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Emerging Paradigms of Kurdish Nationhood in the Middle East

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List of Abbreviations

AKP- Justice and Development Party

BDP-Peace and Democratic Party

GAP- Southern Eastern Anatolia Project

KCK - Union of Kurdish Communities

KDP- Kurdistan Democratic Party

KDPI-Kurdistan Democratic Party-Iran

KNA- Kurdistan National Assembly,

KNC -Kurdistan National Council

Komala-Revolutionary Organization of Kurdish Toilers

KRG- Kurdistan Regional Government

PJAK- Party of Free life of Kurdistan,

PKK – Kurdistan Workers' Party

PUK- Patriotic Union of Kurdistan,

PYD- Democratic Union Party

SKC- Supreme Kurdish Committee

TAL-Law of Transitional Administration

Abstract

This paper aims to explore the role of Iraqi Kurdistan on emerging Kurdish nationhood in Turkey, Iran and Syria. Being the largest non-state nation, the Kurds are split between Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey creating challenges not only to the territorial integrity of these states, but also stability of the Middle East. Therefore the raise of Kurdish nationalism has always been oppressed by the central governments of these states.

Formation of autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan has become an inspiration for Kurdish nationalist movements in the region and Diaspora. While in Turkey Kurdish nationalist movement is seeking recognition of Kurdish identity and cultural rights, in Iran Kurds are demanding recognition of their elementary rights. In case of Syria the raise of Kurdish nationalism leads to the formation of political or cultural autonomy.

Introduction

Non-state nations present huge challenges and problems in modern international politics. Spreading between different regions and states they are threatening territorial integrity of various countries. Current democratization processes, rising awareness of minorities and the objective of self-determination lead to destabilization and enduring conflicts in regions, which have strategic and geopolitical importance.

Middle East has for centuries been the crossroad of strong nationalist movements, which have always attracted attention and interests of powerful international players. Kurdish nationalist movement has emerged relatively later involving core regional and global actors. Thus, numbering over 35 million the Kurds are the biggest non-state nation in the world. They are split between Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey, where the number of Kurds is approximately 15-20 million. Thus, in Turkey there are 8-12 million Kurds, in Iran 4 million, while in Iraq 2-2.5 and 2 million or less Kurds in Syria. Large number of Kurds we can see in United States and Europe, where they have strong lobbying groups. Besides, small part of Kurdish community is visible also in Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Kurdish question is one of the earliest national questions which remains unsolved due to several internal and external factors. Thus being divided between four core countries in the region they occupy areas of geopolitical importance. The existence of rich resources in Kurdish populated areas puts the Kurdish nationalist movement in the center of International relations. On the other hand for a long history they have been striving for formation of nationhood in the countries they live in. In each of these countries they present different kind of demands, which depends on the domestic policy and official state approach towards the issue.

After the First and Second Gulf Wars Iraqi Kurds were successful in their struggle for formation of nationhood within Iraqi borders. This experience has had its impact on Kurdish

nationalist movement in Iran, Turkey and Syria. However the objectives have been different in each of these states. Hence, in Turkey where the largest part of Kurdish community is settled, the main demands are identity recognition and cultural and linguistic freedom. On the other hand previously with the emergence of Kurdistan Workers' Party the ideology was the creation of Greater Kurdistan, which would include Kurdish populated areas of Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey in a single state. Whereas meeting lack of support among Kurds in and outside of Turkey the philosophy has been concentrated on the establishment of decentralized democracy.

Kurdish communities in Iran and Syria have been relatively invisible and modest in their demands. Syrian Kurds have always carried the influence of strong and risky Kurdish national movements in Turkey and the biggest achievements of Kurds in Iraq. However, being deprived of elementary rights Syrian Kurds until recently have not demanded formation of Kurdish nationhood. Similarly Iranian Kurds have for a century been the subject of discrimination and assimilation. On the other hand, being inspired and motivated by the creation of autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan, Kurds in Iran never have a strong influence of PKK and Iraqi Kurds during their uprisings.

Taking into account the scope and the present crucial importance of this problem, different Kurdish and international scholars have discussed the origins of the Kurdish issue, the limitations of Kurdish national movement and the possibility of its success. Thus, to understand the realistic roots of the formation of Kurdish nationhood in these countries, the research paper examines ideas and thoughts of several experts and researchers on this topic to get more insight of it. From this perspective used literature can be divided into academic articles, books devoting to this problem, also Constitutions, laws and other official documents.

Literature Review

Different scholars have special stance and approaches toward the role and importance of the Kurdish national movement, its opportunities and limitations and future perspectives. Thus, this part of the research paper concentrates on the nature of Kurdish national movements and its role in the regional politics.

Though there are different standpoints concerning the goal, methods and forms of the Kurdish national movement, all these authors, Mghoi, Lazarev, Gerard Chaliand, Mhoyan, Jaward Mella, Kevin McKiernan and Nicole and Hugh Pope, similarly stress the important role of Kurdish national movement in the Middle East and its impact on both stabilizing and destabilizing the region. Mghoi in his article presents the unique character of the Kurdish national movement, which becomes obvious when analyzing the enormous difficulties they have for reaching their goal. The author stresses several factors which make the Kurdish question exclusive among other national movements. One of them is the worst situation when the nation and the state are divided among four countries. Thus, any kind of Kurdish demand, who are an old ethnos with deep and rich ethno-cultural, historical ties and who has a rich experience of liberation movement, is considered as a national struggle for independence. Consequently, reaction and operation of the neighboring states have a serious and extreme nature. The second factor is that the Kurdish struggle aims to get liberation from the Muslim countries they inhabit, which contradicts to important principles of Islam. Finally, as Mghoi assumes, the Kurdish national movement is a unique one since it has no official support from a single state like other liberation movements. [1]Furthermore, another author, Gerard Chaliand adds an extra factor, which describes the uniqueness of the Kurdish movement, which creates more difficulties for their future success. The author emphasizes the important role of ideology for every liberation movement. On the other hand Gerard Chaliand believes that

