or civic Iraqi nationalism in which Chaldean and Assyrian rights are respected as a component of Iraq and the KRG.

There is a wedge within the integrationist viewpoint, however: some in diaspora feel Iraqi society cannot normalize, and the response is perhaps integration into diaspora. This is essentially an argument that the nation can survive in diaspora, removed from territory, and subverting traditional understandings of nationalism and nation-building. Ibrahim, for example, expressed pessimism with both the nationalist and integrationist options. He described autonomy as ‘hoping against hope’, stating the need avoid discouragement of those who support it, but observing it is difficult to see how there can be a future for Chaldeans with either the Arabs or Kurds (Author’s Interview Notes 2013). He expressed the most pressing goal is for community members still in Iraq to enjoy their democratic rights, but finds democracy alone is not enough: he cited one village that had 120 families prior to the war witness its population drop to 40 because there is little opportunity for employment or means to support a family. He saw this trajectory as inevitable, estimating in 25 years there will be few Chaldeans in Iraq (ibid). In this vein, the ideology is that diasporas do not require a state; as he stated in a recent speech to the CDF, ‘We don’t like to create a new country for us. We have a homeland; the whole world is our homeland. We have Iraq and America, that are enough for us to live in’ (Ibrahim 2013). The *atra*, here, is extra-territorial.

This sentiment is shared by several Chaldean leaders. The response is not a turn to territory and autonomy, nor integration into Iraq, but rather a diasporic nation: an effort to allow Chaldean culture and identity to flourish in multicultural Western societies. As Eddie Bacall commented:

On the one hand, it hurts me to see Christians leaving Iraq, our villages; on the other hand, I see them, they have better future for them, for their kids, grandkids...I'm living in a great country here, and this is land of opportunities. I feel more citizen here, 200 times more than Iraq. Here I can do whatever I want to do. Open my TV station, newspaper, my own church...My brother's publishing a book. In Iraq he couldn't publish a book about the Christians. They wouldn't allow him to publish a book. I couldn't speak my language. Here, we have our radio station, TV station in our language (Bacall and Bacall Interview).

The alternative to preserving Chaldeans and Chaldeanness, as found here, is perhaps the diaspora's and Church's efforts to build a diasporic nation, to cultivate a flexible but resonant social boundary in diaspora to protect and sustain the language, culture, and historical elements of Chaldeanness within diasporic institutions. In some ways, Chaldean identity and culture are more able to flourish in the U.S. because of the ability to cultivate ethnic institutions. Jacob Bacall noted that successive Iraqi governments marginalized non-Arab identities, in contrast to the freedom to build Chaldeanness in diaspora:

Myself, in Iraq, other than reading the name Chaldean in my church and some of the very, very, very few books that has referred to Chaldeans, I thought we were Arabs. Simply the fact that we were Christian - of course I was young and there was nobody to educate you like you have here, the freedom for education you have. Now every association we have here has a Chaldean name. Everything. Chaldean Chamber of Commerce, the Chaldean Club, Chaldean Foundation (Bacall and Bacall Interview).

In some sense, this represents an understanding that while integration is not immediately plausible in Iraq, integration is happening elsewhere and it is there to which the Iraqi community is emigrating. As a San Diego resident commented regarding the need to build a strong Chaldean Church in the U.S., 'The patriarch talks about keeping Chaldean culture alive in Iraq...But what about here? This is our Babylon' (Quoted in Perry 2015). The importance of institutions and identity to nation-building are evident, enabling the nation – a new *atra*, a new Babylon – to

survive wherever such nation-building can take place.

Despite the omnipresent threat of persecution, some leaders have suggested a path to improve acceptance of Christians that ties into the middleman diaspora theory of Gellner (1983), Blalock (1967) and Bonacich (1973). Such an approach echoes the narrative of Chaldeans as a minority population providing services and skills, often filling a niche role in society, from which acceptance and integration improve as the wider society recognizes the minority's role. As Kassab commented:

If I develop something good, let's say I build a university in the area...I'm cultivating not only my people to become members of the organization, but also I bring in those who were fighting me and persecuting me...It's not appeasing them, but at least quenching their thirst to persecute me. They start to understand, look, this guy is valuable...This guy, the Christian, he was able to do it, so let me give him a chance...That's where the Christian role can come. That's why I keep saying, Middle East, and mainly Iraq, without Christians, is like a garden without flowers...We have that mind that you can be creative, you can be innovative, but here's one thing that a lot of people don't do, other than Christians, is we share...Because if people do that, and share, then there will not be this animosity, and these particular fights and wars and persecutions (Kassab Interview 2012).

The ideology of integration, at its core, is not entirely dissimilar from the nationalist approach: it sees Chaldeans, and Assyrians, as an indigenous, important component of Iraq. The difference, rather, lies in to where long-distance nationalism is projected - whether to Iraq or the homeland, whether manifested as the Nineveh Plain or as a permanent diaspora. The difference also lies within the interpretation of social boundaries, with an assumption expressed herein that boundaries will shift and expand because of the value of Christian membership. In contrast to the aforementioned ideologies, integrationism is consequentially less about control of the state, instead reflecting Gellner's characterization that diasporic nationalisms long gave up any claim to power as the 'price of entering' its professional role and the state itself (Gellner 105).

At times, the reluctance of Chaldeans to support autonomy is correspondingly attributed to a stereotype of Chaldeans as historically an adaptive, integrationist minority, one which tended to keep its head down and avoid politics. This perception was noted by Assyrians and Chaldeans alike, that:

The Assyrian nationalists were jailed and hung, so this is what politics gets you. You get involved in politics, you go to jail, you get killed. So they stayed away from it. So that remains, to be honest. I don't think that's changed (Jatou Interview).

Whilst the fear of insecurity and the consequences for opposition continues to shape an element of the integrationist perspective, integration also possesses an understanding the nation is entwined with membership in the Iraqi state, or has found its future in diaspora.

The Iraqi crisis has challenged some diasporic perceptions regarding political engagement and the reality facing their community in Iraq. A shift in nationalism hence occurred in the diaspora alongside a shift in Iraq's national boundaries. Prior to the outbreak of sectarian conflict, the demand for an autonomous Assyrian and Chaldean region was a far-reaching pipe dream fashioned by ardent nationalists, whereas liberal, democratic rights were a tangible, achievable way to protect Assyrian and Chaldean culture and identity. Yet in the aftermath of sectarian conflict, and the failure of Iraqi society to normalize and govern fairly, a liberal democracy tolerant of ethno-religious minorities is instead perceived by many as the far-off pipe dream, and the establishment of a province a more tangible means of protection. As Jatou observed a Gaussian distribution, as quoted at the beginning of this section, a large segment of diasporic elites have come to support autonomy because it is understood as a national solution and, given the change in circumstance, the more pragmatic solution. Exclusionary boundaries turned many

diasporic actors into long-distance nationalists demanding the quintessential foundation of nation-building: territorial autonomy.

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE NINEVEH PLAIN

The current phase of diasporic engagement marks the first time the modern diaspora has developed and instrumentalized a national claim in an external state. Because Assyrians and Chaldeans are a powerless minority with no expectations of controlling the state itself, the only prospects for autonomy came through lobbying the state, and influential outside states, for change. Long-distance nationalism thus moved ideology and imagining of a homeland into a politically-focused project for autonomy, coinciding with Breuilly's observation that nationalism 'above and beyond all else' is inherently a political claim (Breuilly 1).

This section examines the logistics of turning the imprecise goal of autonomy into a feasible policy measure. Considered is the legal foundation upon which the demand for autonomy is based. Several points of division occurred within the pro-autonomy diaspora over its politics. The first regarded the specifics of such a unit in practice: the extent of its administrative powers and if it would take form as an administrative unit, region, or province. The second, which remains a significant wedge, is whether the autonomous unit should be under Iraq or the KRG: it is such divisions that, in part, have hindered a more united diasporic effort.

Foremost, national claims required grounding in the Iraqi constitution. It was the constitution's guarantee of ethnic-specific rights from which calls for self-administration materialized into autonomy demands. Although pre-war mobilization in the U.S. did not center on territorial rights, an autonomy demand from both diasporic and Iraqi community members was nonetheless present at the ADM's 2003 General Conference. Notably, this occurred before ethno-sectarian conflict solidified

across Iraq. As Kurds and Shiites understood the opening of the political structure as their opportunity to insert their claims for unique national or religious rights, Assyrian nationalists made the same calculation. The Conference directed the ADM, specifically Kanna as the only Christian appointed to the IGC, to push for the inclusion of an administrative region in Iraq's Temporary Administrative Law (TAL), which the IGC was tasked with approving. It was expected the framework of the TAL would shape the framework of Iraq's permanent constitution (Youash 2007).

Organizations like the AUA and ISDP hoped for constitutional provisions placing Assyrians and Chaldeans on par with the Kurdish population, which would have created comparable opportunities for autonomy. Joseph Tamraz stressed that the failure to secure stronger and more specific national rights was not for a lack of effort in the constitutional drafting process, but a failure of those who shaped the final constitution:

We were involved; it's not that we were not. But the thing is, like I said, history keeps repeating itself...The things we were promised or told that we would get didn't happen. So even right at the beginning, when they put in the interim government, we had leadership within it, but after they had changes with the constitution, we didn't get anything (Tamraz Interview).

Instead, final language was superficially clear but legally vague, creating a restrictive framework for national claims to be made (Youash 2007; AUA 2005a). Grounds for autonomy are consequentially interpreted through two provisions in the Iraqi constitution: Article 125, which provides for the guarantee of 'administrative' rights to the various nationalities, including specifically to Chaldeans and Assyrians; and Article 116, which establishes a federal structure within Iraq comprised of 'a decentralized capitol, regions, and governorates, and local administrations'.³¹

³¹ The word محافظة is translated as both governorate or province. While governorate appears as the preferred legal term and province as more colloquial, both translations are often used interchangeably, as is the case in this dissertation.

The language of these provisions is imprecise as to what is meant by administrative rights and local administrations. To substantiate this is meant as rights beyond those conferred to any local municipality, organizations utilized other constitutional provisions to clarify this argument: Article 93 notes the Supreme Court shall settle disputes between the federal government and ‘the governments of the regions and governorates, municipalities, and local administrations’; and Article 122 notes governorates are comprised of ‘districts, sub-districts and villages’ (ISDP 2008: 4-5). Found herein, advocates note, is the application of ‘administrative’ rights uniquely and specifically to the case of national minorities and not as a typical layer of the federal structure.

Additionally, in testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, then-Committee Chairman Joseph Biden asked Ryan Crocker, then U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, directly about an autonomous region in the Nineveh Plain and improving security for minorities, to which Crocker responded:

Some Iraqi parliamentarians and local politicians in Ninawa have called for an autonomous region in Ninawa province, citing Article 125 of the Iraqi Constitution. Iraqi citizens can pursue the creation of a separate administrative region through processes consistent with this article. The best way to provide physical and economic security for vulnerable Iraqis is to help build a democratic, stable, and prosperous Iraq with a security force that provides protection for all of Iraq's citizens (Senate Committee on Foreign Relations 2007).

Several points from this exchange are informative. First, Crocker clearly states the Bush Administration’s opinion that the creation of an administrative region is legal on the basis of Article 125. Second, for Biden to inquire specifically about an autonomous Nineveh Plain as a political goal indicates those advocating for autonomy had made inroads into raising the profile of the Nineveh Plain within Washington. Third, while Crocker does not take a position on the creation of

administrative region, the implication reinforces the U.S. preference for a single, unified Iraq absent ethnic-specific subdivisions.

Such calls for a united Iraq are made somewhat difficult by the special status enjoyed by the KRG. Any legal claim regarding the ability to form an administrative unit is further challenged by Kurdish land claims and Nineveh's resultant status as a contested territory. Article 140 of the Iraq Constitution was to provide for a referendum to settle the placement of disputed territories in Nineveh, as well as the Kirkuk and Diyala provinces, by 2007; however, to date, implementation of these steps has not yet occurred.

There is not a uniform consensus within the Assyrian and Chaldean community if the Nineveh Plain should remain in Iraq or join the KRG. In part, this is complicated by the potential for autonomy within either. Article 35 of the KRG draft constitution guarantees 'national, cultural, and administration autonomy to the Turkmen, Arabs, and Chaldo-Assyrian-Syriacs wherever they represent a majority of the population' (Kurdistan Regional Government 2009). Article 36 notes this is to be considered 'additional rights' beyond the rights of ethnic minorities mentioned elsewhere in the constitution, and Article 14 provides Assyrian shall be an official language alongside Kurdish and Arabic in 'administrative districts that are densely populated' by Assyrian speakers.

Some political parties in Iraq, such as the Assyrian Patriotic Party, the Iraqi BNDP (which separated from Dadesho's BNDP), and the Iraqi CDF, supported pursuing autonomy within the Kurdish government (ADM Interview; Abbo et al Interview; Youash 2007). Statements by Kurdish officials, particularly Sarkis Aghajan, the Kurdish Minister of Finance, who is Assyrian, that the Kurdish government supports an autonomous region curried support from these organizations; Aghajan likewise directed Kurdish resources to building infrastructure projects and housing units in

the Nineveh Plain (ISDP 2011). Thus, implementation of Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution would conduct a referendum that could place Nineveh under KRG control; from there, administrative rights could be pursued under Kurdish Article 35.

However, there is concern amongst some activists that Kurdish provisions are superficially promising but misleading. Kanna cautioned against banking on autonomy within the KRG, noting, 'Generally speaking, the constitution of KRG has much better minority rights than the central federal constitution. But at the same time it [proposes autonomy] in the locations where we are a majority. We have no locations where we are a majority, which means we have nothing' (Quoted in Manna 2010). Ensuring Nineveh remains under Iraq was a preference shared frequently in interviews with diasporic leaders. Recognizing the KRG is in its own throes of state-building and nationalizing, there is grave concern the KRG will be as resolutely homogenizing as was Hussein's Iraq. As Kurdification was aptly summarized, 'the Kurds are articulating this new identity of "Kurdish Christian" as if we can just flip our ethnicity' (Abbo et al Interview). Discussing the potential perils of an Assyrian future in Kurdistan, it was stressed that:

It's not because these people hate Assyrians. Some of them are Assyrian nationalists... Their reasoning was, our churches were being blown up, Iraq was going to turn into an Islamist state, Kurdistan is secular, we are safer there than we are in Mosul or Baghdad or Basra. They were right...I publicly thanked a KRG representative in Washington, DC, at a meeting for what they did for the Iraqi Christians. But I said we are not here to talk about our safety as Christians: we are here to talk about our political rights as an ethnicity in Iraq. We were safe as Christians under Saddam Hussein. But we were not politically free...We are in the short-run very safe in the Kurdistan region. But they are Kurdish nationalists much like the Ba'athists were Arab nationalists, so tread very lightly with whom you are making your alliances (Abbo et al Interview).

Such concern again recalls Gellner's outcomes of nationalism, that assimilation in the KRG is a foreseeable outcome. Given this concern, it is unsurprising diasporic

organizations in the U.S. tend to favour keeping the Nineveh Plain in Iraq. Building an Assyrian and Chaldean nation against a Kurdish nation in pursuit of a homogenizing Kurdish identity presents its own burdens. However, should the location of the Nineveh Plain be decided by referendum, the determination will ultimately be in the hands of residents of Nineveh and not the diaspora.

The question of which form autonomy should take presented another wedge: although the guarantee of ‘administrative rights’ in Iraq and ‘administration autonomy’ in the KRG confines the degree to which autonomy is possible, the absence of specificity with either phrase has allowed for multiple policy interpretations. Such vagueness, as well as different national and ideological leanings, fostered confusion and competing policy plans amongst the diaspora, as evident by the delay in finding a single, shared terminology to describe this geopolitical arrangement: colloquially, autonomy became an administrative unit, an autonomous region, a province, or some other categorization.

