

The Kurdish Stance on Political and Social Power Structure of the Region

Mirtayyeb Mussavi¹, Aryanaz Sadat Mussavi*²

¹Islamic Azad University, Central Tehran Branch

²University of Tehran, Kish International Campus

Received: 17 Aug 2011 ; Accepted: 13 Mar 2012

Abstract: In the war between Ottomans and Safavids Dynasty, two thirds of Kurdistan area was separated from Iran, and joined the Ottoman territories. The Ottoman empire was defeated in World War I and Kurdistan was divided among Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and a small part joined the Soviet Russia, i.e. Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. Concerning the Kurdish governments which were established in Iran being led by Karim Khan-e-Zand, Kurdish Red republic established in Kazakhstan during the time of Lenin, Ararat Republic in Turkey in 1927, Kurdistan Republic in Iran 1944-45 and Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq since 2005. Thus, what should be the Kurdish stance on political and social structure and distribution of power in the region? The hypothesis of this essay is: In spite of the historical, political, military backgrounds and ethnic, linguistic and religious similarities and the importance of the Kurds desire and population, they could still not have considerable share in power structure. The method of this essay is analytical-historical method.

22

Keywords: Kurd, Kurdistan, Iran, Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Russia, Power structure.

Introduction

It can be fairly said that the line of Kurds' language, history, culture, and territory go back to the time of Medes- an Aryan ethnic group in 612 BC. Sultan Sanjar, the last king of Saljuks in 12th century founded a state named Kurdistan and whose capital was Bahar City. Safavids separated Hamedan and Lorestan from Kurdistan, in order to govern the Kurds in a better way. In the Chaldoran War between Sultan Salim and Shah Esmail in 1514 AD, two-thirds of Kurdistan region was separated from Iran and joined Ottoman Territory (Salehi Amiri, 2009, 225)

At the time of Nader Shah, Azerbaijan, Lorestan and Hamedan were taken back from Ottomans (Esmailzadeh, 2009, 205). During Qajar era, Lorestan, Ardelan and Mokrian that had semi-independence administrations, began to be ruled by governors dispatched from Tehran and the same happened to Bootan, Suran, Badinan in Ottoman Empire. (Esmailzadeh, ibid, 247) In 1918, Mosul was occupied by Britain. In 1920, Sevres Treaty - a two phase process road map- for establishing a Kurdish country in Ottoman Empire territory and to respect Kurdish rights, was signed in Sevres, near Paris, although, it was put aside and was forgotten too early. (Smith, 2008, 90)

Religion and Language

The Kurds before Islam were Zoroastrians. The Azar - Goshasb (Fire of Kings) fire temple in Takht-e-Suleiman near Takab, The Anahita temple in Kangavar and Paveh Fire temple, prove this idea. Zoroastrians believe that the first Zoroaster was named Mahabad, the second was Hooshang and the last one was Ibrahim. Today, Yazidi (Izadi) Kurds call their leader Zoroaster (Noori, 1954, 79). The majority of Kurds, today are Shafei and others are Hanafi, Maleki, Hanbali, or Shiite.

Kurds do not have unified language. Kurdish language is a rare Middle Eastern Language that has a few Arabic religious terms. Kurdish language includes six dialects: Kormanj, Surani, Gurani, Kalhor, Lori and Zaza(or deylami) which are spoken in different parts of Kurdistan territory today. (Yasemi, 1983, 129)



Estimated Population distribution and Kurds Territories

Country	Area(km ²)	Population (million)
Turkey	230000	18-25
Iran	100000	6-7
Iraq	80000	6-6.5
Syria	20000	2-2.5

A large number of the Kurdish people have migrated into the EU, USA, Canada and Australia.

The Kurds are influenced by two major phenomena. First they bear some similarity in ethnicity, culture, language and religion. Second, which is getting deeper and stronger over years, is the priority of their political party and territorial divisions. Kurdish people have enjoyed short term unity – when they faced danger on the way of their survival. But they mostly competed or even

fought against each other. This gap has weakened them against their cooperation and uprising against discriminations exercised during history in Turkey, Iraq and Syria.