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[1] Shakro Mghoi, "Kurdish factor" in *Kurdish issue at the turn of millennium*, (Moscow : RAS, Institute of Oriental Studies, 2004)

poor ideology is the main reason for the collapse of the Kurdish national movement. The main problem is that Kurdish leadership has never tried to establish and develop real contacts with the passive population, the reason of which is the absence of a revolutionary ideology. Moreover the author insists that the tribal mentality of the Kurdish leadership and the spread corruption within the military cadres have led to the collapse of the Kurdish movement. According to Chaliand, the Iraqi Kurdish leadership from 1958 to 1975 fully reflected the backwardness of Kurdish society. The leaders did not even try to influence and carry masses with them. Besides, currently they do not possess any real radical revolutionary slogans; they do not go for political mobilization and do not analyze internal and external political transformations. These are the main disadvantages which hinder the success of the Kurdish national movement.[2] Similarly, according to Jaward Mella, a known Kurdish politician and the first person, who has called for a formation of a Kurdistan government when being in exile, main problem of the Kurdish people is the absence of a Kurdish leadership free in his decisions from the states that occupy Kurdistan. He believes that liberation of Kurdistan cannot be achieved if the Kurds rely on Tehran, Damascus or Baghdad and Ankara. The author emphasizes the wholly goal of the Kurdish people, which is not autonomy, federalism or confederacy, but gaining the independence of Kurdistan. Mella assumes that the Kurdish liberation movement should take practical steps toward the formation of the Kurdish state by getting a support from a neutral country. Besides he believes that the Kurdish leadership should be more attentive to observe all the changes in the regional politics and transformations, which can be used for initiating the liberation process. [3] Like Mella, Joost Hiltermann, who has analyzed the situation in Iraqi Kurdistan and discussed its role on the

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[2] Gerard Chaliand, *A people without a country: The Kurds and Kurdistan* (New York: Interlink Publishing Group, 1993)

[3] Jawad Mella, *Kurdistan and The Kurds: A Divided Homeland and a Nation without State(*London: Western Kurdistan Association*, 2005)*

Kurdish issue in the Middle East, assumes that Kurdish issue should be solved only with the help of foreign powers. According to the author, Iraqi Kurdistan has made a significant progress, which is connected with large investments in the region and, also with the role of KRG, which has been improving political, social and economic situation in Northern Iraq. On the other hand, as Hiltermann has mentioned that Kurds are landlocked and consequently are dependent on the states surrounding them, which is a crucial problem. Besides, Kurdistan still has an issue of oil exports. Though there is a real democratic progress in Iraqi Kurdistan, the above mentioned problems can lead to corruption, unequal wealth distribution as well as crisis. This situation proves that there is still much left to be done in order to increase transparency and to boost economy in the region. Hiltermann believes that these problems can be solved only with the help of foreign investors. The author has touched upon Iraqi Kurdistan's relations with its neighbors emphasizing relations between Ankara and KRG based on economic and trade affairs. Iran has also an active role in the Kurdish issue; however its role is not as important as the Turkish influence. Regarding Syria, there is now seen possibilities of increased role of KRG in Kurdish area in Syria and has an impact on shaping the future in the Middle East.[4] Like Gerard Chaliand, Shaqro Mhoyan also stresses the role of ideology for the success of the Kurdish national movement. Thus, Mhoyan assumes that Kurdish national democratic struggle and its ideology are mostly influenced by the international players, who have their interests in the region. Besides, the world ongoing revolutionary process has its own impact on the Kurdish independence movement and its ideology. Moreover, the author believes that separation and unequal development of different regions of Kurdistan makes it difficult to form and implement strong ideology and

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[4] Joost Hiltermann, *The Kurdistan Region of Iraq:Achieving stability in a time of Transition*. (Austrian Institute for International Relations, 2012)

strategy. [5]While according to Kevin McKiernan the Kurdish dream of independence is not achieved because of the Turkish nationalism and the betrayal of outside powers. The Kurds are politically and ideologically diverse and they have never been a "nation", though they have always been struggling for gaining at least autonomy. McKiernan assumes that the problem of the Kurdish struggle for self-determination has been the promises of the US and its European allies, who have guaranteed the formation of Kurdish homeland. Consequently, with this approach these great powers have led to the emergence of resistance fighters-"terrorists" in the eyes of their respective states-Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Syria.[6]

Lazarev and Nicole and Hugh Pope in their papers discuss the factors that push the Kurdish national movement. They mainly emphasize external factors, such as Arab nationalism, which, as Lazarev mentions, meets huge resistance among the Kurds in the Middle East. According to Lazarev Arab-Israeli war in 1950s move forward the Kurdish national movement especially in Iraq. The significant developments in Iraqi Kurdish struggle became a signal for the rest part of Kurdistan.[7] While Nicole and Hugh Pope mention that the power of the Kurdish national movement has always grown when the nations surrounding them-Persians, Arab and Turkish people - have weakened. They assume that Kurds live in an apparently never-ended cycle of uprisings and repressions and consequently the control of a region or the victory over some rivals does not last long, since it depends on power of countries they live in.[8] On the other hand, Nader Entessar has touched upon the ethnic conflicts, which, he believes, are major challenge to the present nation-state system in the Middle East. According to the author the concept of "Melting pot", which states that assimilation is a process produced by modernization, which brings to the emergence of strong

[5] Shakro Mghoi, ''Some issues on ideology of Kurdish nationalist movement in the modern era" in *States and Nations of Middle and Near East: Kurdology*, (Yerevan: Academy of Sciences of Armenian SSR, 1983)

[6] Kevin McKiernan, *The Kurds: A people in search of their homeland.* (New York: St. Martin's Press,2006)
[7]M. S. Lazarev ,"Kurdish issue in the modern geopolitical situation in *Kurdish issue at the turn of millennium*, (Moscow : RAS, Institute of Oriental Studies, 2004)
[8] Nicole Pope and Hugh Pope, *Turkey Unveiled: A History of Modern Turkey* (USA: Overlook Press, 2011)

nation-states, has already lost its relevance. Thus, this phenomenon is proved by the Kurdish demand for self-determination for centuries. As it is stated in his book, a number of "nonassimilating" minorities have emerged to challenge the hegemony of dominant actors in the Middle East. However militarism and great powers' intervention have made it easier for ruling elites to suppress other groups on the basis of cultural, religious, ethnic and other factors. Ethnonationalism has started to increase as a reaction towards the inability of modern nation-states to respond to marginalization. As a result, Governments have been implementing policies which are to destroy their cultural values and identities. Such policies are implemented by Iran, Iraq and Turkey towards Kurds. The main challenge of Kurdish nationalism to the central government of these states is connected with the geographical location of Kurdistan, since the people living in mountainous or forest regions bordering with similar ethnic population are more prone to collective movements. According to Entessar, the problem of dealing with ethnic pluralism, multilingualism, multiculturalism is the most crucial in the Middle East.[9]