The constitution itself does not provide a legal mechanism to create a province; hence, early support was for an administrative region or an administrative unit. Some organizations, like CASCA, used broad language to straddle this legal ambiguity, calling on the U.S., UN, and Iraq to support ‘the plan for an autonomous region/self-administered area or region for the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian people of Iraq’ (CASCA 2008). The ADM, as noted above, supported an administrative area, citing concerns that calling for autonomy would undermine the effort and increase hostility, and that there was not a legal framework for a province. Other organizations became concerned pursuit of a lesser measure would be more palatable to government officials and undermine the opportunity to gain something bigger. An opinion piece by Michael Youash, the ISDP’s director, questioned, ‘when one hears demands and appeals for an ‘Autonomous Assyrian Region’ or an ‘Assyrian Province’, a call for an ‘Administrative Area’ naturally seems almost like nothing - why bother

even asking for it?' (Youash 2007). Likewise, Tamraz noted that simple autonomy is insufficient:

According to the Iraqi constitution, with the administration region, I mean, everybody has that so you will be able to work, get a job, things like that. It's nothing special about that. But we don't want just an administrative region...we want to be able to govern, so that's what that does – what the province gives us...It's going to be self-government, be able to have our own governor...we'll be able to have our own schools, language...Most of the Assyrian people, they want it. But then there were certain political groups that didn't ask for that; they were asking for the administration unit. So that's what a lot of argument was about: why are you asking for administration, which won't give you anything. We want more; we have to have more control. And it's a part of the constitution of Iraq right now, so we can ask. We're not doing anything wrong (Tamraz Interview).

Tamraz touches on the two crucial elements of the autonomy goal: what is permissible under Iraqi law, and what will satisfy Assyrian national needs within that structure. In a way, this parallels the crucial question of diaspora-building: how alike must we be to integrate, and how dissimilar can we be and maintain diasporic boundaries. In both, Assyrians and Chaldeans are relatively without power and undertaking the challenges of nation-building from within the confines of state borders. Yet a key difference is apparent: diasporic elites, having no claim to territory in their state of resettlement, are limited to negotiating for social boundaries and perhaps minor political rights; but Assyrians and Chaldeans in Iraq have the opportunity to negotiate for political and territorial boundaries on the basis of their indigeneity. As Gellner described, possessing that 'residue of ancient territory' is crucial for Assyrians and Chaldeans to instrumentalize a political claim (Gellner 108).

Much of the rhetoric from diasporic organizations has left open-ended policy-specific details: what might this homeland look like in practice; what would be its geographic borders; how much autonomy would it have; what would be the status of non-

Assyrians living in the territory? The differences preventing these organizations from unifying reflect differences in national goals and political calculations. As the flexibility or staunchness of nation-building ideologies are manifested in particularities like the name issue or placing Nineveh in Iraq or the KRG, autonomy too presented an ideological difference: nationalists tended to favour the strongest form of self-rule, and pragmatists and reluctant nationalists tended to support whatever form of administration was feasible whilst recognizing the need to incorporate the area's existing, non-Christian residents.

Although politics remain a constant wedge, most diasporic organizations share support for autonomy: 'Politicians I think are all in favour. Some might call it something different - administrative vs. province vs. region. I think the only differences they have is wanting to try to control it - that's politics' (Manna Interview 2014). Such differences, reflecting ideology and elite competition alike, often materialize when policy details come into question. As was recalled of meetings with the State Department, opinions ranged from Detroit activists backtracking to 'Well, not necessarily an administrative unit. We just want to live in peace and harmony!' to which extreme nationalists would respond, 'What do you mean? This is our land! They should remove them and put us in!' (Jatou Interview). Gellner's challenge of coping with existing populations sharing the land in question is often lost in rhetoric but is ultimately unavoidable. The challenge of any nationalism is what becomes of those non-nationals: can, how, or will they coexist? In the Nineveh Plain, Assyrians and Chaldeans are faced with no option but coexistence: they are simply without the power or population size to do otherwise, and diasporic policy generally recognizes a province will offer a safe haven for other minorities. Such aggregate autonomy does not render futile the Assyrian and Chaldean autonomy argument: they do not face the same concerns of assimilation because ethnic and religious differences facilitate boundary maintenance. The utility of a province thus still lies in allowing Assyrians and Chaldeans a measure of power over their homeland. However, activists

nonetheless often focus on the singularity of the Assyrian and Chaldean connection to the land and existential threat should it be lost, a more compelling argument to amass national and political support.

A benchmark towards unifying policy came in November 2010 and January 2011, when the Assembly of the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Political Parties, comprised of the majority of Assyrian and Chaldean political groups in Iraq - sixteen in total including ADM, CDF, the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council, and AUA - agreed to collectively demand a province.³² This came despite continuing divisions over the name issue and the permanent jurisdiction of the Nineveh Plain. Attendees agreed to a resolution affirming the need to work for a province in the Nineveh Plain in conjunction with other minority groups residing therein, as well as to push for implementation of Article 35 of the KRG's constitution after a constitutional referendum is held (Ishtar Broadcasting Corporation 2011; Tamraz Interview). With this, the conference kept options for autonomy in either government open. The agreement represents a compromise from several positions, seeking to appease the ADM by diluting the ethnic-specific nature of the province and to appease those that want the Nineveh Plain within the KRG.

The choice of a province appears at first confusing because the constitution does not explicitly permit the creation of new provinces; however, it was also a strategic choice, using legal ambiguity to contend such authority lies within Iraq's executive branch, a theoretically easier process for approval than legislation or referenda.

When Prime Minister al-Maliki, in January 2014, announced the recommendation of his cabinet for the creation of four new provinces, including the Nineveh Plain, constitutional experts and politicians questioned the legality of this. A 1969 Ba'ath-era law, Law No. 159, gave the power to change provincial boundaries to the Council

³² This took place shortly after the tragic October 2010 attack on the Our Lady of Salvation Church in Baghdad in which 58 were killed (Shadid 2010; Associated Press 2010).

of Ministers; however, this law was repealed and replaced by the 2008 Provincial Powers Act, which, while clarifying and enhancing the authority of provinces, neglected to address the creation of new provinces or assign authority to change provincial boundaries (Ali 2014; Visser 2014). The KRG first used this ambiguity in late 2013 to modify its internal boundaries to create a fourth KRG province, Halabja, by arguing the absence of authority elsewhere left the authority to the regional government (Rudaw 2014). Organizations like NCA, echoing this, argued in its policy briefs that Iraq's Prime Minister or President can form provinces through an administrative decision (Nineveh Council of America 2013).

Perhaps the most lasting accomplishment of the 2011 Conference, then, was that autonomy-related terminology and policy goals have coalesced around the request for a province. As the ADM and AUA adopted this terminology, ISDP and its affiliated organizations like AANC transitioned from requesting a Nineveh Plain Administrative Unit to a Nineveh Plain Province; likewise, CASCA and NCA refer to 'The Nineveh Solution' as a request for a province.

Ultimately, the unity behind the 2011 Conference diminished because of the difficulty in bridging competing national visions. As a member of the AANC recalled, agreement on a province alone was not enough to supersede such divisions:

They agreed that the Nineveh Plain was sort of our last stand area, and they agreed that we wanted a province. Everyone agreed we wanted a province. But there was no agreement on anything else, there was no agreement on whether the province was part of the KRG, was it part of Iraq, and there was no agreement on that more important first question: well, okay, we all agree we want a province, but where is the jurisdiction of this province?...And this sort of broke down over time. It started to translate into the issue of whether or not you wanted Article 140 resolved and the disputed regions resolved, or whether or not you wanted Article 125 implemented first. And I don't know what exactly happened with this council, but it just sort of decomposed (Abbo et al Interview).

The intent here is not to suggest these organizations and their leadership are ineffective or even uniquely divided. Such disunity exists in every diaspora, and it reflects very real policy divisions: whether Nineveh is attached to the Iraqi government or the Kurdish government matters a great deal. Observed in these differences is how nationalism is meddled into policy, how meeting Gellner's challenges of the nationalist option is carried out and contested by diasporic elites. Such issues are very new points of debate, having previously existed only as nebulous national imagining and now taking place within the framework of a new Iraqi constitution and very-present displacement and security challenges. Uncertainty and contestation are necessary and fair; unfortunately, because of the nature of politics, it has made advancing this cause more difficult, particularly amongst political frameworks already disinclined to act. Elite competition becomes not just who presents the best national vision, but who is able to make their vision realized.

Consensus amongst leading political organizations is nonetheless an important stepping-stone for advocacy. Yossi Shain observed that American-based diasporas tend to self-moderate when lobbying for foreign policy, tempering more extremist or purely ideological views for those that are politically acceptable to the American foreign policy establishment (Shain 2002). Although widespread support of a province does not preclude stronger nationalists or provincial opponents from pursuing their agenda with policy-makers, the emphasis on a solution that is within the framework of the Iraqi state aspires to frame an otherwise radical-sounding measure as one that is a reasonable conclusion aligned with liberal democratic interests.

MAKING CLAIMS TO IRAQ: BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

The internal and external barriers to achieving autonomy in Nineveh are complex, requiring diasporic actors to navigate between factions in the diaspora and in the homeland; between religious and non-sectarian interests; between American, Iraqi,

and Kurdish officials, and, to a lesser extent, the UN, EU, and other states home to the global diaspora. Although the American diaspora occupied a singular position as a diaspora whose resident state had become the occupying power of the homeland, the ability to organize openly and access government officials did not translate into an embrace of its wants. In addition to mounting Iraq fatigue with politicians and policy-makers, disunity across the diaspora, fueled by competing nationalisms and claims of who speaks on behalf of the diaspora, challenges efforts to gain political support and move policy forward.

Assessed within this section is how diasporic actors work to change political and geographic boundaries within Iraq through engagement with policy-makers. It finds despite making national claims in Iraq, elites primarily act within the American political framework. In part this reflects the ease of accessing American political structures as an ethnic lobby, as observed by Tony Smith (2000) and Anthony King (1997), and in part because of barriers to the Iraq state: whilst the diaspora acts on behalf of an Iraqi national minority, they are not a constituency to which Iraqi politicians need to be responsive.

Diasporic activism for autonomy in the homeland in a way presents a paradox, as John Lie described, because diasporas that aspire to return to the homeland essentially pursue their own disappearance, reducing the diaspora to a temporary or unnatural presence (Lie 2008: 172). Yet it is apparent the diaspora is acting as a permanent diaspora, as Americans acting on behalf of Iraqis. Although nationalism and activism demonstrate the transnationality of the diasporic nation, the confines of state boundaries stress its locality. Long-distance nationalism by its nature is constrained: the demand for territorial rule is not so the diaspora can return, but so co-ethnics in Iraq can return and live safely.

This section also explores the political challenge of advocacy: here, rather than

tediously cataloguing individual meetings and letter campaigns and trying to assess which organization might be credited for which political action, it looks comprehensively at the challenges activists have faced in their advocacy, the political momentum gained, and how activists try to push against political barriers.

Diasporic Elites as Long-Distance Nationalists

Accompanying diasporic mobilization for a Nineveh Plain province is the growth of the diasporic lobby. Yet a common criticism of diaspora - and concern from within the diaspora itself - is its ability to affect policy from the distance and luxury of the U.S., detached from any consequences for the policies pursued (Shain 2002, 1999). This is awkwardly balanced with the need for diasporic actors to advocate on behalf of their co-ethnics because those within or displaced from Iraq are often without the resources, power, or safety to seek change on their own behalf. Policy divisions within the diaspora are compounded by policy disagreements with the homeland, and constrained further by limited opportunity to engage with or pressure the foreign government in which nation-building is pursued. If nationalism is about the attainment and use of state power, as Breuilly theorized, shown here is the necessity of this quest: Assyrians and Chaldeans, aside from a few individuals serving in government, have no institutionalized means of power or control over their general welfare.

Iraqi Chaldean and Assyrian leaders sometimes use the distance of the diaspora to challenge the diaspora's policy demands when there is disagreement. For example, Sako has framed autonomy as a demand driven by diaspora, by those who 'live in relative security' and agitate for policies from which they themselves will be unaffected (Sako 2009). Kanna likewise has criticized 'Chicago' activists for pushing solutions when they are not on the ground in Iraq (Manna 2010).

In these instances, such criticism frames the diaspora as more nationalist than leaders in Iraq would prefer. Contention that national agitation may spark backlash against the community in Iraq is a point of concern. Activists are at times told by the Iraqi community, 'you guys scream in the U.S. and we pay taxes for it here' (Jatou Interview). There is worry that more serious demands are correlated to attacks, that 'with us asking for an administrative unit, you've got "Oh my god, now for sure they're going to come after us." And every time there's an incident, "See, this church happened because you guys did this"' (ibid).

The diaspora's distance, its not being 'here' and unaffected by its own actions, thus leads activists to question their role. At the same time, Iraqi organizations ask for the diaspora to speak on the community's behalf; as the Iraqi community sees favourable action from the government, it favours diasporic advocacy. Manna noted that as raising awareness of Christian issues was gaining traction, with practical and symbolic advances such as Maliki's endorsement of a province and the declaration of Christmas as a national holiday in 2013, feedback tends to be more favorable, to 'keep on the pressure, it seems to be working' (Manna Interview 2014).

The diaspora can be frustrated as it attempts to navigate mixed goals, competing organizations, and intra-national boundaries, as well as the want of the diaspora's own lay members to help. Advocacy at times requires mediating between different boundaries and interests, and lends itself to more generalized political requests in organizations without an ideological or national mission. In addition to Shain's observation that diasporas temper political demands to garner support from American politicians, some diasporic actors similarly use broad policy approaches to appease an ideologically and geographically diverse constituency. As one activist noted:

It is not easy to be the voice of the people in the homeland because a lot of

times, they are not together. Therefore, you get mixed signals. And in order to determine what you should be advocating for - that's the major role I play in Washington and with the European Union - is I'm not getting the very, very specific and final word of what exactly I should pursue. So therefore I take a general target and pursue it, which the target represents the whole thing of what's going on between the community and the faction or members. Because every community's asking for something different. And there's no agreement of what should I be asking (Kassab Interview 2012).

To diasporic elites, those most concerned with boundary maintenance, changes that threatened such boundaries, particularly changes that threatened the national existence in the homeland, necessitated diasporic action. Diaspora provides an alternative path to leverage resources and political pressure not available to the community in Iraq, especially as it becomes an increasingly small voice in a large, contentious government. Kamber observed there is an important role for the diaspora to play to make the Assyrian voice heard because Assyrian power in Iraq is diluted, owing to the community's small population and its correspondingly small representation: 'Although we have Mr. Kanna..I mean, one individual or three cannot do that much in a Parliament of 300 or whatever it is. So it is very hard...I think that's very important, to have a very strong Assyrian lobby in these countries to put pressure on the Congress or the government so they can actually deal with the Iraqi government' (Kamber Interview).

Noted is the reality of Iraqi politics: although Parliamentary representation of Christians is guaranteed by law, such representation is insufficient to possessing a meaningful voice in policy decisions; and Assyrians and Chaldeans also lack an ally, whether an external state or political faction, to champion their issues and expand their voice.³³ Moreover, the reality remains that American action is consequential in

³³ Christian parliamentary quotas were changed in 2010 to require five of 325 seats (in 2005, only three Christians were elected) (Leichman 2010). Quotas for provincial governing councils were enacted in 2008, providing minorities in the Nineveh, Baghdad, and Basra governorates with six (two per governorate) of 129 total seats, despite Christian objections

Iraqi politics as the state most responsible for the Iraq War and Iraq's post-war administration, and as a global power. To the extent the diaspora possesses access to American policy-makers, it understands its role as uniquely important to advocating for the Iraqi community. In this sense, the diaspora also understands American action is the lynchpin: as Assyrian activists have found, the message reinforced abroad, even by states like Australia which have shown a commitment to Assyrian issues, is that American action needs to occur for action from other states to occur.