The Kurds in Turkey

Kurds live in a vast area of East, Southeast of Turkey. About one-third of Turkish territory in the vicinity of Syria, Georgia, Armenia, Iran, and Iraq is inhabited by Kurdish people. 21 to 25 out of 81 provinces in Turkey have Kurdish or mostly Kurd inhabitants.

In 1918 Ottoman Empire was defeated. Britain occupied Mosul Province. In 1920 Treaty of Sevres provided establishing a roadmap to a Kurdish state and a two stage treaty was signed. The Lutzen Agreement (1923) aimed to respect Kurdish rights, and support of the formation of a Kurdish government was achieved. In 1923 Sheikh Mahmud Barzani led the uprising, declared Kurdish kingdom in Northern Iraq.

Turkey was recognized as an independent state and rejected Sevres Treaty (Smith, 2008, 90). Ottoman regime was more tolerant than Ataturk's regime. The Ottoman's political ideology was based on territorial nationalism. Ataturk, followed French modernism, omitted the principle "The Government Religion Is Islam" from constitutional law, in 1932. In 1931, "Nation-Turkish State" principle and in 1932 "Turkish Language all along the country" were legalized. In 1937, Ataturk selected "Secularization", officially. Hereafter, Kurdish language, clothes, names (for persons, areas, things) and costumes were banned. Kurdish people were called "Mountainous Turks", until 1991. (Smith, ibid, 90)

According to the principle no 2510 Tunceli, some Kurds were enforced to leave their birthplaces. They were exiled from East to the West of Turkey – to Istanbul (2.5 million), and to Ankara (about 1.450 million), through coercion. The armed "Guards of Villages" did not let the returned Kurds get their properties back. (Turkey

Social, Economic Study Center, 2009, 288) These measures led to a revolt in Tunceli, and 40000 people were killed. According to seyed Reza Dor-simi, in 1921 and the years after uprisings in Turkey caused mass deportation of Kurds. (Moradi, 2009, 73)

In spite of these deplorable conditions - according to the studies made by Hacettepe University- 88.5% of exiled Kurds came back to their birth-places during 2000 to 2006. (Goonter, 2009, 289) It is obvious that imposed exile, was the leading cause of unemployment, poverty, and resulted in lax security. Many children and youngsters have been deprived of education and an ordinary home life .The students had to swear an oath of obedience to Pan -Turkism, every week: "I am only a Turk". This was a constant source of irritation .The racial discrimination made the Kurds and other racial minorities feel annoyed and impatient.(Goonter, *ibid*, 284) If the Turks authorities had chosen "soil – based" strategy instead of "blood - based" policy, they would not have faced so many political, social, cultural, and anti-humanitarian measures (Haji Aghai ,2009,294).

Mahmood Barzani's uprising caused establishment of Ararat Republic in 1927, it was supported by Badr Khanian and Kurdish intellectuals. He fought against British, who became an heir to Ottomans in Kurdish region, for 6 years. The Turkish government suppressed him, finally. Sheikh Saiid Peeran's rebellion began in 1925, and resulted to the trial of 59 Kurdish people in 1959.

These suppressions were not limited to Kurdish customs, but they continued, somehow, to omitting Turkish Islamic traditions, e g. omitting canonical courts and substituting civil and penal courts, banning of head cover (fez, turban) and cloak for men, banning of teaching by clergies in Islamic way in the one-room schoolhouses, banning of construction of temples, shrines, traditional titles, and finally changing the handwriting in Nov. 1928. A section of those reforms were over-flowed to Iran.

1971-72, Kenan Evren coup aimed the Kurds and leftists, as a result of which political block occurred, and leftists started to choose underground and hidden activities .In early 1970s , Kurdistan Workers party (PKK) with active attendance of women, in 29th uprising stance, leading by Abdollah Ocalan , formed its headquarter at Aleppo and Latakia in Syria from 1980 to 1990. PKK launched guerrilla wars in Southeast Turkey starting from Syria. For the security reasons, PKK had to set up a militia base in the North of Iraq. Syria opposed Ocalan and PKK, in 1988, and, Ocalan had to leave Syria. He was captured by Turkish agents while leaving Greek embassy in Nairobi in the early 1999. Ocalan was granted a temporary asylum by Kenya. Ocalan was on trial in Turkey. His death sentence commuted to life imprisonment in Imrali Island. Death sentence had long been unused in Turkey. (*ibid*, 275)