The next group of experts discusses the role of Kurds and Kurdish national movement in the Middle Eastern politics. Jacques Neriah, Hoshavi Babakr, Marianna Charountaki, Riccardo Dugulin and Gareth Stansfield all agree that Kurdish question can reshape the regional relations, though each of them has specific stance on the nature and scope of that impact. Jacques Neriah has analyzed the issue of Kurds in the Middle East and has discussed the possibility of emerging Kurdistan in the region. According to the author, the emergence of "Greater Kurdistan" is no longer an unreachable reality, since the current situation is leading to this perspective. The formation of Kurdistan will create enormous challenges for Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran becoming a bridge for many conflicts in the region. It creates opportunities for Iraqi Kurdistan to support Syrian Kurds to get autonomy. However this

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[9] Nader Entessar, *Kurdish Politics in the Middle East.* (USA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010)

perspective depends on the powers dominated in tri-border territory between Iraq, Turkey and Syria. Moreover, Kurdistan can help Iran to supply to its Syrian partners and to support Hezbollah in Lebanon. This entire picture proves that the Kurds are regional crucial players, whose actions can reshape Middle Eastern politics.[10] Likewise, Sonia Roy has examined the Kurdish issue, its influence on Turkey-Iraq relations along with Iran and Syria. As the author assumes, the successful model of Iraqi Kurdistan has been encouraging Kurds to fight for their rights without a fear of being suppressed by the government of the state they live in. In this context, the prominent result of Turkish Kurds' struggle has been Turkey's recognition of Kurdish identity, since they were previously ignored as "Mountain Turks" or as "Southeastern" problem. However, unlike Jacques Neriah, Roy believes that the formation of Kurdistan by unifying all Kurds in one land is far from reality. The reason is that they do not have even written or spoken common language; besides, there are religious differences, though the majority of Kurds are Sunni. On the other hand the Kurdish people are currently satisfied with the recognition and furthermore with the formation of autonomous region in the countries they live in. According to the author, continual democratization and development will bring benefits to all Turks and Kurds in Turkey at the same time revealing advantages of secular democracy to the Muslim World. [11]According to another author, Hoshavi Babakr, the emerging Kurdistan can become a factor of destabilization for the countries they inhabit and for the whole Middle East. The Kurdish issue, as Babakr mentions, hinders economic and social development of that countries, shape their political environment in accordance with the Kurdish possible demands through sacrificing democratic rules and economic profits. Babakr assumes that Kurdish question will be solved in case of formation of independent state, which

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[10] Jacques Neriah, *The Future of Kurdistan: Between Turkey, the Iraq War, and the Syrian Revolt.* (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 2012)

[11] Sonia Roy, "The Impact on the Politics of Iraq and Turkey and Their Bilateral Relations Regarding Kurds Post-Saddam Hussein Regime", *Foreign Policy Journal*, April 22, 2011

will destabilize the region. [12]Similarly Soner Cagaptay has touched upon new dynamics of Kurdish issue and the regional security environment in the Middle East as a consequence of Arab Spring and United States' withdrawal from Iraq. Since the US invasion to Iraq, Syria, Iran and Turkey have been cooperating against the war in Iraq and PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party); in its turn PKK has targeted Iran through PJAK (The Free Life Party of Kurdistan) by attaching the country. At the same time, no longer dependent on Turkish protection and relieved from the threat of Saddam's regime, PUK (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan) and KDP (Kurdistan Democratic Party) has started to cooperate with PKK and Syrian Kurds. However, since the Arab Spring this political balance between Turkey, Iran and Syria has been changed. The revolt in Syria has positioned Iran and Turkey in the opposite ends of regional political arena. Turkey has protected protestants, while Iran supports Syrian president Bashar Al-Assad. Encouraged by Iran, PKK has started to strike at Turkey killing more than 150 Turks since 2011. Iraqi Kurds, in turn, have been aligning with Turkey for balancing increased Iranian influence in Iraq. This situation means that they are more likely to help Turkey in fighting against PKK. At the same time, Syrian Kurds are apparently seeking for Assad regime's collapse leading by Barzani, the president of Iraqi Kurdistan; however separately from opposition. These are new axes of the Middle East, which has created political chaos and instability similar to the situation of the 1990s.[13] On the contrary, Marianna Charountaki and Riccardo Dugulin emphasize the stabilizing role of Kurdish question in the Middle East. Marianna Charountaki believes that democratic transformations in the Middle East are closely inter-related to the role of Kurdish claims in the Middle East and the recognition of their issue cannot be undervalued in achieving democratization of the

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[12]Hoshavi Babakr , "Kurdistan: Perspectives of Kurdish nationhood" in *Kurdish issue at the turn of millennium*, (Moscow : RAS, Institute of Oriental Studies, 2004)
[13] Soner Cagaptay, *"Arab Spring heats up Kurdish issue,"* Washingtoninstitute, March, 2012, accessed December 7, 2012
 http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/opeds/JIAA_Kurds-February_2012.pdf

region. Since, democratization foresees the prevalence of rule of law with the recognition of cultural, political, religious, civic freedoms in the whole Middle East. The author stresses the role of Kurdish issue as a balancing factor in the democratic transformation of the Middle East. Consequently, the current situation in Syria, as Charountaki mentions, is not accidental. Syria officially has recognized 300.000 Kurds as citizens of its country, which highlights the importance of the Kurdish power in the Middle Eastern politics. In Iraq, the Kurds has proved that the autonomy of different nations in a bi-national state is not only possible, but also helps Iraq to recover the country after post-Saddam era. In Turkish case, Recep Tayyip Erdogan's commitment to democratization is closely interlinked with the Kurdish issue in the country. Since, the democratization discourse, particularly Europeanization process in Erdogan's agenda's has indicated "Kurdish initiative" as an important issue to be solved for maintaining Turkey's stability. However the role of United States should not be underestimated, since the Kurdish issue plays a crucial role for the US long-term policy in the Middle East. The events which will follow after regional democratization in the Middle East, according to the US plans, the Kurds should play the role of strong ally of the United States especially with respect to relations Iran, Turkey and Israel in order to establish regional balance of power in favour of Washington. [14] Like Charountaki, Riccardo Dugulin also discusses the role of Kurdistan and its different interest groups in Middle Eastern politics. As the Arab World is facing a period of social-economic oscillation, non-Arab World is developing its enclave in the strategically important region of the world, Kurdistan. Located between Southern Anatolia, Persia, Northern Mesopotamia and the Near East and being fertile and oil-rich region, it has always been the cause of conflicts for centuries. Controversially, seen as a relatively safe in Northern Iraq, considered terrorists in Turkey and waiting in convulsion for