Activists recognize pressure from American officials does not determine Iraqi or Kurdish actions; strategy instead recognizes the U.S. can encourage Iraqi or Kurdish actions that are more favourable to Assyrians and Chaldeans: 'I know, for example, the only way this is going to work for us is if the U.S. continues to put pressure on it' (Manna Interview 2014). It is in furtherance of this objective that Assyrian and Chaldean diasporic elites have mobilized to act as an ethnic lobby on behalf of their co-ethnics in Iraq and push long-distance nationalism claims within the American political structure.

'We Would Have Done Much Better if We Were Working on Global Warming'

Procuring American support for a Nineveh Plain province was, and remains, a mountainous battle. As seen with the refugee crisis, a reluctance to address a solution to mass Christian displacement was shared by the Bush and Obama Administrations; overcoming reluctance was rendered only more difficult by the seeming complexity of autonomy. Iraq fatigue and a public and private desire to disengage from Iraq grew during the last years of the Bush Presidency and characterized the Obama Presidency, thereby challenging from the beginning any effort to garner political support for a claim as initially radical-sounding a Christian

that the law was 'an insult' and UN recommendations of twelve minority seats (Susman 2008; BBC News 2008).

province (Filkins 2014; Khedery 2014). The political climate became increasingly unfavorable as years progressed, particularly as domestic partisan polarization entrenched over the national economic crisis, health care, and social reforms, sidelining attention to the country's ongoing wars.

The opposite was true for the diaspora, as activism increased as time passed and the crisis deepened. By 2006, the effects of sectarian conflict were beginning to compel a more widespread diasporic mobilization, but only limited options were available for diasporic activists with the adoption of Iraq's permanent constitution and a new government already in place. Consequentially, from what was permissible within American policy, the pinnacle goal became to have the highest Administration officials, the President or members of his cabinet, pressure the Iraqi government to create the Nineveh Plain province. Diasporic activists pursued lines of advocacy with the Administration, especially the State Department, and with Members of Congress. Advocacy was likewise pursued with the international community, particularly Australia, Sweden, and other countries with diasporic populations, as well as the Vatican, and with Iraqi officials directly when possible. Whilst many advocates commented they found the European and Australian states more receptive, the shared acknowledgement remained that this was fundamentally an American issue and an Iraqi issue (Tamraz Interview; Bacall and Bacall Interview; Abbo et al Interview).

In hindsight, part of the challenge was that demands for a province did not coalesce until rather late. Although it might be expected times of crisis would bridge together diasporic actors towards a common goal and sideline political and personality differences, this has largely not happened: groupness has not crystalized (Brubaker 2004). Diasporic disunity poses an additional challenge for those who take the nationalist option beyond the challenges Gellner outlined. As differing national ideologies remained a barrier in overcoming internal divisions, they likewise made

selling policy to policy-makers that much more challenging. Before convincing American officials of the merits of their specific policy, diasporic organizations first had to gain attention for their cause and build a desire to intervene on the cause's behalf:

When we go to Congress or the State Department, putting myself in their shoes, they get people with causes coming all the time. Somebody wants to save the whales, global warming, we're just another item on their list. And the big concern is, to us, I think our issue is a lot more challenging, to be honest. I think we would have done much better if we were working on global warming or save the whales because you can have a lot more traction and share interest with people. But here, especially to policy-makers, the Assyrians are a nuisance really. They don't want to deal with a minority. Like, 'I have big enough problems with 97 percent of the population in Iraq, I'm going to worry about three percent? It's not like you're going to make or break anything I do there.' That's how they look at us. But to us, that three percent is clinging to existence (Jatou Interview).

Assyrians and Chaldeans, as they were without an external state supporting their safety, found themselves similarly without an external lobby to share and champion their cause. Whilst individuals and individual churches mobilized charitable giving, prospective allies like the prominent Evangelical and Catholic Christian lobbies were often relatively silent on the plight of Iraqi Christians in Washington (Kassab Interview 2012; Taimoorazy Interview).

Consequentially, there are several core arguments diasporic activists use to convey the need for a province to policy-makers. Humanitarian urgency and moral responsibility are primary themes, gaining particular use and resonance following specific periods of crisis in Iraq, such as the assassination of Archbishop Rahho of Mosul in 2008 and the Baghdad church attack in 2010. The urgency activists sought to convey was that the cost of doing nothing would be the extinction of Assyrians and Chaldeans in Iraq. Typical of such language is the ISDP's comment in its policy briefs that 'the urgency for operationalizing the Art. 125 solution is undeniable when

combined with the very real fact that ChaldoAssyrians are being wiped out of Iraq. The Nineveh Plain Administrative Unit policy is necessary to avert their total cleansing from their indigenous homeland' (ISDP 2008: 3). Similarly, the argument is often made that the crisis facing Christians is a result of the war, Christian support for the U.S., or the perception that Christians automatically support the U.S.; as CFA wrote to Senator Rand Paul, who questioned why the U.S. was giving refuge to Iraqis, 'the United States bears a moral responsibility to help those who have been forced from their homes and lost family members under our country's watch' (Kassab 2011).

Another argument stressed the choice available to Assyrians and Chaldeans were to essentially emigrate or face hardship in Iraq; arguing the U.S. bears direct responsibility for this outcome, it followed the U.S. likewise held a unique responsibility to help Assyrians and Chaldeans remain. For example, an ISDP policy brief stated: 'Two policies stand before the US in confronting the realities of the crisis. Mass resettlement is one option; while the other is providing meaningful opportunities through local development of the Nineveh Plain for ChaldoAssyrians and other minorities there' (ISDP 2007). ISDP contended resettlement is a more financially beneficial argument, costing '\$7.43 billion versus the \$236 million for giving minorities an enduring solution through the Nineveh Plain policy' (ibid).³⁴ The shortcoming of this argument, however, is that the U.S. certainly possessed no intention to resettle hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, making the suggestion of a multi-billion dollar resettlement project not credible. To policy-makers, this is clearly a fallacy of false choice as there was an inherent understanding the U.S. would neither resettle that many refugees nor allocate that level of funding for the development of one region in Iraq.

³⁴ The first figure estimates the U.S. spends \$16,500 per refugee, which ISDP multiplied by 450,000 Nineveh Plain residents. The latter figure represents ISDP's estimate costs for security and developing infrastructure, schools, and agriculture in the Nineveh Plain.

Moreover, the Bush Administration's policy was to avoid action that could 'exacerbate tensions between Iraq's various communities' (Youash 2008: 360). As Youash wrote at the time, referring to the Administration's approach as the 'myth of equality in victimization', 'The USG is effectively saying it cannot help these people to reduce their disproportionate level of suffering because policy does not allow it to acknowledge the existence of disproportionate Assyrian Christian suffering' (ibid).

While the recognition of disproportionate suffering changed under the Obama Administration,³⁵ the effective policy outcome immediately did not. The Administration framed any question of autonomy as an internal issue left to be decided by Iraqis. Then-Ambassador Peter Bodde, for example, in a 2011 meeting with diasporic leaders in Detroit stated the official U.S. position was for Iraqis to work out a Nineveh Plain arrangement through the Iraqi Parliament and was not for the U.S. to engage, urging Assyrians and Chaldeans to work with other minority groups and determine if they want to move forward within the Iraqi political system (Author's Personal Notes April 2011). Similar emphasis on the need for policy decisions regarding Nineveh to be sorted by Iraqis was made by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Michael Corbin, who stressed, for example, the inclusive government and minority protections in the constitution offer great potential to improve the crisis affecting its minorities (Manna 2011).

This position remained frustrating to activists, particularly given the U.S.'s role in creating the crisis. Most frustrating was the contrast between the ongoing crisis and the government's continuous laissez-faire avoidance. As one humanitarian organizer expressed:

³⁵ In 2007, then-Senator Obama wrote the State Department following USCIRF's designation of Iraq as a Country of Particular Concern regarding the need to improve protection and aide for Iraq's minorities (Obama 2007b).

I voted for Bush, the second Bush, for a second term. It was the first time I voted, I was so proud...We thought America would help us like they helped the Kurds. But we have been greatly disappointed. I love Bush, I do, as a person. He was a man of principle, he was a Christian, but I am devastated at his policies. We pushed to Rumsfeld, said what about the Christians? And there was no answer. They didn't have a plan. They really didn't. U.S. policy still fails us til today. We've written as an organization so many letters to Obama, to the White House, they don't even send a blanket, generic letter acknowledging. State Department comes in just to really shut us up. Give us a sign, photo op, and they leave. There's not been anything (Taimoorazy Interview).

Reflected here, again, is the sense the U.S. government 'didn't give a damn', that unfolding crisis was again a sideshow to the greater scope of Iraqi conflict and governance (Hanna Interview; Donabed 2010: 245).

The challenge of seeking American influence in Iraq was compounded by internal nationalist dynamics: prior to the 2011 agreement to pursue a province, advocating for competing iterations of autonomy underscored the absence of a political consensus to Administration and Congressional officials; additionally, opposition, particularly from the Chaldean Church, aided the impression autonomy or a province was a controversial, fringe goal. Myriad diasporic voices left policy-makers uncertain who best speaks for the diaspora. Manna stressed this dynamic was and is a main challenges encountered: 'Part of the problem is that while me and CASCA and others will go and request the support from the government for a province, after we leave, another Chaldean group will claim they represent the entire country, and will come in say something opposite. That's the big challenge' (Manna Interview 2012).

Until activists agreed autonomy would take the form of a province, consistent messaging was a challenge. Indeed, to some policy-makers, the quest for autonomy was assumed to be a quest for a state. In part, this assumption reflects early messages conveyed by nationalists, its far-reaching pursuit something to be easily

dismissed. Consequentially, as the Obama Administration's underlying policies distanced the American government from taking sides on Iraqi issues, the perception an autonomous region was unrealistic or would contribute to worsening the marginalization of Christians in Iraq was sometimes cited as cause to not pursue it.³⁶ Manna observed of State Department officials that, 'They're sympathetic, and they pretty much tell us, you know, we can't deliver you a country; be realistic. I think the company line lately has been Iraq's a sovereign country, which is unacceptable to me. My response is, you got us into this mess, you get us out of it' (Manna Interview 2012).

Similar responses were heard from many activists across nationalist leanings. At times it was unclear if the lack of interest reflected official policy or the individual priorities of administration officials. As one example, it was noted encouragement and the impression the province was on the State Department's radar was given by Corbin, whilst the opposite was heard from his successor, Barbara Leaf:

If you came to me a year ago, a year and a half ago, and asked the same question, I'd say definitely, that we were definitely Nineveh Plain...I asked her [Barbara Leaf] point blank, are we chasing our tails for this? And she said, you really need to give up. This is ideology; it's never going to happen (Taimoorazy Interview).

The frustration of inaction from either Administration channeled advocacy efforts towards Members of Congress who shared the diaspora's concerns. As described elsewhere, 'Congress has never had a problem remaining committed to helping those who helped us [in Iraq]. The problem has come from two successive Administrations' (Packer 2014b). Yet Congress is limited by its own lesser role in foreign policy. As Kassab described taking a generalized strategy to balance the different opinions of

³⁶ The futility of this perception was bluntly observed after the fall of Mosul, when an Iraqi Christian commented to the Wall Street Journal, 'The Americans want to stay away from this because their view is, if you train the Christians, you're starting some crazy religious war. Well, ISIS beat you to it' (Malas 2015).

Iraqis, congressional policy did the same. Congressmembers rarely took a direct position on autonomy, pursuing Assyrian and Chaldean issues more indirectly: support instead came through congressional pressure on the Executive Branch, and from using congressional appropriations to direct resources to the Nineveh Plain.

Engaging Congress as a lobbying strategy reflects the observations of King (1997) and Smith (2000) that Congressional members are theoretically more vulnerable, given the nature of their electoral cycle, and therefore the most accessible branch of government. This is by design: they are the most localized elected federal representatives and are more likely to be responsive to niche interests because of their relationships with their constituencies. Congresswoman Eshoo and Congressman Wolf formed the Religious Minorities in Iraq Caucus, later the Religious Minorities in the Middle East Caucus, to bring together Representatives with a dedicated interest to the issue and serve as a point of contact for the diaspora or individual Members to raise issues (Wolf Staff Interview 2012). This facilitated coordination for letters to the Executive Branch, appropriations requests, and congressional resolutions, and provided a critical voice urging the U.S. to do more. A letter to Secretary of State Clinton in November 2010, for example, sent after the Baghdad church attack, stressed the ongoing violence ‘underscores the degree to which the U.S. continues to lack a clear, coherent strategy for the protection of these people’ and noted:

We are concerned that the administration has too often implied, as the previous administration did, that the attacks against Iraq’s religious minorities are only part of a broader pattern of ‘generalized violence’ that plagues Iraq...We respectfully request that the State Department take immediate steps to formulate and articulate a specific, comprehensive strategy for the protection of Iraq’s Christians and other minority groups while a meaningful number still remain there (Eshoo et al 2010a).

The language here does not advocate for a specific policy or security measures, nor

mention autonomy in the Nineveh Plain as a possible solution; nonetheless, it urges the Administration take more direct engagement by planning an assistance strategy. The State Department's response agreed minority populations 'are extremely vulnerable and need specific attention', yet too was generic in its strategy, noting primarily the meetings it held with the diaspora, Iraqi Christians, and Iraqi officials, and commending advances within the Iraq government to better prosecute attacks on Christians and integrate police and security forces (Verma Letter 2010).

An example of the frustration shared by Members of Congress and the diaspora is seen in the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission's January 2011 hearing, 'Christian Minorities Under Attack in Iraq and Egypt'. Congressman Chris Smith stated he hoped, 'the Obama administration would realize that we have a moral imperative, and we have been lax and ineffective in ensuring that the Christians are protected' (Tom Lantos Commission 2011: 41). Likewise, Wolf commented that he recognized the Administration cares about the community's plight, but criticized the administration for not doing more despite its sympathy.

Wolf, when speaking of this issue on the House floor, often cited William Wilberforce's quote that, 'You may choose to look the other way but you can never say again that you did not know'. Instead of endorsing autonomy or any specific policy within Iraq, Wolf moved to create a Special Envoy to be tasked with advocating for religious minorities in the Middle East, a bill that passed in 2014 with the backing of Senators Levin and Roy Blunt, yet to date the position remains unfilled (P.L. 113-161). The policy here underscores the limited role of Congress in foreign policy and intervening directly in the affairs of another state; instead, a full-time, Administration-level official would work directly on the issue (Wolf Staff Interview 2012). Wolf, following retirement from Congress in 2015, formed a non-profit organization calling for a safe haven in the Nineveh Plain and arming Christian militias in the region in response to ISIL's advance (21st Century Wilberforce

Initiative 2015).

Eshoo additionally testified during the Lantos hearing to her frustrations that neither Administration offered a stronger policy response:

During the previous administration it was very difficult, I think, to get the foreign policy establishment to recognize that the invasion had precipitated this humanitarian crisis. And in the current administration, attention to this issue may have improved somewhat, but most frankly not as quickly - and to bring the relief to the Christians in this situation and the deterioration of the situation...We just simply have to do more (Tom Lantos Commission 14).