Today, it is ascertain that armed struggles between Turkish army and PKK, for a period of 33 year , and murder of 30000 of PKK's members was a tragedy for the two sides. Basically Kurd issues did not have a military solution, because too many strikes had negative effects and led to adopt more radical measures by the two sides. On the one hand, however, some hard groups like Shahn Balij, Jamal Koor, Hooger and Shamdin Sakik, murdered prominent agents of PKK, as Masoom Koor Kamal and Hassan Bindal. On the other hand, some people believe that Turkish forces attacked Turkish areas in fall 2007, not only to make excuse attacking on the North of Iraq to destroy Kurdish Regional government (KRG) , but also to stifle the influence and domination of the Justice and Development Party and its leader Rəcəb Tayyep Erdoğan. Indeed some assumed that a few attacks in the name of PKK, were organized by Turkish Forces, one of which was, the attack on Beit Asbap in October 2009 in which 13 people were killed.(Goonter, *ibid*, 264)During the premiership of Erdoğan, Kur-

dish parties with the motto of "Democratic Republic and Democratic Autonomy" received their own independent candidates in parliamentary elections. PKK tried to make a reform by adopting a dialogue policy and altering its name to KKK, KCK, KADEC, in order to be prepared for the next round. So, members of the PKK returned to Iraq and called ceasefire at the request of Ocalan, in March 2013.

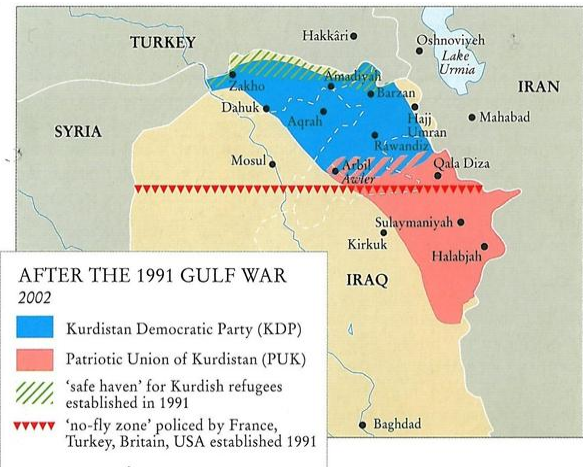
Now, Kurdish people have 36 out of 550 seats in parliament. About 108 city and county council Posts in Kurdish areas belong to the Kurds. This is what Ardoghan called "Kurdish votes to their identity". (ibid, 265) Indeed, Ardoghan intended, "moderate Islam to liberal economy, and moderate nationalism to secularism" get closer. (ibid, 264)

Two important issues should be taken into account, here. First; Turkey's authorities signed many economic agreements with the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in the North of Iraq. Having heard the possibility of forming a Kurdish autonomy region in the North of Syria, the Turkish government became a bit anxious. Second; Angela Merkle, the chancellor of Germany states: The condition for joining of Turkey to EU is recognizing Kurdish self-governing administration.

The Army of Turkey may occupy Syrian Kurdistan in order to prevent PKK's probable activity in Turkey, or under the pretext of closing the logistical and preparatory routes of PKK's irregular troops, it may contrive precautious tactics.

In Syrian civil war, beginning in the late 2011 and early 2012, Turkey helped a number of Syrian refugees, abhorrent from the local fights, flowing into Turkish border areas. It is obvious that the Kurds and Kurdistan have had prolonged security tension, considerably since the PKK started its operations.

The Kurds in Iraq



Kurdish people constitute 20% out of 29 millions of population in Iraq. They live in Halabjah, Kar-kuk, Soleymaniyah, Qala Diza, Arbil, Rawandiz, Hajj Umran, Barzan, Amadiyah, Aqrah, Dahuk, Zakho and parts of Mosul. (Smith, 2009, 91)

Ethnic Kurdish people's rebelliousness against Iraq government began in 1920 and continued until the formation of Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) after 2003.