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[14] Marianna Charountaki, "*Democracy in the Middle East: watch the Kurdish issue*", Opendemocracy, June 15, 2011, accessed December 7, 2012,
 http://www.opendemocracy.net/marianna-charountaki/democracy-in-middle-east-watch-kurdish-issue

possible successful revolutionary conquer Kurdistan and Kurdish people play a crucial role in political arena of the Middle East. According to the author, Kurdish influence is seen as a stability factor in the Middle East. Indeed, internal conflicts in Kurdish Autonomous Region of Iraq have not transferred to massive turmoil, thus Iraqi Kurdistan is considered to be relatively economical and political stable region, which is connected with vast oil fields and infrastructural projects attracting foreign investments. In Syria, Kurdish pressure is seen as a balance in inter- Arab tribal and religious tensions. Consequently, International community and the Arab leaders should take into account the role of Kurds for keeping and enhancing peace and stability in the Arab Middle East. [15] Similarly, Gareth Stansfield stresses the role of Kurdish policy of regional and international powers for maintaining peace in the Middle East. According to Stansfield, the Kurds have received less attention in comparison with Palestinians, though the number of Kurds exceeds population of Israel and Palestine combined. Moreover the huge influence of Kurds in four major Middle Eastern states should not be underestimated. Furthermore, Kurdish aspirations and increasing nationalism are, for sure, affecting the future developments of these four states. However, for now no Kurdish politician is calling for an independent Kurdish state at the expense of Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Syria for a creation of pan-Kurdish state. Rather Kurdish officials of these countries are doing what they want pursuing political goals taking into account the situation of the state they are living in. On the other hand the recognition has always been in the agenda of all Kurdish politicians in these countries. This demand, however, has been increasing due to globalization and the major part, thanks to establishment and survival of autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan, which has its influence on rising national feelings among Kurdish population. In

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[15] Riccardo Dugulin, *"The Kurds' place in the 'Arab Spring'',* Opendemocracy, December 10, 2011, accessed December 7, 2012
http://www.opendemocracy.net/riccardo-dugulin/kurds%E2%80%99-place-in-%E2%80%98arab-spring%E2%80%99

turn, the mistrust of some Turkish political elites towards any form of Kurdish entity in or near Turkey has only strengthened the Kurdish nationalism in Turkey, as well as in Iran, Iraq and Syria. Thus, the Arab officials and international policy makers should pay attention to Kurds and consider how best approach them in order to maintain stability in the region. [16]

Aylin Unver Noi and Maria Fantappie discuss the policies of Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey towards Kurdish issue and present the role of Arab Spring on the Kurdish issue. According to Noi, when the Arab Spring has emerged, Turkey's "soft power" and its economic, political, social developments have inspired the Arab world. However, Kurdish issue has become an obstacle for Turkish ambitions in the region. The situation has strained when PKK has attempted to bring Kurdish Spring in the Middle East, when it has started to intensify attacks in Turkey. The Arab Spring, its impact on Syria has deteriorated relations between Syria and Turkey. Consequently, the Assad regime has used Iraqi and Syrian Kurdish terrorists against Turkey. With the help of PKK the Arab Spring can turn into Kurdish Spring in Turkey. Besides, the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq and the role of PKK in Iraq have brought about a Kurdish Spring in Turkey. While Turkey has supported opposition in Syria, PKK has been cooperating with Syria against Turkey, which has brought Kurdish Spring to Syria. Iraqi Kurds, in their turn have shown their own Kurdish Spring in face of demonstrations organized by Goran Party against PUK and KDP (Kurdish Democratic Party). This has been continued until they have forcibly been suppressed by KRG leadership. Iran, at the same time, has been attacked by PJAK and PKK since 2004. In addition, according to the expert, Israel is enhancing its ties with Iranian Kurds and is providing necessary equipments in fighting against Iranian government. Consequently, as Noi assumes, Kurdish problem has not only been used by external powers to weaken regional countries, but also by Turkey, Iran,

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[16] Gareth Stansfield, *"The Kurdish Policy Imperative"*, Chatham House, April, 2007, accessed December 7, 2012.
 http://kms1.isn.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/ISN/46228/ipublicationdocument_singledocument/b8973ae0-0fba-430e-a90f-f9217f44e4cb/en/1.

Iraq and Syria for fighting against each other. [17] Likewise, Maria Fantappie has observed the role of Iraq in the Middle East and its relation with Syria. According to Fantappie, Iraq is becoming a more autonomous payer in the Middle East. This can be possible if Iraq starts to play a key role in the Syrian crisis. The solution of the crisis can provide an opportunity to become a regional power by conciliating between opposition and the regime. However this perspective depends on Iraq's Government ability to overcome domestic crisis. However, Iraqi officials have found an agreement on their stance towards Syrian crisis. Both Maliki and Iraqi Kurdish leaders try to use the crisis in order to assert their role in the Middle East. According to the author, the Syrian crisis can reshape relationship between Turkey and KRG, since Ankara will more likely to cooperate with Iraqi Kurdistan in order to counter PKK's expansion over its border.[18] Maria Fantappie in her another article has discussed the possible liberation of Syrian Kurds. According to this article Kurds interests are clashing in Syria. Thus, PKK controls the most part of Kurdish populated areas in Syria, whereas Iraqi Kurdistan has its influence on the Syrian Kurdish Politics. At the same time PKK tries to use Syrian Kurds for combating Turkey, while Iraqi Kurdistan seeks to form Syrian Kurdistan autonomous region under its umbrella. On the other hand, the author believes, that even if Syrian regime falls, Syrian Kurds have a long road to get autonomy. In spite of this clash of interests of PKK and Iraqi Kurds, both need each other to address their problems. [19]

Taha Ozhan and Aliza Marcus have touched upon the Kurdish question in Turkey and different social-political environment in the Middle East which has changed the dynamics of the Kurdish issue. Taha Ozhan claims that the experience of the Kurdish issue in

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[17] Aylin Unver Noi," The Arab Spring, Its Effects on the Kurds, and the Approaches of Turkey, Iran, Syria, and Iraq on the Kurdish Issue", *Middle East Review of International Affairs, 16* (2012)

[18] Maria Fantappie, "*Iraq in the Middle Part IV: Maria Fantappie on Iraq's relations with Syria",* The Small Wars Journal, July 20, 2012, accessed December 10, 2012, http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/iraq-in-the-middle-part-iv-maria-fantappie-on-iraq%E2%80%99s-relations-with-syria

[19] Maria Fantappie," *A Tough Liberation for Syria's Kurds"* Middle East Center, August, 2012, accessed December 10, 2012
http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=49190