Despite strong advocacy from these Members, amongst others, their advocacy did not amass support for autonomy nor a desire to direct congressional resources to the issue. This also reflects the difficulty in gaining traction for the issue generally: for example, a 2011 letter circulated by the Religious Minorities Caucus urging Obama to make the protection of Iraq's minorities a key benchmark in the U.S. relationship with Iraq gained 38 total signatures; this could suggest some progress given the smaller numbers on previous letters related to Assyrian and Chaldean issues, but nonetheless represents only a fraction of the House's 438 Members (Wolf et al 2011).

Policy outcomes instead came from a more targeted approach, utilizing congressional appropriations to direct resources to the Nineveh Plain specifically, providing short-term relief to help Assyrians and Chaldeans remain there and to invest in the economic development of the region. This represented a marked change from policy under the Bush presidency, in which funding was not allocated to specific ethno-religious minority communities, but rather based on 'determinations of need', a policy the State Department stated at the time was to avoid exacerbating sectarian conflict (Blanchard 2010; Committee on Foreign Affairs 2008: 28).

Eshoo was instrumental in securing funding for security and humanitarian aid in the Nineveh Plain. Funding directed to vulnerable minority groups in the FY2008 appropriations bill provided a \$10 million appropriation to the Nineveh Plain; another \$10 million was included in the FY2008 supplemental, accompanied by language noting ‘The Appropriations Committees are concerned about the threat to the existence of Iraq’s most vulnerable minorities, particularly the Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriac Christians’ and instructing the State Department to provide a point person overlooking their humanitarian, security, and development needs (P.L. 110-161; P.L. 110-252).³⁷ In FY2010, the House appropriated \$20 million for Iraq’s minorities, which was reduced to \$10 million in the Consolidated Appropriations Act (P.L. 111-366). The FY2012 appropriation did not contain new spending specific to minorities, although it included language stating the importance of ‘providing targeted assistance to ethno-religious minorities in Iraq to help ensure their continued survival’, mentioning the Nineveh Plain specifically and directing the State Department to submit a report on the assistance it provides consistent with Article 125 of the Iraqi Constitution, implicitly suggesting the government aid nation-building capacities for these minorities (P.L. 112-74).

On-the-ground assistance was an important factor to supporting the Assyrian and Chaldean claim to Nineveh. As Congressman Peters noted in speaking to Chaldean leadership in Detroit, he felt the ultimate goal of U.S. policy should be to see no more refugees through creating economic and safety conditions that allow families to return and remain in Iraq (Author’s Personal Notes April 2011). Atop immediate humanitarian needs for financial assistance, in the short-term economic assistance supported quality-of-life programs including employment and agricultural support.

³⁷ The success in securing appropriations is contrasted by the lax attention to expenditure oversight. Upon hearing from the diaspora and church leaders that funding was not reaching the ground, Congresswoman Eshoo, with seventeen Members of Congress, wrote the GAO requesting an investigation (Eshoo et al 2010b). The GAO reported in July 2012 that USAID was unable to account for how projects funded through the FY2008 allocation were in compliance, a deeply frustrating development (GAO 2012).

In the long-term, economic assistance was important to the autonomy argument: it retained population in Nineveh. This approach brings together both nationalists and integrationists: both find common ground in believing economic and social contributions from Assyrians and Chaldeans will further their cause, with the former believing it will demonstrate the sustainability and viability of a Nineveh Plain province in Assyrian and Chaldean hands, and the latter believing it will cultivate goodwill towards Assyrians and Chaldeans from the wider society.

Economic development of the Nineveh Plain became a point at which American and Iraqi officials likewise sought common ground with the diaspora. Officials, recognizing the diaspora's financial resources, encouraged diasporic investment in Iraq, framing this as a way for the diaspora to support its co-ethnics. This point was stressed by officials ranging from Ambassador Bodde to DAS Corbin to Usama al-Najafi, Speaker of Iraq's Parliament. As one example of such dialogue, Bodde stressed in the aforementioned meeting in Detroit that the Administration's policy is to create conditions that allow minorities to remain in Iraq, stating minorities in Nineveh tell him their principle concern is employment; somewhat dismissing questions regarding a province and security, he called on the diaspora to increase its charitable work and private investment, specifically within the agricultural sector, housing, and creation of small to medium sized-enterprises, factories, and other ventures that would create employment (Author's Personal Notes April 2011). This was generally received with frustration as attendees questioned how the diaspora can open businesses in Iraq when Chaldeans cannot open their existing shops and could not survive without remittances from the diaspora, as well as asking why the responsibility is on the diaspora to contribute when more is not being done by the Iraqi government itself.

To the Ambassador's point, however, there have been efforts beyond humanitarian assistance to support long-term economic development from diasporic actors who

grew increasingly frustrated with the lack of political movement. One such attempt was the Nineveh Plain Project, founded by Abbo, which became part of the AANC.

As he described:

After three or four years of doing the political lobbying work, and just realizing we're not going to get anywhere, we're spinning our wheels, I started to realize we have to come up with an alternative strategy. "Nation building" that didn't rely on politics – or at least not a purely political strategy for this. And it became clear to me we needed to come up with that strategy, and at the same time do it in a way that leveraged the fact that you were Assyrian, regardless of where you were in the world...the only thing that made sense was to sort of refocus on economic development...you take political stability en masse and you carve out de facto political security by essentially creating economic security. And to the extent that it's inefficient because you don't have pure political security, you just subsidize the inefficiency with money. That was sort of the idea behind Nineveh Project. Can we carve out essentially some areas within Iraq, obviously within the Nineveh Plains because that's where we have the best chance...You build a fortress around a town, and you build up a town in the middle of nowhere. And although you know it's sort of economically inefficient in the modern era, you essentially fund it with people's wealth from the diaspora (Abbo et al Interview).

The strategy he outlined fundamentally represents channeling existing diasporic nationalism into long-distance nationalism. It offers a concrete way to utilize diasporic resources to directly support the nation, here through development and entrenchment of the homeland by substituting economic power, which is available to the diaspora, for political or state power, which is not. The role for the diaspora as found here spans the distribution of the staunch support for long-distance nationalism for building a homeland to the integrationism of lessening social hostility through economic contributions. Recalled are similar Zionist efforts prior to the establishment of Israel to use diasporic resources to support Jewish emigration, settlement, and land development in Palestine, aided by programs like the Jewish National Fund, the Jewish Colonial Trust, and the Jewish Agency. The way AAS utilizes diasporic resources to support Assyrian-language schools and Sarkis Aghajan

utilizes KRG resources to support Christian housing developments, a centralized organization could do the same to create economic security, enabling Assyrians and Chaldeans to return to and stay in the *atra*. In this case, the state power Breuilly emphasized is reinterpreted as economic means.

The Project ultimately failed to take off, however, sidelined by several elements including a history of distrust within the diaspora, the belief funding should go either through existing channels, such as the Churches, or as a direct investment in Nineveh, and, as conveyed to Bodde, a belief the U.S. and Iraqi government bear the responsibility of assistance. That the Nineveh Project and discussions around projects like this have not borne fruit is again a testament to the challenges of elite competition, organizational jockeying, and the absence of a diasporic body, outside the Churches, widely accepted as a legitimate national representative.

Continued engagement has facilitated the learning curve in professionalizing the Chaldean and Assyrian lobby to better utilize its own resources to pressure the government. In Detroit, especially, the combination of high-ranking Members of Congress, notably Senator Levin and Congressmen Levin and Peters, and the entrepreneurial success of the local community have in recent years helped to attract increased political interest in Chaldean issues. Manna notes there has been a learning process, but finds these elements have contributed to increasing the resonance of the province within Washington:

Our objective has been in Washington either help us form a province or issue a million visas for the rest of them to come here - and so you know that wasn't going to happen...But we also realize that having meetings is one thing, and they don't really take you seriously until you start writing policy pieces and memos that they can study...First of all, on the U.S. side, this is new to so many in our community, the advocacy...There has never been a concentrated effort to try to influence or to educate. So that's part of it. The other part of it is we're just so small as community but, frankly, I think the Michigan community has had a tremendous amount of influence. We have

some very influential congressional members, and so it's those members that have been helping us. I think even from our angle, working with the State Department, it doesn't hurt to say hey, there's 150,000 Chaldeans here now that represent 15,000 business, these are the contributions they're making here (Manna Interview 2014).

Diasporic elites raised the profile of their policy goals by raising the profile of the diaspora's economic and social contributions in America. This represents a marked progression from before the Iraq War, when Assyrians and Chaldeans had to fight to be included with the opposition, to explain 'who' Assyrians and Chaldeans are by drawing upon their history of fighting against Hussein, to recent years as diasporic activists have gained political access by their influence as Americans and the recognition of their community. Such an evolution speaks to the changing geopolitics, certainly, but also to an evolution in diaspora-building and boundary-shifting amongst American political and social circles. Whilst there is much more ground to be gained, the saturation of Assyrian and Chaldean demands for a province in Washington is a measure of the dedicated work of activists over the past decade.

Professionalization of lobby efforts have given diasporic elites the opportunity to raise the issues directly to decision-makers, and brought politicians and Iraqi officials to Detroit, Chicago, and California to meet with diasporic elites directly. As Manna noted: 'Vice President Biden's team met with us...he told us personally that he's been talking to al-Maliki and to our friends in the Kurdish Regional Government...I think when al-Maliki visited the U.S. not too long ago, and met with President Obama, Vice President Biden, Senate Foreign Relations members, each one of them has brought up the Christian issue' (Manna Interview 2014). There is a growing sense amongst elites that after years of advocacy, explaining who Assyrians and Chaldeans are and that they are at risk in Iraq, such efforts are perhaps finally gaining traction. Jatou similarly noted targeted, policy-specific advocacy matters: 'When the Iraq War

started, we set up a project called the Iraq Sustainable Democracy Project...It had some good traction, good progress at the time. It was a project, which means it had a start and an end. We had some good millstones that we achieved. It did make an impact' (Jatou Interview).

A measure of political traction was realized in January 2014 when Maliki announced he and his Council of Ministers supported the creation of a Nineveh Plain province. Although it is more likely this surprising announcement was the product of political calculations and Iraq's upcoming elections, it nonetheless brought the endorsement of a province to the national, and international, stage (Ottaway 2014; AUA 2014a). The hurdles that remained were of course significant. In the absence of a legal framework for the process, the decision was instead put before parliamentary passage, which offered unfavorable prospects given that Parliament Speaker Usama al-Nujafi's brother was the Governor of the Nineveh Governorate and highly opposed to partitioning the Nineveh Plain region. The difficulty of approval was further rendered improbable in the events of 2014 and the tragic collapse of Mosul.

CONCLUSION: NATIONALISM IN RESPONSE TO EXCLUSION

A litany of factors brought focus to the need for a tangible, long-term solution to the plight of Iraq's Christian communities: the ethno-sectarian cleansing of Iraq's urban areas that resulted in mass displacement; the rash of church bombings and murders of priests; the land contestation with the KRG; the unwillingness by American and Iraqi officials to address the crisis through things like improved security measures; the indignity of being yet again victimized; and the sense that existing legal rights and constitutional provisions were not enough to compel security and equality. Iraq had undercut its guarantee of equal rights by institutionalizing the supremacy of Islam and shaping the Iraq state into one increasingly understood as both Arab and Muslim; it, and the U.S., simultaneously negated such hard-fought rights by

neglecting the plight of the minority populations and allowing exclusionary, constricting boundaries to harden.

Breuilly argues nationalism, in modernity, is about power, which is ultimately about control of the state (Breuilly 1993). The Assyrian and Chaldean crisis resulted from an absence of power to define national boundaries or control mechanisms of the state to otherwise aide their protection; the long-distance nationalism which resulted, and the ideologies and political demands it propogated, is ultimately about attaining power, in some capacity, for Assyrians and Chaldeans to remain in the homeland and be responsible for their affairs.

The pursuit of the nationalist option, as Gellner recognized, is confronted by multiple challenges and diasporic activists must work within the limitations of state borders. Activists address these challenges, including shared territory with other ethno-religious minority populations, land contestation from the KRG, and a hostile national and political environment, through pursuing policy that is workable and in line with the reality on the ground, drawing upon narratives of Nineveh as the ancient and still clung-to homeland, and justifying their claims through arguments of indigeneity as the descendants of ancient Mesopotamia. The long-standing work of diasporic elites in cultivating ideologies and narratives of the diasporic nation, reviving histories, language, and cultural symbols and practices, is well-suited to similarly cultivate political claims based on such narratives and fuel long-distance nationalism (Brass 1991).

Yet diasporic elites possess different interpretations of autonomy, of how it should be shaped in practice or if it should occur at all, that represent differences in national understandings and political calculations, as well as differences in how exclusive and permanent Iraq's own changing boundaries are understood to be. The unyielding stateless nationalism found within elements of the Assyrian diaspora has

undoubtedly shaped the claim for autonomy: Nineveh is a homeland that will preserve what it is to be Assyrian. Pragmatic activists who have come to support a Nineveh province do so more because of short- and long-term necessity than deep-seated nationalism. For Chaldeans, the absence of a territorially-focused nationalism allows instead for high adaptability; here, Nineveh is a harbour to shield and anchor their displaced or, alternatively, a 'ghetto' that breeds marginalization from the rest of society. Nationalism is not stagnant, but is responsive to changing national boundaries and political and social dynamics. Its current inclinations in the Assyrian and Chaldean community may therefore continue to evolve in response to ongoing challenges, politics, and necessity.

Autonomy is a complicated, ambiguous pursuit in which the diaspora does not act as a unified entity with a single voice, but a diverse population which actively contests different outcomes, pursues different paths simultaneously, and occasionally seeks unity - in short, it behaves as a nation with different policy goals and ideologies and assumptions of what is in the nation's best interest. It questions, and continues to question, the future of an *atra* that is simultaneously anchored in the Nineveh Plain and dispersed across the globe.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION: DIASPORIC ROOTS, ROUTES, AND BOUNDARIES

“In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there is such a thing as being too late.” We are too late to stop a war that should never have been fought; too late to undo the pain of battle, the anguish of so many families.’
-Barack Obama (2007)

The Assyrian and Chaldean story in America has spanned a century. It is not a story of a singular trajectory from the *atra* to America, but one of an *atra* dating centuries that spanned many roots across the Middle East, intertwining as routes brought immigrants and refugees to America, intersecting and dissecting again as populations relocate, new waves of migration bring renewal, identities are lost and found and divided. New roots in America are themselves changing as cities change, declining industrial centres like Flint and Gary are left for the sun of California or the economic opportunity of Chicago, creeping urban poverty in Detroit pushes Chaldeans into suburbia, and urban boomtowns like Phoenix and Vegas attract new refugees and next generations of Assyrian and Chaldean Americans. For the past decade, this has occurred against an ever-worsening crisis in the homeland, as a war that promised democracy and renewal instead wrought conflict and persecution.

With the unrooting of displacement and the permanency of resettlement, the Assyrian and Chaldean nation is fundamentally changed. The new *atra* elites create in diaspora is instead extra-territorial, balancing integration in American society with maintenance of identity and cultural elements across a diverse diasporic membership; this is both made possible and challenged by the open, multi-ethnic yet homogenizing nature of American society. In a way, this *atra* has become a new homeland: it is not a shared source of roots and history for the whole of the nation, but is undeniably the territory that shapes the lived experience of diaspora for its members and within which the future of this diasporic nation is imagined.