Since 1975 Algeria Agreement between Shah and Saddam, and solving Arvand Rood's issue, the Shah stopped his support from Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) led by Mustafa Barzani. KDP was stationed in Iran, at Karaj – far from borders. Although, some great powers supported the Kurds. Some governments like Israel by delivering weapons and training encouraged them to rebel against Iraq government.

During the war between IRI and Iraq led by Saddam, some of the Kurdish people began their battle against Saddam. Over 180000 Kurdish people were killed in Anfal battle by Baathist regime, in Halabjah they were attacked by chemical warfares.

In 1991, determination of "no fly zone" policed by the USA, Britain, France and Turkey was established in Iraq territory, predisposed a situation for Kurdish oppositions, Kurdish Democratic party (KDP) led by Barzani and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) led by Jalal Talebany to dismiss Iraqi forces from Kurdish inhabitant areas. Iraqi

forces were defeated by US - led Coalition - in Kuwait, suppressed Shiite uprising in the South, then crushed the Kurd oppositions in the North, 1.5 million Kurds fled into Turkey territory. While, thousands Kurdish people were trapped in mountains bordering Turkey, in March 1991. In April UN set up a "Safe Haven" on the Iraqi side of border. (Smith, 2008, 90)

In Iraqi Kurdish elections KDP got 50.8 and PUK 49.2 percent of the votes and a Kurdish coalition government formed in 1992. About 20000 Turkish troops entered "Safe Haven" in anti - PKK operations. Turkish troops attacked PKK in Northern Iraq aided by KDP in 1995. There have been several military attacks approximately repeated every 6 month. (Smith, *ibid*, 92)

In 2003, Allied forces attacked on Iraq. Saddam`s regime collapsed. According to 114th principle of Constitutional Law, the new government recognized federalism, and Arabic and Kurdish Languages. Kurdish Language is spoken in the Parliament, Courts, Governmental Councils, official conferences and schools. Under an agreement, presidential post, foreign ministry, five ministers, presidency of Kurdistan region was given to the Kurds. Kurdistan (in Iraq), centered by Arbil has prime minister, parliament, army, flag and official anthem for itself. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) coordinates only overall issues with central government. About 17% of Iraq's budget is devoted to KRG, 70% of this amount is paid for government employees and the rest is spent on infrastructure in the KRG.

The distribution of oil revenue and destiny of Kirkuk is unclear. According to the Article 110 of the Constitutional Law, federal government is in charge of oil revenues, while the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) signs contracts on petro areas.

The Kurds in Iran

Safavids policy was based on "12 Imam Shiite". They believed that the inhabitants of Iran,

subject to Safavids Kingdom must be Shiite, or else, who would have to leave the country. However, they changed 23(or 25)Sunny Kurd tribe leaders and assigned Shiite Qezelbash from Shahsavan Tribes, instead. The Sunny tribe leaders asked asylum from Ottomans. (Esmailzadeh, 2009, 205). They signed a friendship agreement with Ottomans. Under this agreement the Ottomans recognized their local administrations, the tribe leaders pledged to be loyal to the Sultan of Ottoman. The enmity between Iran central government and the Kurd tribe leaders began hereafter. (Salehi amiri, 2009, 246)

Kurdish people live in Kurdistan, Kermanshah, Ilam, some parts of the West and South Azerbaijan, Lorestan and Hamedan provinces. At the time of Nader Shah and also the first Pahlavi period, some groups of Kurds were decamped to the North of Khorasan, Gilan, Mazandaran and Varameen. The Kurds who lived in Khorasan spoke in Kormanj dialects. Those Kurds who lived in Kermanshah and Ilam generally had Kalhori dialects and the overwhelming majority of them are Shiite.

According to constitutional law of IRI, discrimination in favor of one ethnic group or racism is forbidden, and teaching in dialects of the minorities is recognized. It deserves to pay attention that there is no limitation for the Kurds, or any other minority, to obtain high ranks in the army or executive positions in the administrative jobs.