Southeastern part of Turkey is one dynamic of the Kurdish problem, since the other element is the Kurdish successful experience in Iraq. The Kurds in Iran, Syria and Turkey have been aspired by this victory, which has encouraged them to fight for political prominence. However, according to author some serious problems can emerge if interaction between Iraqi and Turkish Kurds is not implemented appropriately. The Kurdish issue, which was considered ''pushed by external powers'' has "materialized" with the formation of Kurdish authority in Iraq. Furthermore, Turkey has started to play an active role in Iraqi Kurdistan and as the author is stating Ankara should admit that Northern Iraq is currently a part of Kurdish question. Thus, Northern Iraq should not be an obstacle to Turkish Middle Eastern policy. Consequently Turkey should take into account the seriousness of Kurdish issue for its regional ambitions.[20] In the same way, Aliza Marcus believes that Prime Minister, Erdogan, should focus on the improving relations with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which have become a real challenge for Turkey. In this context, Erdogan's ''Democratic Initiative'' has been a significant pace to democratization of the country, which will lead to end the Kurdish rebellion. The result of this initiative has been the unofficial amnesty of 34 PKK members and supporters in Iraq, who have been accepted as heroes among the large Kurdish communities in Turkey and Iraq. Thus, the latter has proved Turks that Kurdish population has a huge power in their country. However, Erdogan has immediately moved ahead his plan to recover relations with PKK. This policy has brought guerilla war, which has not been best solution for democratic country. The author has suggested Turkey to transform PKK through negotiations, which will bring to recognition of the organization. Besides, Ankara should consider that the Kurdish issue is not just a result of poor economic development or it is not

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[20] Taha Ozhan,"A New Agenda for the Kurdish Question",*Insight Turkey , 11(2009)*, 97-114.

just pushed by international actors to weaken Turkey. Moreover, they should take into account that the goal of PKK is now cultural autonomy.[21]

Research Design and Methodology

To verify and examine these statements in detail the Master's Essay will present the nature of Kurdish national movement in Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey separately. The paper will discuss what kind of role autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan has in the emerging Kurdish nationhood in the Middle East.

To address these issues, this study applies information using qualitative research design with conducting document analysis. Data is collected through primary and secondary data. As a secondary source the paper uses various academic articles, books, research studies of different think tanks. Moreover, Master's Essay refers to famous Kurdologists, specialists of the sphere, politicians.

Primary data consists of official documents, which includes Constitution of Iraq, Constitution of Iran, Turkey and Syria, Draft Constitution of Kurdistan Regional Government. The paper uses also different laws and official announcements by the governments of Syria, Iraq, Turkey, Iran, Iraqi Kurdistan and other countries. Besides, the part of document analysis comprises of various agreement signed between these countries and Kurds.

Taking into consideration the importance of the relationship between the formation of autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan and Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkey, Iran and Syria this paper proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: The model of Iraqi Kurdistan encourages the birth of a new Kurdish nationhood in the Middle East.

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[21] *Aliza Marcus, " Troubles in Turkey's Backyard",* Foreign Policy Journal, 2009, Accessed December 10, 2012
http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/07/09/troubles_in_turkey_s_backyard?page=full

To verify the hypothesis, the Essay will answer the following research questions:

Research Question 1. What are the country specific features of emerging Kurdish nationhood in the Middle East?

Research Question 2. What implication does Iraqi Kurdistan have on emerging Kurdish nationhood paradigms in the Middle East?

The Master's Essay is composed of three chapters. In the first chapter theoretical framework of Kurdish nationalism is provided in order to get more insight into the Kurdish nationalist movement. In this part definitions and evolution of Kurdish and Pan-Kurdish nationalism are presented. The second chapter of the paper is devoted to the model of Iraqi Kurdistan. This part introduces the formation process of autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan, the main achievements and limitations of the Kurdish nationhood within the borders of Iraq. The last part presents Kurdish nationalist movements in Syria, Iran and Turkey describing the specific features of Kurdish issue in these states and analyzing current geopolitical situation around these countries which can have its impact on the formation of Kurdish nationhood.

Contextualizing Kurdish Nationalism

Nationalism

"The newly established states cannot tolerate having their rule challenged by disaffected minorities or regions, no matter how good the claim of the other to separate national existence may be"- Rupert Emerson[22]

The concept of Nationalism has no common definition, since there is still no consensus among scholars. Different context requires different approaches for definition. Thus in the case of Kurdish issue, nationalism is defined as a political movement of a unique group, which wants to be differentiated from others with its history, language culture. Thus in the core of the concept lies the idea of "nation". The emergence and development of the idea of "nation" and therefore Nationalism, as a political philosophy are linked with the events of 18th century Enlightment and French Revolution in 1789. Eventually rejecting artificial political boundaries nations started to regroup in cultural, linguistic, religious communities. Therefore starting from this period the process of nation-state building emerged. [23] Thus, it was the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, which brought the notion of nation-state, which linked nation with the state. However, bonding nation and state started to generate tension, since they have been concentrated on different directions. The main problem was the homogenization policy, which was the most important program for nation-state. Thus, state's tendency to homogenize minorities is unavoidable. On the other hand, nation differentiates its group from the rest population of the state. Therefore, many nations accepted their subordinate position in a federative structure; the others were fighting for their identity and

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[22] A. Turner "Kurdish Nationalism" in Ideology and Power in the Middle East ed. By P. Chelkowski et al. (USA: Duke University Press, 1988), 379
[23] Model United Nations Far East, "UN policies on Nationalist-Separatist Movements", 47th Session, 2011. Accessed May 14, 2013
http://www.munfw.org/archive/47th/ga1.htm

independence, while others were assimilated.[24] On the other hand, at the end of the nineteenth century the principle of "nation" was developed and led to the principle of self-determination accepted after the First World War at the Versailles Peace negotiations in 1919 by the victorious powers, which then was incorporated into the Charter of the United Nations.[25]

Since 1950s International agreements have touched upon the principle of self-determination. The Covenant on Economics, Social and Cultural Right and Covenant on Civil and political Rights in Article 1 states the right of people to self-determination, which went into force in 1976. According to this agreement all people have the right to self-determination, which determine their political status, enhance their economic, social and cultural rights. In 1975 the Helsinki Final Act affirms the right of people to be free in their decision of choosing own form of government. Further acceptance of the right to self-determination in international documents leads indigenous groups, displaced, oppressed people to claim against states that argue that they have a jurisdiction and power over them in the international forums. Consequently, the claims of minorities that they are wrongly dominated by the dominant groups in nation-states have been getting more hearing during the international political forums and discussions.[26]