The diaspora, to again borrow Tölölyan's terminology, is 'a special category of ethnicized dispersion' shaped by a 'paradoxical combination of localism and transnationalism' (Tölölyan 2012: 7, 13). The diasporic nation is, like any nation, an imagined community, a 'deep horizontal comradeship', but one that is caged by state borders, frequently intermixed with other peoples and cultures, and yet, undeniably, a singular community (Anderson 1991: 8). As this thesis contributes, diaspora is also a product of boundary-making, formed through the boundaries encountered and negotiated upon resettlement outside the homeland, within which a diasporic nation is built. This understanding thus brings focus to the relationality and socially-constructed nature of diaspora: diaspora is not simply the corollary to displacement.

The research presented in this dissertation offers a unique examination of the contemporary Assyrian- and Chaldean-American diaspora, a little-studied population, and contributes a much-needed understanding of the Assyrian-Chaldean dichotomy. Examined herein are the actions taken by diasporic elites to build a diasporic nation that is rooted in America and indelibly intertwined with the national homeland and Assyrians and Chaldeans across the globe, and how the Iraq War affected such nation-building. This study builds upon understandings of the insecurity of stateless diasporas, demonstrating that within a porous society, diasporic continuity is not guaranteed, brought into being and sustained by the interaction between state and diasporic boundaries, and by the dedicated work of diasporic elites to build institutions, narratives, and nationalisms. The diasporic nation is made through this ongoing process, and is made a part of the global Assyrian and Chaldean nation through its transnational activism and sustained ties to the homeland and Assyrians and Chaldeans living elsewhere.

The findings of this research, in addition to contributing to Assyrian and Chaldean studies, thus contribute to diasporic literature regarding the roles, motivations, and

ideologies of diasporic elites who help make the diaspora: in essence, it aims to expand understanding of why diaspora persists. The pursuit of Assyrian and Chaldean diasporic nation-building as explored in this dissertation, from building a diasporic nation in the U.S. to the pursuit of a self-administered homeland in Iraq, thus offers an empirical basis to answer to the research questions posed and draw out the key themes of its findings.

Diasporic elites hold a central role in building a diasporic nation.

Diasporic elites are the diaspora's nationalists, the ones dedicated to its existence and longevity, who protect culture, language, and histories, and transfer them to the next generations. As demonstrated through the Assyrian and Chaldean experience, diasporas are built and sustained by the work of dedicated activists, reliant upon individuals who chose to identify with and care about the diasporic collective (Tölölyan 2012). This work is situated and ideological, local and transnational, proactive and reactive. The role of elites encompasses the boundary-making and institution-building that shape the local diasporic experience, and the formation of nationalism and political activism on the diaspora's behalf.

Whilst the type of society diasporic members encounter upon resettlement, whether a society whose boundaries are open and porous and into which members can cross or a society whose boundaries are closed and exclusionary and from which members remain isolated, is outside the control of diasporic elites, elites play an important role in working within or pushing against the boundaries encountered. This dissertation contributes to understanding how elites consciously and unconsciously navigate these barriers and the factors which influence boundary construction: as examined in Chapter IV, upon arrival in the U.S., Assyrians and Chaldeans encountered a state whose citizenship boundaries were easily crossed by virtue of American immigration policies, and whose national boundaries were crossable by their ethnic, religious, and cultural attributes. Indeed, such porous boundaries facilitate individual crossing and,

as Ishaya observed, assimilation was prevalent amongst the first waves of migrants, remaining a challenge through today despite the development of diasporic boundaries and institutions that have occurred in recent decades (Ishaya 2003). Assyrian and Chaldean diasporic actors frequently noted in interviews that cultivating diasporic memory and maintenance is an ongoing effort and the fear of disappearance is pervasive. However, if not for the work of diasporic elites to build institutions and claim the diaspora as a group on behalf of which political claims are staked, the diaspora may never form or, in such an open society, may again melt into obscurity a generation or two after resettlement.

Elites, as Wimmer described of boundary theory, therefore negotiate the cultural diacritica that define ethnic and diasporic boundaries in relation to surrounding society (Wimmer 2009). They act as institution-builders, pursuing a measure of institutional completeness to maintain boundaries, help capture diasporic membership, and make the diaspora relevant for its members (Breton 1964; Stinchcombe 1965). As Chapter IV further describes, through the institutions they build, elites provide services to new refugees, steering their membership in the diaspora; provide organizational outlets, such as cultural and professional affiliations; and curate nationalism and political goals for the diaspora and, when practicable, to the homeland. It is through successful institution-building and the tight diasporic networks developed in cities like Detroit that the diaspora establishes its presence and finds a way to balance integration without assimilation. This marks a significant contribution to understanding the resonance of Chaldean identity in Detroit and, increasingly, San Diego, and a contribution to better understanding the relationship between institution-building and diasporic maintenance generally.

This research thus builds upon the findings of existing theory that the role of diasporic elites in nation-building is essential and formative, complementing Tölölyan's assertion that diasporas must include an element of 'doing', as well as the

models of Sheffer and Shain in which a few, dedicated core members are regularly engaged on the diaspora's behalf and plan for its future (Tölölyan 1996; Sheffer 2003: 53). It further compliments the boundary theories of Wimmer, Brubaker, and Barth that elites are the boundary-makers, reaffirming the socially constructed and situational nature of diaspora (Wimmer 2013; Brubaker 2004; Barth 1969). However, it also contributes to better understanding this role of elites through the use of boundary theory, enabling examination of the social and political dynamics diasporic elites confront, how they negotiate diasporic boundaries in relation to these dynamics, and why they pursue certain boundary-making or boundary-shifting strategies.

This dissertation also adds to existing scholarship on diaspora by positioning elite activism as a nationalism-driven endeavour. Nationalism is too often overlooked in diaspora studies; and diaspora is too often absent from nationalism studies, existing outside the singular nation-state relationship and not always in pursuit of territory or statehood. It is suggested herein that nationalism is essential to diasporic elite action, both as a motivating ideology and an element that is cultivated and drawn upon by elites in furtherance of political goals. Diasporic nationalism is evident in diasporic institution-building and boundary negotiation; it is further evident as long-distance nationalism that makes political claims of the Iraqi state in the interest of Assyrians and Chaldeans in Iraq and of the greater Assyrian and Chaldean nation. Diasporic nationalism differs from traditional nationalism because it seeks an extra-territorial nation; here, power is instead pursued and contested through the diasporic structure – through leadership, public representation, establishing cultural diacritica that define the diaspora, and making political demands on the diaspora's behalf to protect the diasporic nation and contribute to its well-being.

Boundary-making is essential and inseparable from its American context.

Diasporic boundary-making is a core contribution of this research to diaspora studies. Boundary-making occurs in relation to the myriad social and ethnic groups that comprise American society. The cultural diacritica that define the diasporic boundary inform external understandings of the diaspora, of 'who' the diaspora are, and simultaneously inform internal understandings of who 'we' are. The American context is therefore formative to making the diasporic nation, whilst at the same time challenges its prospects for longevity as part of a diverse yet culturally homogenizing society.

Residing in a state in which ethnic diversity and civic engagement constitute its social fabric presents few barriers to diaspora-building. Unencumbered by the well-founded fear of asserting their ethnic identity, forming civil society organizations, or exercising national claims prevalent in Ba'ath-era Iraq, diasporic elites are able to expand their institutional and political presence in America and make political demands on behalf of the diaspora and the homeland. Assyrians and Chaldeans have thus come to exercise political demands as Americans within the American political system regarding local and transnational issues. Diasporic elites mobilized to demand recognition in the U.S. Census and the Iraqi constitution alike; both demands speak to this duality of diaspora and the multiple boundaries diasporic elites navigate. The ease of making such demands reflects the openness of American society, the permissiveness of ethnic lobbying, and the ease of access to elected officials and policy-makers (Saideman 2002; Shain 1999). Diasporic claims take place within the state and are thus also shaped by its legal and political boundaries: underscored here is the nature of state caging (Mann 1993: 250-252). These findings thus challenge theory that positions diaspora as operating outside the state or that discounts the continued salience of state borders. Diasporic consciousness and imagining of the homeland are essential to diaspora; however, as demonstrated through the Assyrian and Chaldean case, the reality of the diasporic nation is that it exists within the United States: the diaspora itself is imagined as bounded within

American borders and its development and lived experiences occur within those borders as part of American society.

At the same time, Assyrians and Chaldeans encounter few barriers to assimilation, and the ease of integration poses a fundamental challenge to boundary and diasporic retention. The dispersal of Assyrians and Chaldeans across the American landscape further challenges the ability to sustain membership: there is no mechanism to compel allegiance or membership in the diaspora. Contributed through this research is a better understanding of the strategies diasporic elites pursue to negotiate social boundaries: in this case, a strategy of shifting boundaries to facilitate integration into American society whilst retaining enough cultural diacritica to retain the diaspora. The contrast between individual boundary crossing, in which an individual adopts cultural practices and is able to 'become' American, and boundary shifting, in which local society changes its understanding of who is a member, is consequential to diasporic formation: the former is individual assimilation, from which the individual often ends membership in the diaspora; the latter is a social shifting that recognizes the diaspora's collective integration (Wimmer 2013: 58-63). The existential uncertainty and anxiety that comes with statelessness reaffirms the need for strong and diverse diasporic institutions, nationalism that provides purpose, and flexible but resonant diasporic boundaries.

Diasporic elites are not always successful in boundary making or maintenance. The influence of the American context is exemplified when considering the role of diasporic religious institutions. The Chaldean Church and the Church of the East are intertwined with the Assyrian and Chaldean nation, and integrate well with the religious nature of American society that encourages Church membership. This is contrasted with the Assyrian diasporic experience in Sweden, where Sweden's highly secular nature is waning the importance of the Church of the East, which may hinder boundary maintenance for the next generations of Swedish Assyrians (Cetrez 2011).

The early decades of Assyrian immigration demonstrated that although religious institutions alone were not enough to retain the diaspora, the Churches nonetheless are an essential layer of diasporic boundary formation, a *raison d'être* for many in the diaspora, that works in concert with other cultural and institutional factors to cultivate the diasporic boundary – particularly within the Chaldean community (Breton 1964). The myriad roles of the Church, including of Church officials as active nation-builders, as presented in this research thus builds upon findings recognizing the importance of religion to diaspora, particularly when there is such an overlap as found here between religion and identity (Vertovec 2000a; Cohen 1997).

This dissertation, as outlined in Chapter IV, observes two trends in Assyrian and Chaldean diasporic boundary-making in the U.S.: the development of a heterogeneous ethno-national Assyrian identity; and the development of an ethno-sectarian Chaldean identity, which challenges Assyrian as an all-encompassing ethnicity. As Chapters V and VI further develop, the foundation of these ideologies shaped the political demands put forth by diasporic elites on behalf of the greater Assyrian and Chaldean nation, from the demand for recognition and ethnic-specific rights to the demand for territorial autonomy. The Assyrian diaspora transitioned from close entwinement with the Church of the East in the early 20th century to an ethnic focus that emphasizes the common ethnicity, history, language, and culture of the people belonging to the Church of the East, Chaldean, and Syriac faiths. This transition was significant to nation-building because it provided a common narrative to the diverse, scattered population in America, and made ethnicity salient to combat Arabization policies and continued marginalization in the homeland.

Chaldean boundaries, by contrast, transitioned from being defined solely by membership in the Chaldean Church to encompassing ethnic and sectarian criteria. The Chaldean Church and Chaldean civic organizations shaped this integration in pursuit of boundary-shifting, developing the narrative and structure upon which the

basis of Chaldean identity and communal ties lie today. The making of Chaldeanness was thus the byproduct of a host of external and internal factors: the ecclesiastical divide created the first boundary upon which geography, national forces, cultural diacritica, and political claims later built. Atop the inherent weakness of statelessness and dispersal, with no means to create authority or effectively transcend internal divisions, Chaldean migration from Iraq to Detroit and later San Diego in turn created a Chaldean-specific context of boundary-making in relation to these localities and existing ethnic groups, a process which imbued Chaldeanness with ethnic understandings. Politicization surrounding the Iraq War brought identity claims into the political sphere, increasing the salience and endurance of this boundary and Chaldean identity itself. These factors have not yet, however, fissured the internal Chaldean-Assyrian boundary, and perhaps that is not the intent of most Chaldean elites, many of whom still believe Assyrians and Chaldeans constitute one ethnic group and one nation. Yet there is a commitment amongst Chaldean elites for boundary maintenance within the greater context of the Assyrian-Chaldean ethnicity, one which is fluid and relational but nonetheless present.

The significance of Chaldean identity, in addition to aiding understanding of the complicated, diverse makeup of this nation, is its resonance against Assyrianism reinforces of the socially-constructed nature of diaspora and identity. This example contributes to a more general understanding of the ways in which differences in historical narratives, cultural attributes, religion, and other social factors can be given social relevance by diasporic elites and be used to reshape boundaries between and within social groups.

As this dissertation therefore argues, the locality of diaspora matters to diasporic boundary-formation, and thus to diasporic national development. State and local boundaries provide the context from which new roots are formed, new cultural

ascriptions are amassed, and political demands for the diaspora and its future are claimed.

Changes in the homeland shape diasporic nation-building whilst underscoring the distance of diaspora.

Changes in the homeland, depending on the depth and impact of the change, can recast national boundaries and, in turn, spur diasporic mobilization. The salience of diasporic identity and membership is fluid, gaining relevance in times of crisis or opportunity. The Iraq War was an extraordinary moment that indelibly changed the Assyrian and Chaldean nation. Offered herein is consequentially a study of a diaspora as the boundaries between diaspora and the homeland underwent significant change and an existential crisis soon emerged; this presents a significant study into the relationship between diasporas and homelands and how diasporic mobilization unfolds when such change occurs. The war, and the ethno-sectarian conflict that followed, gave rise to concerted political activism from the diaspora as a nationally-focused lobby. The importance of the homeland in the Assyrian and Chaldean case is reaffirmed by this activism: the homeland is the unifying root of the diaspora, and what happens there affects all its branches. However, at the same time, such activism and its potential outcomes reaffirmed the diaspora is no longer of the homeland but separated by state borders, acting instead as long-distance nationalists towards Iraq and as an ethnic lobby within the U.S. The utility of boundary theory as proposed by this thesis facilitates examination of the social, political, and geographic factors that change boundaries, and thus allows a better understanding of why diasporic elites mobilize and why they assert particular political demands.

The experiences of the past century, as outlined in Chapter III, continue to frame Assyrian and Chaldean perceptions and national ideologies, which in turn frame how elites interpret and react to Iraq's changing boundaries. The devastation of the WWI-

era genocide gave rise to a sustained effort to create an Assyrian homeland predicated on international recognition that Assyrians are a nation deserving of self-rule. The failure of this effort bears impact on Assyrian national memories still today; the consequences of such national assertions may continue to shape Chaldean ideology and integrationism. As examined in Chapter V, removal of the Hussein dictatorship brought forth a new opportunity to shape Iraq's national boundaries as a multi-ethnic, multi-sectarian state. The promise of democratization mobilized Assyrian and, to a lesser extent, Chaldean diasporic elites to secure representation in planning for a democratic post-war Iraq, thereby ensuring Assyrians and Chaldeans would be recognized as an equal part of Iraq and their cultural, linguistic, and national rights would be officially protected.

Rising ethno-sectarian conflict fundamentally changed this policy focus, marking the turn to the Nineveh Plain explored in Chapter VI. Diasporic elites mobilized in response to the shifting boundaries of the Iraqi state and the humanitarian crisis it wrought, boundaries which increasingly defined national membership along Arab and Islamic criteria, fiercely excluding Assyrians and Chaldeans from membership. Hundreds of thousands of Assyrians and Chaldeans were displaced in the violence and repression that resulted. The outcomes of exclusion remain, as Gellner theorized, the choice to flee, assimilate, or pursue a nationalist option (Gellner 1983). As this research demonstrates, the diaspora's resulting political demands were not uniform, but parallel these choices: to continue to pursue integration into Iraq, working against national boundaries to reassert the constitutional promises of democracy and minority rights; to pursue resettlement into diaspora, providing safety but permanently decreasing the population remaining in the homeland; and to pursue territorial autonomy within the Nineveh Plain.