The most Considerable point is that, Iranian Kurdish people, compared to the Turkish, Iraqi and Syrian`s were more compatible with the central government. The existing turbulence mostly stems from foreign countries and a very small part of it is connected to internal issues, for instance, Democratic Republic of Mahabad and also Azerbaijan Republic (1945 - 46), which was formed directly by the Soviet Union. The uniforms of military and police personnel in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan had the same colors, signs, medals as

the Soviet's. They followed the same regulations and ranks, too. (Mussavi, 2011, 86)

The relation between Turkish border guard – Soleiman Sabri – and Simkoo (or Simitkoo) in Soomay Bradoost (1920-1924) had to be taken into serious consideration too. The Turkish Council in Rezaieh (Urmia) had a hidden connection with some Iranian tribe leaders. Since dissatisfied Kurdish tribes made trouble for Iranian and Turkish governments, Turkish ambassador in Iran, had suggested that Iran and Turkey's arm forces cooperate, in order to suppress disobedient Kurdish tribes. Hence, Tabriz Division help Turkish Forces to suppress the Kurds stationed in Ararat, and Turkish Army help Iranian Forces to suppress Simkoo's partisans in return. General Amir Ahmadi the Commander of Tabriz Division reported to Tehran: "If we are not cautious and open the road, it may be possible that the Turkish compromise with Esmail Agha Simkoo secretly and instead of suppression, they cooperate with each other at the time of war and attack us and advance to Tabriz." At the dawn of 1925 (about one month before Reza Khan's coronation), Amir Ahmadi, with the help of Omar Agha from Shakak Tribe and Shahsavan Tribe, attacked Simkoo, but Turkish border authorities opened the border to make the rebels escape into Turkey's territory possible. In 1929, Simkoo eventually, was killed, on 18.7.1930, by the military personnel of Oshnavieh Garrison. (Romano, 2006, 114 and Cronin, 1998, 580)

There are a few illegal parties that should be pointed out: The Democrat Party which supported Saddam regime during eight year Iran and Iraq war (1980-1988). Komale –a militant and separatist Party, which is under the protection of foreigners - appeared in 1979. Three leftist groups, namely-the Revolutionary Group of Painstaking Iranian Kurds, Chaveh Group (Maoist) and the Union of Farmers, which joined together to establish another opposition party (fa.wikipedia.org/wiki/).

Another issue to be mentioned is that, a guerilla of pseudo – military group called partiya Jiyana Azad a Kurdistane (PJAK) a branch of PKK, was established in 2003. PJAK and PKK's ideology is "Apoism" that means absolute followers of Abdollah Ocalan. (ibid) After PKK retreated and accepted ceasefire, PJAK had to disarm naturally.

The Kurds in Syria

After the collapse of the Ottoman regime, a part of Kurdish territory joined Syria. In the period of 1920-44, Syria was mandated by France. In 1920, there was a tension between France and Turkey. French asked the Kurds to advocate them against Turkey. In return, French committed to solving Kurds issue in Syria. French supported Khoyban Party and the uprising of Sheikh Saiid Piran, in 1925. Syria became a haven region for Turkish Kurds. France and Turkey signed an Agreement, to locate an area among Turkey, Iraq and Syria's borders for the Kurds, in 1929. This area included three provinces: Haske, Reghe and Aleppo. The first Syrian Kurds uprising aimed to legalize Kurdish language and recognize Kurdistan to be governed by the Kurds, in 1928, which was opposed by the French government.

After World War II Syria got independence, and joined UN in 1945, but Kurdish Language, Culture and tradition were banned. Although, the Kurds supported Syrian Arabs and fought against France's Colonization (1920 to 1945), it was unprofitable. Indeed when Baath Party seized the power, anti – ethnic measures were intensified.

In 1963, oil fields were discovered and exploited in the Kurds region. The Syrians became anxious, because of probable disintegration of Kurds, so Syrian authorities intensified their strictures. The restrictions included the following: "Many Kurdish people in Syria have no ID card, they are not entitled to own land and house, they are not allowed to nominate for elections, in Syria, no Kurd holds a high post in the army, National Media and in the executive power".

A key post was never given to a Kurd to the present day. In Islamic Enlightening period the president Bashar-Assad gave back some Kurdish people's nationality, in order to band the Kurds to cooperate with the opponents. Yet, the "United Democratic Party" led by Saleh Moslem established a "Temporary Council" in 2012. It controlled Kurdish territory in Syria and preordained the background of Kurdish self-government in Iraq and Sham called (DAISH).