Ethnic, linguistic, religious minorities have always been demanding the right to be recognized and the right to control their destiny. And though during International conferences the importance and value of the principle of "the right of people to self-determination" is constantly raised and it is guaranteed by International Law, its content is actually non-existent.[27] Hence it is usually put into the contradiction with the principle of territorial integrity. Moreover, the dominant opinion of global powers gives the priority to the

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[24] T. K. Oommen, "New Nationalisms and Collective rights: The case of South Asia" in Ethnicity, Nationalism and Minority Rights ed. by Stephen May et al. (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 121-122

[25] Richard Jay, "Nationalism" in *Political Ideologies*, ed. Richard Jay et al. (London: Routledge, 1994) 153-183

[26] Iris M. Young, "Two Concepts of self-determination" in *Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Minority Rights*, ed. Stephan May et al. (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 176-179

[27] Gerard Chaliand, *A people without a country: The Kurds and Kurdistan* (New York: Interlink Publishing Group, 1993), 1-2

preservation of existing state territories.[28] Consequently, because of the absence of their own state, the minorities have been suffering for being denied by the sovereign states. [29] Therefore, grievance of these minorities followed by different international forums and discussions about their rights to self-determination has been flowered with the burst of nationalist sentiments.[30] In this regard, as Anthony Smith states that nationalism is a principle about a nation, not a state. Though, in general, free nation needs a state for its protection, it is not a strict requirement. According to many nationalists nations are free organisms and can easily exist in nature.[31] Thus, this consideration is quite relevant to the case of Kurds, since being divided geographically, politically, ideologically, linguistically, religious, tribally they have been forming and developing their nationalist movement and the sense of nationhood separately. Hence, being a stateless people they have held their dominant role in the core countries of the Middle East and in their Diaspora in Europe and North America. Therefore these sentiments, which raise ethnic demands usually bring intra- or inter- state conflicts. Thus, according to Horowitz, behavior based on ethnicity is normatively sanctioned, and ethnicity is accompanied by hostilities towards "outgroups".[32] In this context, a close link between nationalism and ethnicity is important, since the majority of nationalisms are ethnic in character. Moreover, the concept of nationalism connects ethnicity to state, where an ethnic group develops an ethnic ideology to dominate the state. Thus the successful nationalist movement requires special ideology and symbolism. [33] Moreover, according to Greenfeld, the sole fundament and condition for nationalism, without which no nationalism is possible is an idea.[34]However, in this case Kurdish nationalism has shown conspicuous

[28] Young, *Two concepts of self-determination*, 179
[29] Chaliand, *A people without a country,* 1-2
[30] Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic groups in conflict* (University of California Press, 1985), 16
[31] Anthony Smith, *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism: A cultural Approach* (Routledge, 2009), , 61
[32] Horowitz, *Ethnic groups in conflict*, 19
[33] Smith, *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism,* 66
[34] Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five roads to modernity* (London: Harvard university Press, 1993), 4-12

failure, since the absence of common philosophy hinders the Kurds to unite and to cooperate with each other.

According to Gellner nationalism is a first and foremost a political principle, which states that political and national units should be in a harmony. Nationalist sentiment is the sense of anger awakened because of the violation of this belief or the sense of satisfaction aroused by its achievement.[35] The violation of this principle takes different forms such as oppressing minorities through discrimination, cultural oppression, economic oppression, physical oppression and Genocide. However, usually even cultural rights, which are inalienable minimums, are denied to minorities in many states. Thus, tens of millions of people are still being refused the right to communicate in their language and hold their own identity.[36] And, the case of Kurdish people has shown the vivid pattern of this statement: the violation of primary rights of Kurds has always led to mass protests in all the four countries. Besides, the Kurdish problem has been officially denied in Turkey for a long period. Whereas, similarly in the other four countries there have always been a tendency to ignore the Kurdish issue for instance by putting their number as law as possible. Moreover, in Syria the Population Census does not include Kurds in order not to publicize their real numbers.

The motivations of nationalist movements vary from each other and from period to period. However, the main objective is self-determination through establishing nationhood or statehood. The concepts of nationhood, self-determination and statehood are interrelated, since in order to be a nation, they should want to have a state.[37] Similarly, Eriksen believes that "nationalist ideology is an ethnic ideology which demands a state on behalf of the ethnic

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[35] Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 99

[36] Chaliand, *A people without a country*, 2

[37] Ruth Ajonye "The politics of state formation: statehood as an expression of power"(Lund University, 2008), 23

group". [38] On the other hand nationhood does not necessarily lead to secession and does not require independence. Consequently, self-determination does not mean secession. Moreover the goal of nationhood is the formation of self-government within the borders of the state. [39] Thus, the motifs of such national movements can be linguistic, cultural or political autonomy, the recognition of identity or distinctiveness, the notion of homeland. [40] Statehood is the other way to achieve self-determination. In this case territorial demarcation is necessary, thus ethnic groups want total political independence. In other words nations eventually seek to the creation of their state.[41] In this regard currently Kurdish nationalist movement is demanding Kurdish nationhood in these states through recognition their identity in Turkey and Iran and formation of political autonomy in Syria. Whereas, in Iraq, gaining political autonomy, Kurds are moving to the stage of statehood formation.

Kurdish Community

Kurds are genuinely different numerous people recognizable and recognized for ages, who, numbering approximately 35 million, are now to be found in the areas of five different countries of the Middle East. All these states are more or less hostile toward Kurds and their aspirations. For several thousand years the Kurds have inhabited in the area, which nowadays comprises southeastern Turkey, northwest Iran, northern Iraq and eastern Syria.[42] These territories are the part of "Kurdistan", which has been in use for already thousand years in order to describe the areas which are considered Kurdish lands.[43] Therefore, Turkish part is called Northern Kurdistan, Iranian part - Eastern Kurdistan, Syrian part-Western Kurdistan

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[38] Thomas H. Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*: Anthropological Perspectives (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 99-118

[39] Max van der Storel "Nationhood and Statehood: Reconciling Ethnicity and Citizenship in an independent world" (OSCE, 2001), 5

[40] Smith, *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism,* 62-63

[41] Ruth Ajonye "The politics of state formation", 27

[42] Quil Lawrence, *Invisible Nation*, (Walker and Company, 2008), 12

[43] Turner ,*Kurdish Nationalism*, 382

and Northern Kurdistan in Iraq.[44] In addition, Kurdish people are found also in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan.[45] Moreover, there is a significant number of Kurds, approximately 1,5 million, living in European large countries.