To some, particularly Chaldean actors, the initial response to these boundary shifts was to recognize refugees had no immediate prospect of returning to Iraq. Activists,

particularly the Chaldean Federation of America and its affiliates, lobbied the U.S. government to increase refugee admissions to bring displaced Assyrians and Chaldeans into the diasporic community (Kassab Interview 2013, 2012; Barka Interview). It is here that Chaldean activism expanded outside the Church and asserted a Chaldean voice as an ethnic lobby. Their advocacy helped change American policy and brought tens of thousands of refugees to safety in the U.S.

At the same time, others worried resettlement could endanger the nation's long-term survival; that the risk of assimilation in the West and population loss in an unfriendly homeland created an existential crisis (Jatou Interview; Tamraz Interview). As a long-term policy, however, refugee admissions are not a permanent solution because the rates of resettlement are simply incapable of meeting need and do not help those who wish to stay. Many diasporic elites, including many who support refugee admissions, have turned their focus to enabling Assyrians and Chaldeans to return to and remain safely in Iraq: for many, this became understood as the nationalist option - the right of Assyrian and Chaldean self-governance in their homeland. The findings presented regarding this trajectory mark a significant contribution to Assyrian and Chaldean scholarship.

Long-distance nationalism for autonomy has existed in the diaspora since Assyrians and Chaldeans became a diaspora, but it was with the post-war crisis that autonomy became the foremost diasporic goal. Here, diasporic nation-building became quintessential nation-building, aiming to make congruent the Assyrian and Chaldean nation and a political unit over the Nineveh Plain (Gellner 1). The amassing of widespread diasporic support for the Nineveh Plain province and the persistent advocacy on its behalf is arguably the diaspora's most significant policy advancement in a century.

Yet also evident through diasporic mobilization is that neither the removal of the Ba'ath regime nor the crisis it produced, to date, have reduced the salience of the intra-Assyrian-Chaldean boundary. In some ways, salience increased because identity now carries political meaning. Aside from the 2000 U.S. Census, the war was amongst the first times Chaldean elites made political claims to a separate Chaldean ethnicity, and it was the first time such claims were made in concert with securing Chaldean-specific rights and recognition within the state. Whilst not all Chaldean elites believe Chaldeans constitute a unique ethnic group, those who maintain Assyrians and Chaldeans are one people still assert the importance of the Chaldean identity, highlighting a key factor in its continued salience: those who identify as Chaldean do not wish to see their identity disappear. Thus, claims for recognition are in part motivated by a fear of disappearance or being rendered insignificant, a reaction to Assyrian nationalism as much as Arabization and its Iraqi Christian label, as well as the risk of dilution into Catholicism in America.

The relationship between the homeland and the diaspora again confirms the effects of state caging (Mann 250-252). Although diasporas are transnational, their political reality is fundamentally local, restricted by state borders. As evident with the Iraq War, diasporic elites generally do not claim a right of return or aspire to live in an Assyrian state; rather, changes in the homeland reaffirm the diaspora is very much a diaspora, and has been shaped in ways by routes and resettlement that the homeland has not. Indeed, emergent amongst some Chaldean elites is a belief that a diasporic nation, formed around a strong Church, could provide the institutional and ideological completeness associated with the homeland. This presents a stark point of contrast with the diaspora's long-distance nationalists, who fear assimilation is unavoidable without roots anchored in Nineveh.

This dissertation thus draws from the theories of Breuilly and Gellner, which in different ways frame nationalism as a political endeavour in pursuit of control of the

state, whilst repositioning these theories in relation to diaspora, which, in contrast to traditional nations, lack territory, exist outside the homeland, and often lack standing to effectively exercise political demands (Breuilly 1993; Gellner 1983). Diasporic nation-building, like the nature of diaspora itself, is thus more complicated than a nation making claims where it is indigenous. Instead, it is argued actors pursue diasporic nationalism to assert the diaspora's own political claims and nation-build in the state of resettlement, and pursue long-distance nationalism to assert claims for the nation's rights in the homeland, when the diaspora has a homeland.

As evident in this study, despite the diaspora's permanence outside the homeland, such national rights, whether framed as autonomy or as more measured claims for liberal rights and protections of the state, are understood as aiding the preservation of Assyrians and Chaldeans everywhere. As is further evident by the mobilization surrounding the removal of the Ba'ath regime, the closure or openness of a state, reflecting the nature of its political system and national boundaries, is determinative of the ability of diasporic elites to make political demands and the nature of their activism.

IMPLICATIONS

Voluntary and forced migrations over the past century have given rise to the number of displaced peoples and nations who consider themselves diasporas. As Anderson observed of the phenomena of long-distance nationalism, almost all migrants carry with them citizenship, belonging to somewhere and yet no longer belonging (Anderson 2001). This reflects the double consciousness Gilroy described, of being neither fully of the homeland of ancestry nor of the state of residence (Gilroy 1993). Diasporic nation-building thus imposes 'an imaginary coherence on the experience of dispersal and fragmentation'; it builds an imagined yet lived diasporic community (Hall 1990: 224). Yet, as this dissertation shows, diaspora is more than a

consciousness, imagining, or automatic byproduct of displacement: it is fluid and relational, an ever-evolving result of changing local, state, and national boundaries brought forth as a displaced population negotiates its place in a new society.

Presented in this dissertation is a unique study into the Assyrian- and Chaldean-American diaspora and the role of its elites in imagining, building, and sustaining the diasporic nation at an ongoing, pivotal moment in the greater nation's existence. This study offers an important contribution to literature on diaspora studies and to the nascent field of Assyrian and Chaldean scholarship. Demonstrated herein is the applicability of boundary theory to examining the local and transnational, internal and external dynamics of diaspora, and the multitude of routes and roots contained therein.

The findings of this work present several avenues for further research. Future studies can benefit from using boundary theory to examine non-elite perspectives and experiences of diaspora, contributing to a better understanding of how lay individuals understand and negotiate social boundaries, and how diasporic boundaries are maintained despite challenges by competing individual identities and assimilation. Comparative study between the Assyrian and Chaldean experience in the U.S. with the diaspora in other states would improve insight into this nation and how state borders shape diaspora. Similarly, comparison between this diaspora and other diasporas in the U.S. could expand understanding of the American diasporic experience.

It is argued from these findings that the prevailing typologies of diaspora theory are therefore inadequate to understanding the complexity of the Assyrian and Chaldean case. Assyrians, in isolation, present a compelling argument for a triadic victim diaspora, pushed from the homeland through waves of violent exclusion and retaining a nationalism dedicated to securing the Assyrian national existence, a self-

ruled territory in the homeland (Safran 1991). Chaldeans, in isolation, present a compelling argument for a middleman minority diaspora, cultivating an entrepreneurial mentality that lends itself to finding an economic niche, favouring integration and eschewing demands for self-rule or territory (Gellner 1983: 101-109; Bonacich 1973; Blalock 1967). Certainly these differences reflect, and have lent themselves, to shaping the intra-national boundary. Yet such typologies overlook that it is one diaspora, with one homeland, one language, shared holidays, symbols, and cultural practices. Moreover, typologies overlook the complexities within each community, shaped by different routes and boundary creations upon resettlement: national ideologies and diasporic experiences are hardly uniform across the Chaldean community nor the Assyrian community.

This dissertation instead finds diaspora is a continuous, evolving product of boundary-making, often the result of diasporic elite mobilization. Diaspora is a nation not simply born of displacement, but formed through social boundaries encountered and made upon resettlement outside the homeland. Diasporas are affected by their ever-changing boundaries in relation to local society, their state of resettlement, the homeland, and within the diaspora itself. Boundary theory therefore offers an essential framework to examine the complexities and varieties of diaspora, and the diversity within a single diaspora. This approach enables insight into when and why diasporic identity becomes salient, and when and why mobilization occurs. As Wimmer described in relation to ethnicity, boundary theory does not explain what diaspora is, but *why* it is (Wimmer 2008).

This dissertation also positions diasporic nationalism as an essential component of diasporic formation and continuance. The existence of a diasporic nation is precarious: it is extra-territorial but caged by state borders, often intertwined with other populations and ethnic groups where risks of marginalization and assimilation are alternatively present; and yet, despite this vulnerability, there is no shortage of

populations eager to claim their place as diasporas. The resiliency of these extra-territorial nations after displacement is something of a paradox in nationalism studies, challenging the traditional nation-state framework. It is thus argued nationalism is essential to the diasporic nation: it underlies the commitment of diasporic elites to the diaspora, providing ideological and political purpose and planning for the nation's future; and it is instrumentalized by elites in pursuit of political claims to mobilize support and legitimize such claims. Diasporic nationalism, and long-distance nationalism toward the homeland, are intertwined with boundary formation and diasporic national development as diasporic elites mobilize to pressure boundary change or in response to changing boundaries.

Epilogue

The tyranny of ISIL that befell northern Iraq has been fierce and catastrophic, and some of its damage irreparable. It is too late to save the lives lost, that will be lost in the fight to reclaim and protect villages; it is too late to undo the years of neglect by the Bush and Obama Administrations as the Assyrian and Chaldean population in Iraq was reduced by hundreds of thousands; it is too late to repair the targeted destruction of ancient artifacts and churches, proof of the once great Assyrian civilization in Nineveh, of the millennia for which Christianity was carried by devoted adherents, for whom Christianity in turn offered a beacon of hope.

It is hard to say much about hope in Iraq these days. The population, the *atra*, and the years of work for recognition and rights and autonomy were rendered asunder in one fell swoop. Worry for family and the community in Iraq is paramount, inextricable from worry for the nation's survival. Churches can be rebuilt, homes reclaimed, life resumed, with a resiliency that has characterized Assyrians and Chaldeans for millennia. Yet, certainly, the *atra* is again changed. It has been said the Kurds have no friends but the mountains; Assyrians and Chaldeans, brutally

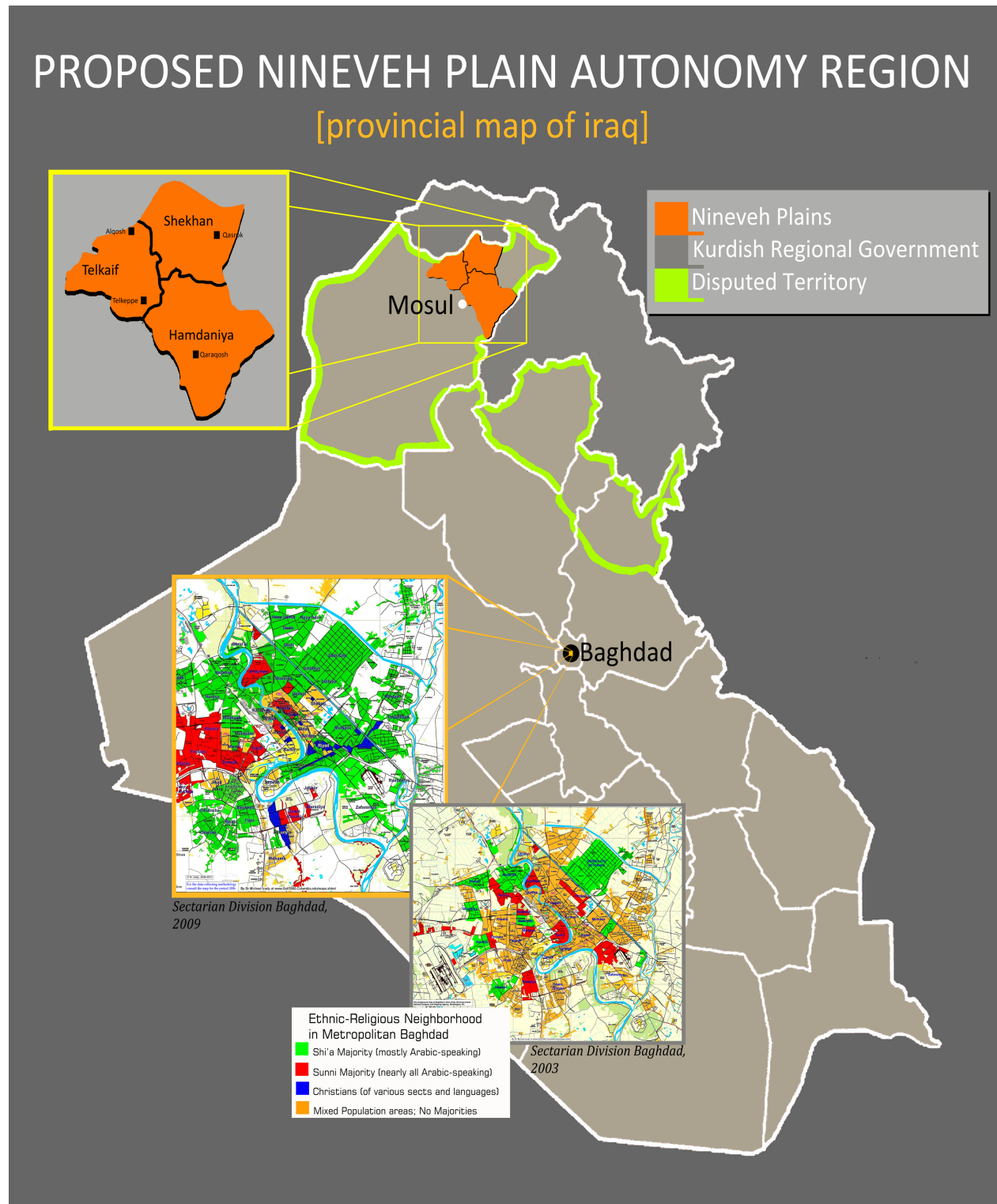
forced from the mountains a century ago, have nowhere to flee but into Iraq's Kurdish region or into diaspora. National roots are thus increasingly stretched as boundary closure continues to push away the population, and geography and time further distance the diaspora and its next generations from the homeland. The Assyrian and Chaldean nation is consequentially becoming rooted outside its Nineveh homeland as diasporic elites craft new roots in states with open, porous boundaries. The utility of boundary theory is evident, offering examination into the contrast between these new and ancient homelands, and what it means for the future of the nation as displacement, insecurity, and boundary closure persist.

Yet still there are glimmers of hope. If anything is learned from the Assyrian and Chaldean experience over the past century, it is unlikely an Israel will be gifted from the international community. But the Assyrian and Chaldean experience is profoundly a story of faith and resilience against overwhelming circumstance. There are two *atras* before diasporic elites, both of which are vulnerable and both of which carry hope for the nation's future. The first is the *atra* in Iraq, made vulnerable by this violent exclusion and closing boundaries. Here, hope is tied to the political demand that, with the defeat of ISIL, Assyrians and Chaldeans be granted a measure of self-rule over the Nineveh Plain, aided by international protection for a time, to secure the nation's roots and existence therein. This reflects a quintessential long-distance nationalism, a territorial nationalism that characterizes so much of nationalism theory, fueled by the failure of successive Iraqi governments to recognize and protect Assyrian and Chaldean rights and the existential fear of losing the nation's homeland; its anchor. The second is the still-developing *atra* in diaspora, made vulnerable by the risk of assimilation and disappearance into America's porous boundaries. Here, hope is that a resilient, lasting new homeland can persist in an open and multiethnic – albeit homogenizing - society. This reflects a quintessential diasporic nationalism, the belief that integration without cultural disappearance is possible with effective nation-building and boundary-shifting of local society. This

also reflects perhaps a quintessentially American optimism, a belief the American experiment offers lasting hope to a displaced nation.