The Kurds in Russia

The immigration of Kurds to Caucasia is reviewed in three sections. In Czarist Russian era there was a war with Ottomans. Some Kurds immigrated to Russia. They lived there until the October Revolution in 1917, and gained citizenship and received nationality of some Soviet Union Republics. "Agree Rebellion" in North of Kurdistan made the Kurds stay in Czarist Russia and afterwards in the Soviet Union and get "Portion". The Portion was donated to the Kurds under the slogans, such as: "Freedom for peoples", who were living in the Soviet Russia. The "Autonomous Red Kurdistan Region" was established from 1923 to 1926. "Lachin City" was its Capital, which is in Azerbaijan Republic now. (Orni, Rojev Quarterly, 2009, 382)

Conclusion

The Kurd issue and the following PKK and PJAK are related to two or three recent decades, while Kurd's Dissatisfaction, objection and uprising started from 1514 after Chaldoran war and disintegration of Kurdistan territory. The issue is still in progress in Turkey, Iraq and Syria. Those who relate Kurds' issues to terrorism and just consider it as a security conflict have ignored history and the reality behind. The Muslim Kurds' request is welfare and economic issues, but most importantly, they require security, acceptance of Kurdish dialects, culture, justice, and undiscriminating

behavior. Patricide or fratricide murder exercised in Iraq in Saddam period, has obviously intensified the troubles and caused failure in locating any temporary measures and has lost opportunities and led to unreliability.

References

- Ahmadi, Hamid, (1999), Ethnicity and Ethnocentrism in Iran from mythos to Reality. Nay Publication. Tehran.
- Bayat, Kave, (No time) Turkish Kurds Uprising and Its Effects on Iran Foreign Relations. Iran publication. Tehran.
- Cronin, Stephanie (1998) The Army and the Pahlavi State in Iran (1910-1926), translated by Gholamreza Alibabai. Khojaste Publishing. Tehran.
- Esmailzadeh, Khaled (2009), "Assessing the Kurd Political Cooperation in Iran", Rojev Quarterly, no11, 12, 13
- Goonter, Michael, (2009), "The Road to Turkish Democracy Lay on the Kurds", Rojev, Quarterly, no 11, 12, 13.
- Haji Aghai, Azad, (2009), "From Kurdish Relief to Democracy Relief", Rojev, ibid.
- Kaka, Abbas, (2009), "The Tensions of Democracy in New Iraq", Rojev, ibid
- Mansoori Larijani, Esmail, (2009) An Introduction to Saint Defense, Khadem Reza Publication, Qum.
- Moradi, Fateh, (2009), "An Entropy of Fascist Governments: High and Low. Political Participation", Rojev, ibid.
- Mussavi, Mirtayyeb (2011) Global Oil Political Economic Issues, 2nd Edition, Mardom Salari publication, Tehran.
- Noori, Ehsan (1944) The History of the Race Root of the Kurds, Sepehr Publication.
- Orni, Seyed Mohammad, (2009), "The Red Kurdistan: Regret of Soviet Kurds", Rojev, ibid.
- Rezai, Ahmad, (2000), "The Kurds and Kurdistan in Transition of Time", National Study Quarterly, no 6.

Romano, David, (2006), *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement, Opportunity, Mobilization and Identity*, translated by Mansoor, Saeed, Rojev, *ibid*.

Salehi Amiri, Seyed Reza (2009) *The Management of Ethnic Conflicts in Iran*, Strategic Research Center.

Smith, Dan, (2008), *the State of the Middle East: An Atlas of Conflict and Resolution*. Earthscan.

Turkish Economic Social Research Center, (2009) "The Road Map for Solving the Kurd Issues", Rojev, *ibid*.

Zahirnejad, Mahnaz, (2000), "The Kurd Culture and Identity", *National Studies Quarterly*, No 6.

Wikipedia: <<http://wikipedia.org> Mostafa Barzani

Mirtayyeb Mussavi

He has PhD in political science and is Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Political Science, Central Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University.

Aryanaz Sadat Mussavi

She has MA in law, Tehran University, Kish International Campus.