The exact number of Kurds in any of these states is unknown. The reason of this uncertainty is that the exact number of Kurds is usually not publicized officially in the four main countries, while Kurds, on the other hand, are exaggerating it. Thus, according to the official calculations there are 8-12 million Kurds living in Turkey.[46] However as Kurdish sources state, there are approximately 20 million living in Turkey. [47] In Iran the situation is different, since the Iranian government has always stated that the Kurds are "pure Iranians" and in this way carefully avoiding any distinction between "Iranians" and "Persians". Therefore no statistics on composition of Muslim population in that country has ever been made.[48] However, according the most argumentative estimates the smaller number are in Iran nearly 4 million, followed by Iraq, about 2-2,5 million and Syria, having much smaller community.[49] On the other hand there are boosted calculations stated by Kurdish scholars, who claim that there are 10 million Kurds in Iran, followed by Iraq, 6 million, and Syria, 3 million. [50]

As it is shown, in Iraq and Turkey, Kurds are the largest minority groups creating challenges for these states. The official stance toward Kurds in Turkey has for a long period been that the Kurdish problem does not exist because the Kurds do not exist at all. Moreover, the Kurdish issue has been referred as an "Eastern question" and the Kurds as "Mountain Turks". In the case of the other three countries there is an official position to downplay the problem by putting the number of Kurds as low as possible. Hence, in Iran, Kurds, amounting 7 percent of the whole population, are the one of important minority groups, who together

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[44] Mella, *Kurdistan and The Kurds,* 25
[45] Gunter, *The A to Z of the Kurds*, 28-29
[46] Chaliand, *A people without a country, 39*
[47] Mella, *Kurdistan and The Kurds,* 25
[48] Chaliand, *A people without a country*, 96
[49] Turner ,*Kurdish Nationalism*, 381
[50] Mella, *Kurdistan and The Kurds,* 25

makes a bit more than half of the population, while native Persians amount only about 45 percent of the population. [51]

The geographic position of "Kurdistan" presents a sensitive point both politically, economically and strategically. Its geographic extend has been varied over the centuries. Thus, before the First World War being divided between Ottoman and Persian Empires following the war it was already divided between five different states. Currently, Turkey has the largest portion (43 percent) followed by Iran (31 percent), then Iraq (18 percent), Syria (6 percent) and Armenia and Azerbaijan (2 percent).[52]

"The Kurds have no friends but mountains" is a famous Kurdish proverb which describes the prominent role of mountains for the Kurdish people. Indeed, though high mountains have hindered Kurds to unite, they have also defined Kurdish history, culture and their character. Moreover, high mountains have contributed Kurds to fight and keep on struggling since the antiquity. They have protected them from fully conquered from Turks to the north, Iranians in the eastern part and Arabs to the west and south.[53]

Kurdish populated areas have a unique strategic position in the world. According to some European politicians Kurdish question is not about national movement but crude-oil –related problem. Indeed, being blessed with the large resources of water in the Turkish and Iraqi part and reserves of oil in the Iraqi and Syrian part "Kurdistan" has gained economic and political significance.[54] Moreover, though Kurds are economically underdeveloped comparing with the population of non-Kurdish areas in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, they have witnessed large extent of economic, political, social modernization during the 20th century.[55] Hence, rich resources of Kurdish populated areas in the four countries make the Kurdish problem one of the most heated disputes in the International arena. Thus, this area is rich for important

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[51] A. Turner, *Kurdish Nationalism*, 379
[52] Gunter, *The A to Z of the Kurds*, 29
[53] Ibid, 29
[54] Mella, *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, 22-23
[55] Gunter, *The A to Z of the Kurds*, 32

minerals such as uranium, iron, copper, silver, gold mercury, marble, coal and seas of crude oil.[56] For instance, Iraqi Kurdistan with its crude oil reserves is one of the world's biggest players in the energy industry. However, this factor is hindered by the tensions between Kurdistan Regional Government and Baghdad over revenues from the oil exports.[57] In Syrian case the bulk of oil is located in Deir Ezzor to the northeastern and in Hassake, where the Kurdish people are majority.[58]

Kurdish Nationalism

Being a largest nation after Arabs, Persians and Turks in the Middle East, the Kurds have raised their nationalist sentiments and started nationalist movement relatively later.[59] Thus, the desire of Kurds for nationhood in the states they inhabit has led to enduring Kurdish revolts following the First World War and has brought the notion of "Kurdish issue".[60] In this case it is necessary to distinguish between Kurdish and pan-Kurdish nationalism, since the latter is basically developed among the Diasporas Kurds, while the former is mainly a result of anger because of suppression of Kurds in these four countries.

According to Wadie Jwaideh, Kurdish nationalism is a natural and understandable phenomenon and the problem is that it has appeared late in the history and in the wrong place.[61] Turks, Arabs and Persians preceded the Kurds, and started the process of their nation-building. Therefore, their initiation of political, economic, cultural, military projects

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[56] Mella, *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, 22

[57] Guy Chazan "Kurdistan's vast reserves draw oil majors", Financial Times, January 7, 2013, accessed April 22, 2013, http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/8d15816c-4929-11e2-9225-00144feab49a.html#axzz2R6VrfPyj

[58] Josh Wood, "Syria's oil resources are a source of contention for competing groups" New York Times, March 20, 2013, accessed April 22, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/21/world/middleeast/syrias-oil-a-source-of-contention-for-competing-groups.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

[59] Izzettin Sumer "The future of rising Kurdish nationalism in the Middle East: Comparative perspectives of Turkey, Israel and Iran" (paper presented at the Middle East PhD students International conference, Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, SOAS, London, 07-08 of May, 2011)

[60] Gunter, *The A to Z of the Kurds*, 28

[61] Martin V. Bruinessen , "The Kurdish question: Whose question, whose answers", (Indiana University, Bloomington, 2004), 6

created discriminating environment for Kurds, who perceived national identity as "we" and "they." [62] Thus, any effort of Kurdish people to establish a nation-state of their own met Turkish, Arab, Persian opposition and the resistance of modern states. Therefore this has brought the rise of anger among Kurds causing the Kurdish nationalism to become "increasingly radical and uncompromising". [63]

The awakening of Kurdish nationalism is not only movement affected by the internal regional dynamics, but also different processes outside of the Middle East. Thus, globalization has brought new opportunities and developments to the Kurdish nationalist movement in the international arena. Hence, the immigration of Kurds to Europe started in 1980s, and already in 1990s formed significant Kurdish Diaspora in Europe. Kurdish Diaspora in Europe using wide opportunities on democratic-legal and economic level led to trans-boundary character of the Kurdish national demands. These benefits that Kurds have gained have supported to the "institutionalization of the Kurdish nationalism in the international arena". [64]