Diaspora, indeed, is born of displacement and made of constant change. Diasporic boundaries are reshaped as society evolves and populations move, as events abroad recast national and political goals in diaspora. The work of diasporic elites, much like the work of any nationalist, is similarly a constant task of boundary negotiation and maintenance. If nothing else, as one Assyrian activist in London recently described, the diaspora holds the ability, and a responsibility, to serve as the bearer of culture and history, protecting that which make the Assyrian and Chaldean nation until it can be transferred back to the homeland (Ewan 2015). The crisis posed by ISIL and the response yet to be undertaken by Iraq and the international community bear the inextricable weight of history: what is done here will in many ways decide the destiny of the Assyrian and Chaldean people. In the continued face of uncertainty, diasporic elites thus work to build a semblance of an *atra* that can endure in diaspora; their work recalls the words of Langston Hughes, 'We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how' (Hughes 1926).

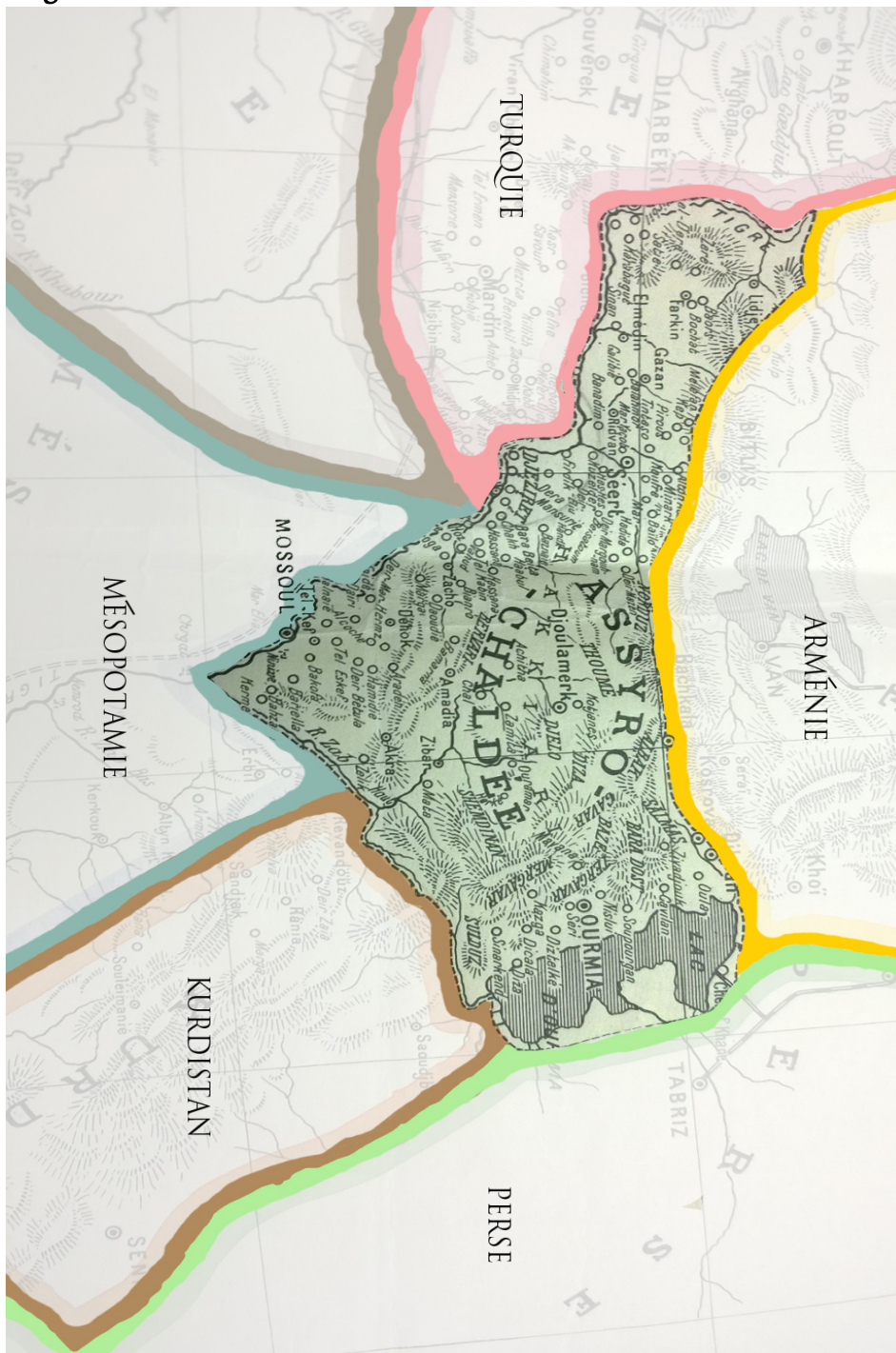
**APPENDIX I:
Contemporary Provincial Map of Iraq, ft. Proposed Nineveh Plain
Province and Ethno-Sectarian Changes to Baghdad**



[map credits] Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, 'Iraq: Administrative Divisions' *University of Texas Libraries*: lib.utexas.edu/maps/atlas_middle_east/iraq_divisions.jpg; Izady, Michael (2009)

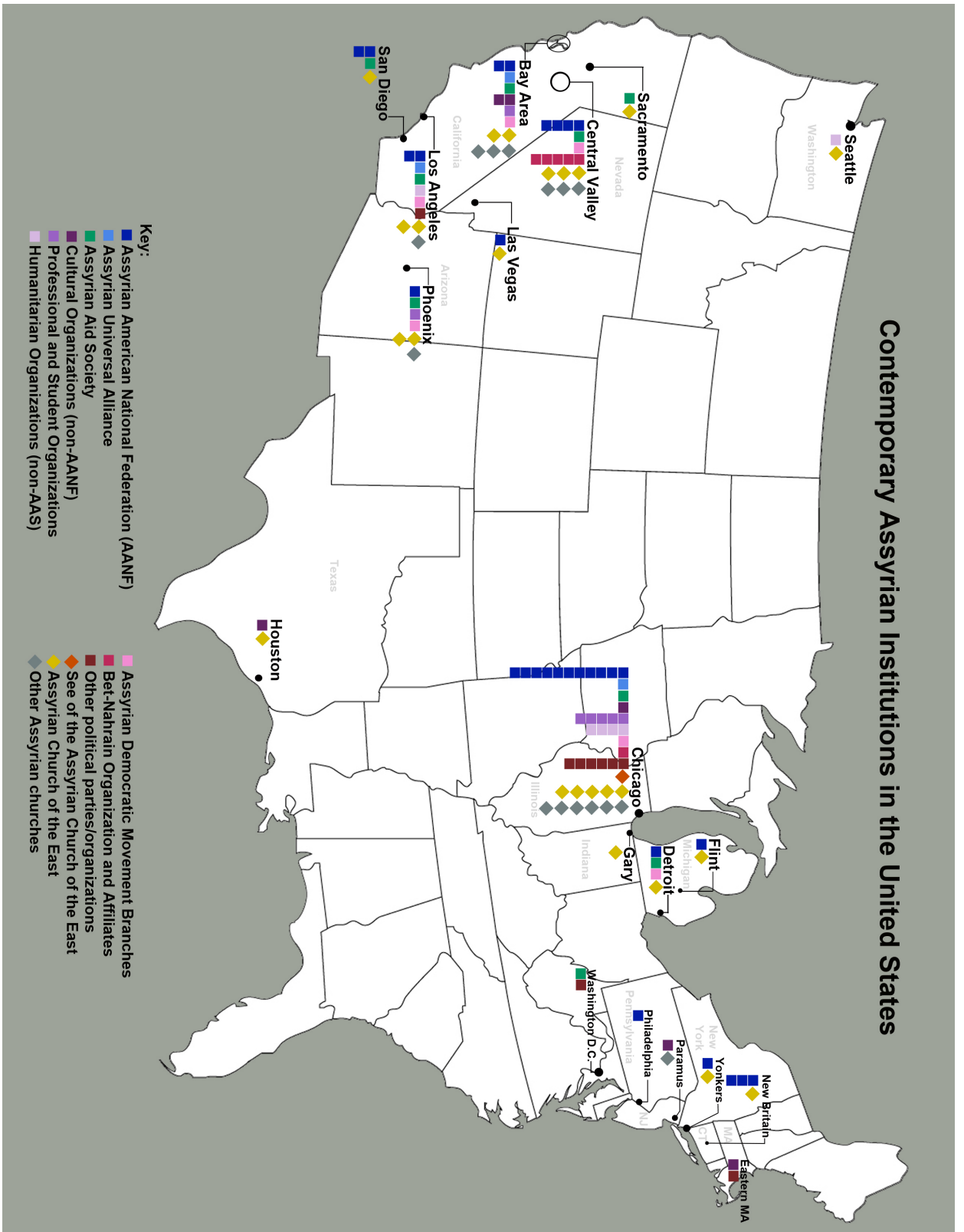
'Baghdad, Iraq, Ethnic composition in 2003' and 'Baghdad, Iraq, Ethnic composition by the end of 2009' *The Gulf/2000 Project*: gulf2000.columbia.edu/maps.shtml; Cannistra, Mary Kate (2008, November 23) 'Kurdistan Regional Government Boundary' *The Washington Post*: washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/graphic/2008/11/23/GR2008112300231.html?sid=ST2008112300239&s_pos=list; *Iraq Sustainable Democracy Project* (2008) 'Proposing the Operationalization of the Art. 125 Solution', pp 8: iraqdemocracyproject.org/pdf/NPAU%20-%20policy%20brief.pdf.

**APPENDIX II:
Map of Proposed Assyro-Chaldée State, 1922, as submitted by
Gen. Agha Petros to the Lausanne Conference**



Map Credit: Petros, Agha (1922) 'Autonomy for Assyrian Christians (Claims of Assyro-Chaldeans)', Eastern Conference Lausanne, F.O./839/23

APPENDIX III: Diagram of Assyrian Institutions in the U.S.



List of represented institutions:

Arizona: Assyrian Aid Society; Assyrian American Cultural Organization of Arizona; Assyrian Democratic Movement; Assyrian Student Association of Arizona; Mar Yosip Assyrian Church of the East; St. George Ancient Church of the East; St. Peters Assyrian Church of the East

California:

Organizations - American Mesopotamian Organization; Assyrian Aid Society (Central Valley, Los Angeles, Sacramento, Santa Clara, San Diego); Assyrian American Association of Modesto; Assyrian American Association of San Diego; Assyrian American Association of San Jose; Assyrian American Association of Southern California; Assyrian American Benevolent Association; Assyrian American Civic Club of Turlock; Assyrian Athletic Club of Modesto; Assyrian Broadcast Network; Assyrian Broadcasting Radio Station of Bet-Nahrain; Assyrian Club of Urhay; Assyrian Community Center of San Francisco; Assyrian Cultural Center of Bet-Nahrain; Assyrian Democratic Movement (Los Angeles, Modesto, San Jose); Assyrian National Congress; Assyrian Television Broadcasting Station of Bet-Nahrain; Assyrian Student Association at San Jose State University; Assyrian Universal Alliance (Los Angeles, San Jose); Bet Nahrain Democratic Party; Gishru: Birthright Assyria; Chaldean Assyrian American Association of San Diego; Help to Heal (formerly Assyrian Medical Society)

Churches - Ancient Church of the East Mar Shaleeta Church; Assyrian Evangelical Church of San Jose; Assyrian Evangelical Church of Turlock; Assyrian Pentecostal Church of San Jose; Assyrian Pentecostal Church of Turlock; Assyrian Presbyterian Church of San Jose; Mar Addai Assyrian Church of the East; Mar Gewargis Assyrian Church of the East; Mar Narsai Assyrian Church of the East; Mar Yosip Assyrian Church of the East; Mar Zaia Assyrian Church of the East; Mart Mariam Assyrian Church of the East; St. John's Assyrian United Presbyterian Church of Turlock; St. Mary's Assyrian Church of the East; St. Paul Assyrian Church of the East; St. Rabban Hormizid Assyrian Church of the East

Connecticut: Ashur Assyrian American Association; Assyrian American Ladies Association of Connecticut; Assyrian National Association of Connecticut; St. Thomas Assyrian Church of the East

DC: Assyrian Aid Society; Iraq Sustainable Democracy Project

Illinois:

Organizations - Assyrian Academic Society; Assyrian Aid Society; Assyrian American Association of Chicago; Assyrian American Civic Club of Chicago; Assyrian American Ladies Association; Assyrian American National Coalition; Assyrian American Police Association; Assyrian American National Republican Coalition; Assyrian Athletic Club of Illinois; Assyrian Business Association of Chicago; Assyrian Chaldean Syriac Students Union; Assyrian Chamber of Commerce; Assyrian Church of the East Relief Organization; Assyrian Democratic Movement; Assyrian Democratic Organization; Assyrian Democratic Party; Assyrian Human Rights Association; Assyrian Information News Agency (AINA); Assyrian Liberation Movement; Assyrian National Council of Illinois; Assyrian National Foundation; Assyrian Patriotic Party; Assyrian Social Club of Chicago; Assyrian Student Organization - University of Illinois at Chicago; Assyrian Teaches Association of America; Assyrian Universal

Alliance; Assyrian Universal Alliance Foundation; Assyrian Youth Association; Bet Nahrain Democratic Party; Iraqi Christian Refugee Council; Mar Zaia Assyrian Organization

Churches - Assyrian Christian Church of Chicago; Assyrian Evangelical Covenant Church Chicago; Assyrian Evangelical United Church of Christ; Assyrian Pentecostal Church Chicago; Carter Westminster Assyrian Presbyterian Church of Chicago; Mar Gewargis Assyrian Church of the East; Mar Sargis Assyrian Church of the East; Mart Mariam Assyrian Church of the East; St. Andrew's Assyrian Church of the East; St. John's Assyrian Church of the East; St. Odisho Ancient Assyrian Church of the East

Indiana: St. Peter Assyrian Church of the East

Massachusetts: Assyrian American Organization of Massachusetts; Assyrian Democratic Organization

Michigan: Assyrian Aid Society; Assyrian Democratic Movement; Assyrian American Club of Flint; Assyrian American Social Club of Michigan; Mar Shimun Bar Sabbi Assyrian Church of the East of Flint; Mart Mariam Assyrian Church of the East of Warren

Nevada: Assyrian American Association of Las Vegas; Mar Benjamin Shimun Assyrian Church of the East

New Jersey: Assyrian Orthodox Church of the Virgin Mary; Diyarbakir Turabdin Assyrian Association

New York: Assyrian American Association of Yonkers; Mar Mari Assyrian Church of the East

Pennsylvania: Assyrian American Association of Philadelphia

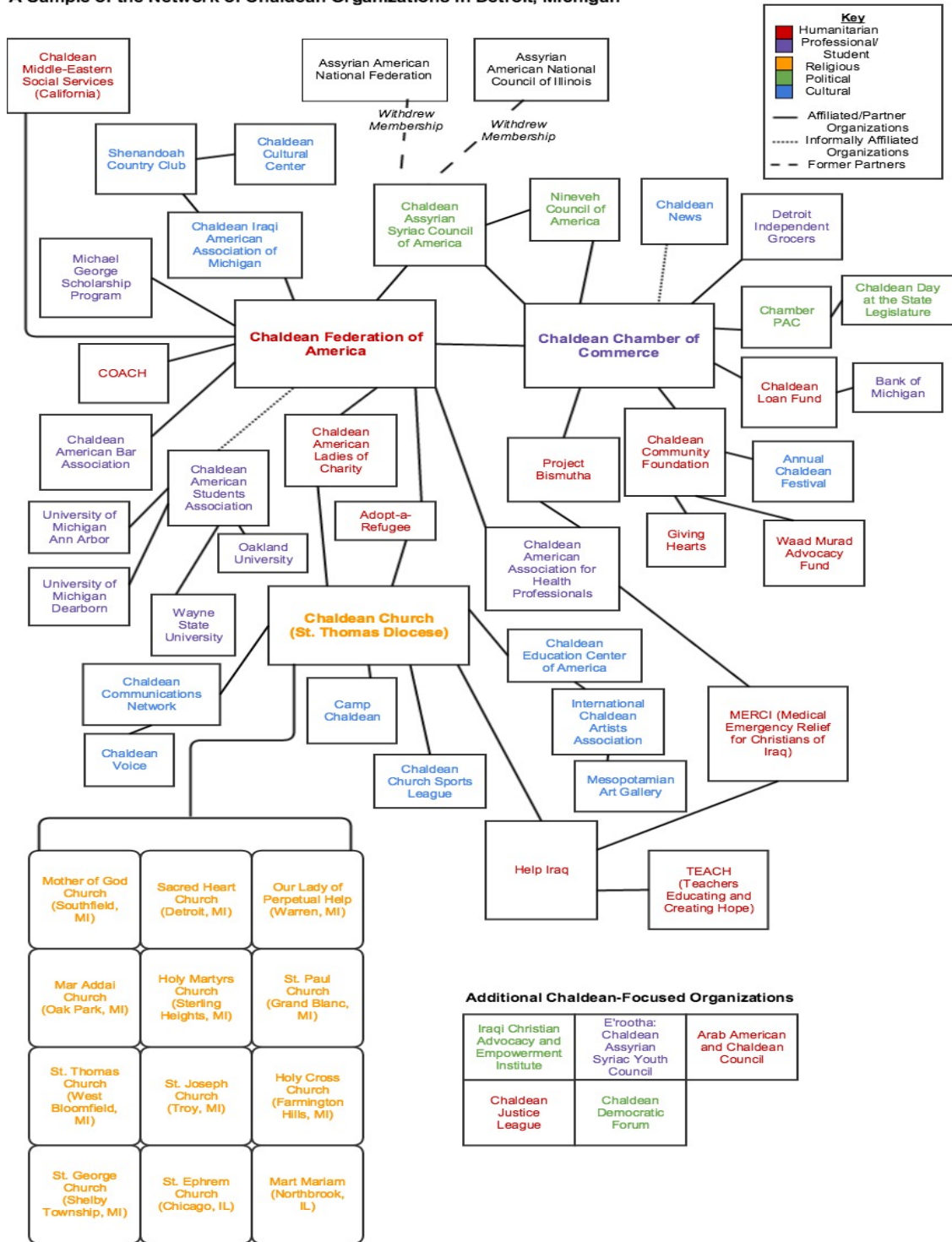
Texas: Assyrian American Association of Houston; St. Mary Assyrian Church of the East

Washington: Assyrian Children's Fund; St. Thomas Assyrian Church of the East

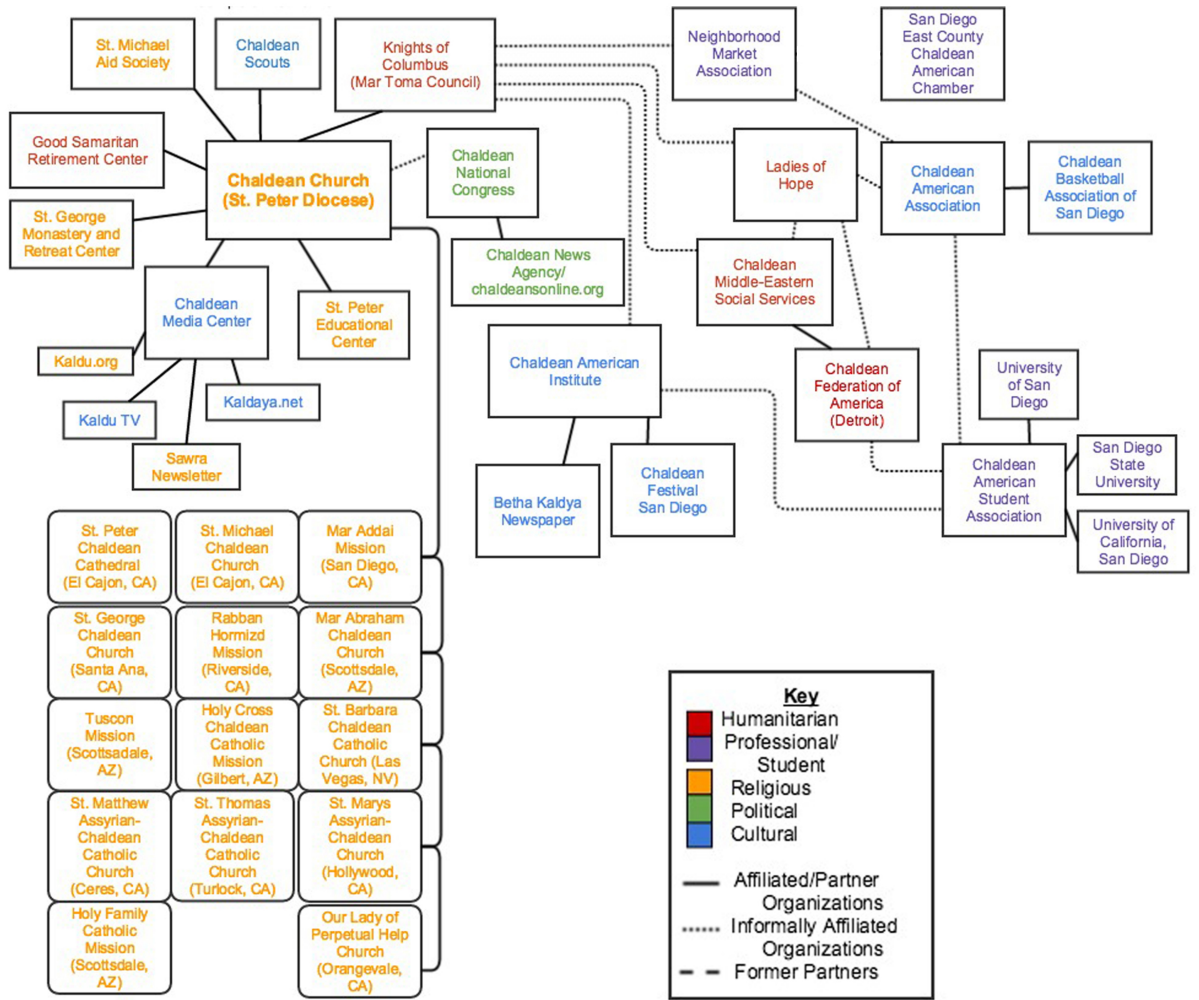
To note, the organizations and churches represented herein aim to capture the majority of Assyrian-serving organizations in the United States; however, given the fluidity of such organizations, several may have inadvertently been excluded and some of those represented may no longer be active or have merged or changed names. Inclusion of an organization or church is merely a representation of its existence and not of its size or role within the community.

APPENDIX IV: Diagram of Chaldean Institutions in Detroit and San Diego

A Sample of the Network of Chaldean Organizations in Detroit, Michigan



A Sample of the Network of Chaldean Organizations in San Diego, California



APPENDIX V: List of Assyrian and Chaldean Interviewees

Presented is a brief description of the Assyrian and Chaldean community leaders interviewed for this research.

Assyrian Community Elites

- Ashur Mansour: Originally from Iraq, Mr. Mansour emigrated to California for employment, where he works as a computer engineer for Apple. He serves on the Executive Committee for the Assyrian Democratic Movement's San Jose Chapter and co-hosts the ADM Weekly television programme, and is also involved with the Assyrian Aid Society.
- Emanuel Kamber: Dr. Kamber was Secretary General of the Assyrian Universal Alliance, and was previously active with the Iraqi opposition, having served as deputy chairman of the Iraqi National Congress's Central Council and worked with the State Department's Future of Iraq Project. He is a physics professor at Western Michigan University, having left Iraq in 1979 to pursue his doctorate in London before emigrating to the U.S. in 1985. As a student in Iraq, he was active in student movements to improve democracy and protect humanitarian rights.
- Elmer Abbo: Dr. Abbo has served as the Executive Director of the Assyrian American National Coalition, co-founder of The Nineveh Project, and producer of *Defying Deletion*, a documentary about the Assyrian and Chaldean plight, amongst other public advocacy and education work in the U.S. and abroad. A Chaldean-Assyrian, Dr. Abbo was born in the U.S. and became active in the Chicago-area Assyrian community after moving to Chicago, where he earned an MD and JD from the University of Chicago and currently practices medicine.
- Firas Jatou: Mr. Jatou is a California-based engineer who is from Toronto originally. He was a founder of the Assyrian International News Agency (aina.org) and has long been involved in Assyrian advocacy, including through affiliations with the Assyrian Academic Society, of which he was president, the Assyrian American National Federation, and the Assyrian American Association of San Jose.
- Juliana Taimoorazy: Ms. Taimoorazy is an Iranian Catholic Assyrian who fled Iran in 1989 when she was sixteen years old, arriving in the U.S. a year later as a religious asylee. She is the founder of the Iraqi Christian Relief Council, formed in response to the refugee crisis in 2007. She has also engaged with community issues as a host and reporter for seventeen years with the

Chicago-based Assyrians Around the World television program.

- Joseph Tamraz: Originally from Iran, Mr. Tamraz is an engineer and member of the Assyrian Universal Alliance's Executive Board and Chairman of its Chicago Branch, and has served in multiple capacities as an Assyrian community organizer, including as founder and chairman of the Assyrian American National Republican Coalition, President of the Assyrian American Civic Club of Chicago, Midwest Director for the Assyrian American National Federation, and as coordinator and host of Assyrian Universal Alliance Radio in Chicago.
- Natalie Babella: Ms. Babella is the President of the Santa Clara Valley Chapter of the Assyrian Aid Society, based in San Jose, California, and is a co-founder of Gishru, an Assyrian birthright program to connect Assyrian youth in diaspora with those in the homeland. Her parents both were born in Baghdad, Iraq, and emigrated to the U.S., where they remained active in Assyrian political and cultural organizations, which she credits with developing her involvement.
- Waleeta Cannon: Ms. Cannon has served as a founder, treasurer, and board member to the Assyrian American National Coalition, a member of the Assyrian Academic Society, director of the Assyria Foundation, amongst other roles advocating on behalf of the community. She works on behalf of women's rights and development, including working in Iraq in 2011 for the International Human Rights Law Institute. From Chicago, her parents fled Iraq after her father was arrested and persecuted for operating a pro-democracy radio station.
- Wisam Naoum: Mr. Naoum, now a finance attorney in Chicago, is from Michigan, where he was a co-founder and political director of E'rootha, the Michigan-based Chaldean Assyrian Syriac Youth Union, and is affiliated with both Chaldean and Assyrian advocacy efforts in Detroit and Chicago.
- Zaya Yaro: Mr. Yaro is an Executive with the Assyrian Democratic Movement's San Jose Chapter, and serves as a television anchor for Assyrian National Broadcasting and Ashur TV. Mr. Yaro fled Iraq during the Anfal campaign, after which he became a member of the ADM because of its role in providing support and services to those displaced by the crisis.
- Wisam Kosa: Mr. Kosa is a member of the Chaldean Catholic Church in San Diego and is active in Assyrian community organizations, including the Assyrian American Association of San Diego and the Assyrian American National Federation, as well as hosting an Assyrian-themed local television

program. He is a software engineer and former professor who emigrated from Iraq in 1982.

Chaldean Community Elites:

- Bishop Ibrahim Ibrahim: Bishop Ibrahim was the first Chaldean Bishop appointed to the United States, serving from the Chaldean Catholic Eparchy of St. Thomas the Apostle of Detroit from 1985 until his retirement in 2014. He was born in Telkeppe and has lived in suburban Detroit since 1982. The interview was conducted just prior to his retirement.
- Ghassan Hanna: Dr. Hanna was a co-founder and General Secretary of the Chaldean National Congress, and editor and writer for the Chaldean News Agency, which he operated through his website chaldeansonline.net. He served as an advisor to the State Department and U.S. military, having been deployed to Iraq twice; he is an engineer and currently works as a project manager for the Navy. He fled Iraq in 1979 after facing persecution for refusing to join the Ba'ath party and resides in suburban San Diego.
- Jacob Bacall and Eddie Bacall: The Bacall brothers emigrated to Michigan in the 1970s from Iraq, where they founded Bacall Development, a real estate development and property management company, and have been active in Chaldean political and social institutions for decades. Jacob was involved in the governance of the Chaldean Iraqi American Association of Michigan and recently published a book titled *Chaldeans in Detroit*. Eddie is on the board of the Chaldean Democratic Forum, which aims to support Chaldean political parties in Iraq, and has made multiple trips to Iraq following the war on behalf of political and humanitarian missions.
- Joseph Kassab (Two interviews): Mr. Kassab, at the time of the first interview, was the Executive Director of the Chaldean Federation of America (CFA), a capacity in which he served since 2005, and at the time of the second interview had left CFA to form the Iraqi Christians Advocacy and Empowerment Institute. Based in suburban Detroit, Mr. Kassab is originally from Telkeppe, Iraq, and worked as a bio-medical researcher and professor in Iraq until fleeing Iraq after facing intimidation for refusing to join the Ba'ath Party. He came to the U.S. in 1980, where he is the Chief Science Officer at Nano-Engineering and Consulting. He was also a founding member of the Chaldean Assyrian Syriac Council of America. His brother, Bishop Gabriel Kassab, recently retired as the first Bishop of the Chaldean Church in Australia and New Zealand.
- Mark Arabo: Mr. Arabo is the President and CEO of the Neighborhood Market

Association, an organization which represents independent retailers and is the largest independent grocers association in the western U.S.; his brother, Aday Arabo, heads the Associated Food and Petroleum Dealers, which represents Midwestern food retailers. Mr. Arabo was born in California after his parents emigrated from Telkepe, Iraq, in 1979, and has become recently involved in Chaldean-related advocacy and humanitarian aide in San Diego.

- Martin Manna (Two interviews): Mr. Manna is the President of the Chaldean Chamber of Commerce, based in suburban Detroit, for which he has worked since 2003; he is also head of the Chaldean Community Foundation, operates the Chaldean News, was a founding member of CASCA, and is a director of the Nineveh Council of America, which has taken over for CASCA. Mr. Manna was born in Michigan to Iraqi parents: his father was active in an Iraqi opposition party and worked as an assistant editor for a daily newspaper until the Ba'ath regime came to power, after which the family fled to the U.S.
- Mary Romaya: Ms. Romaya is the Director and a founding member of the Chaldean Cultural Center in suburban Detroit, editor of 'The Chaldeans: A Contemporary Portrait of One of Civilization's Oldest Cultures', and a co-chair of the Detroit area's Chaldean-Jewish Building Community Initiative. Raised in Detroit, her parents were amongst the earliest waves of Chaldean migration to Michigan.
- Noori Barka: Dr. Barka is actively involved in the San Diego-area Chaldean community, including serving as Chairman of the Chaldean American Institute, Chairman of the annual Chaldean Festival, founder of the monthly Chaldean House newspaper, among others. He holds a PhD in Diagnostic Immunology and is the founder and president of CalBiotech, having emigrated from Iraq in 1980.

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