Nowadays, approximately one-fourth of Kurdish population inhabit outside of their called historical Kurdish homeland. Therefore second and third generation have grown up in a quite different environment, where the sense of "Kurdayeti" or "Kurdishness" has undoubtedly changed. Indeed, diffusion of Kurds among various territories such as Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Russia, European countries and the United States shows the fragmentation of Kurdish people. On the other hand regularized immigration to the Western European countries has reterritorialized the Kurdish communities. Thus, centers of Kurdish communities, political party headquarters are as usual in some parts of London and Berlin as they are in Iraq or in the southeastern part of Turkey. Consisting mainly of refuges and political exiles Kurdish Diaspora have brought "Kurdish question" in the center of European

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[62] Izzettin Sumer "The future of rising Kurdish nationalism in the Middle East", 6
[63] M. Bruinessen , "The Kurdish question", 6
[64] Izzettin Sumer "The future of rising Kurdish nationalism in the Middle East", 6

public debate. Thus many Kurds in the Diaspora wish to return to a "free and independent Kurdistan" however emphasizing the importance of formation of democratic institutions as they have seen during resettlement. [65] Therefore, Diaspora Kurds influenced by the democratic political culture of the West continue to hold a pressure on the Kurdistan Regional Government to launch the process of democratization and institutional reforms in the society.[66] Therefore if the Kurds gain some degree of security or autonomy in the countries they inhabit it will be result of Kurdish financial support and successful lobbies in the geopolitical centers such as Washington and London.[67]

The experience of emigration has been part of Kurdish history and therefore part of development of Kurdish nationalism. Hence, in their new places Kurds sustain and enhance the sense of Kurdish identity and organize themselves in various institutions and networks. For instance, Turkish Kurds in Germany prior to their arrival accepted the official stance of Turkey, which considered every citizen of Turkey a Turk. However gradually Kurds rediscovered their identity and dared to require recognizing their Kurdishness in Turkey and in the international arena.[68] Thus, Kurdish Diaspora has economic, psychological and political significant impact both on the rise of Kurdish nationalist sentiments separately in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria and on the development of Pan-Kurdish sentiments within and outside of "Kurdish homeland".

Pan-Kurdish Nationalism

Pan-Kurdish nationalism is an ideology that aims to unite all ethnic Kurds living with the boundaries of the "Kurdish homeland"- "Greater Kurdistan" in a single state. Greater

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[65] Carl Dahlman, "The political geography of Kurdistan", Eurasian Geography and Economics 43(2002): 294
[66] Khalid Khayati "Link between Kurdish nationalism and Diaspora", 09 January, 2008, accessed 23 April, 2013 http://www.kurdishglobe.net/display-article.html?id=D5F273B00D14BA4E81322EA8E235C513
[67] Dahlman, "The political geography of Kurdistan", 294
[68] Khalid Khayati "Link between Kurdish nationalism and Diaspora"

Kurdistan is a territory that consists of lands that are currently parts of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria and some part of Armenia. Unlike Kurdish nationalism which exists along separate lines in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, Pan-Kurdish nationalism operates within the international borders trying to unify Kurds under a single organization.[69] This task is carried mainly by the Kurds living in the European countries and the United States. Indeed, while Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey define the Kurdish claims in terms of separatism and secessionism, Kurdish youth in Europe is organized for reunification of Kurdish territories, that are, as they claim, under occupation. This strategy aims to create not only Kurdish identity but also "Kurdistani" identity. [70]

According to Diaspora Kurds the creation of independent Kurdistan is a duty and rights of all Kurds. However there have not been implemented serious attempts for this goal.[71] While according to Kurdish youth in Sweden the recognition of Kurdish identity by Arabs, Turks and Persians is already a success, since it is the prerequisite for the recognition of formation of common Kurdish state.[72]

Kurdish Diasporas have a position of criticizing the current political structure in the Middle East and give the importance to the collective struggle of Kurds in the region for recovering "Kurdish homeland". Hence, they consider suffering, oppression, denial of Kurdish identity as justification for the developing violent struggle to gain a full recognition.[73]

According to Miroslav Hroch, there are three main goals of non dominant nations' demands: "development of national culture based on their own language, which should be used in education, administration and in economic life; achievement of civil rights and political self-

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[69] Djene Bajalan "Pan-Kurdish Nationalism: Theory or Praxis"(paper presented at ASEN Conference, 2009), 1-2

[70] Barzoo Eliassi, "National conflict reflected in Diasporas: the quest for recognition among Kurdish youth in Sweden", 21 December, 2011, accessed 23 April, 2013
http://www.opendemocracy.net/opensecurity/barzoo-eliassi/national-conflict-reflected-in-diasporas-quest-for-recognition-among-kur

[71] Khalid Khayati "Link between Kurdish nationalism and Diaspora"

[72] Barzoo Eliassi, "National conflict reflected in Diasporas"

[73] Ibid

determination generally in terms of autonomy and independence in rare cases; creation of social structure out of ethnic group". [74]

Hroch provides three vital phases for successful national movement: the first phase is the rise of scholarly interest; the second is the period of patriotism; and the third one is a spread of mass national movement. During the first stage the attention of activists is directed to the awareness of their linguistic, cultural, social and historical rights. It is the stage of recognizing national identity. In the second phase modern nation-building process begins by awakening national consciousness among the group and gathering information about history and customs of the ethnic group. According to the author, this intellectual activity has an instrumental meaning for the political process of nation-building. The last stage the national movement is formed with its own program and ideology which reflects the interests of the group members.[75]

It's instrumental to apply Hroch's model of nationalism for examining and explaining Pan-Kurdish nationalism. Thus, in this regard all two goals of national ideology, according to Hroch's model, are accomplished in the pan-Kurdish ideology, while the third one is semi-completed. The issue is that only one part of the Kurdistan (Iraqi Kurdistan) has gained autonomy, whereas Kurds in Syria, Iran and Turkey are struggling for the first and second goals of the same model that is at least cultural autonomy.

Development of Pan-Kurdish nationalism can create risks and opportunities in the Middle East, which cannot be ignored both for the global actors as USA and 4+1 (Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria and Europe). The transformation of Pan-Kurdish sentiments into a structure based on nation-state in the Middle East will not only transform the political map of the Modern

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[74] Miroslav Hroch, "From National Movement to the fully-formed Nation: The nation-building process in Europe " in Mapping the Nation ed. by Gopal Balakrishnan (London: Verso, 1996), 78

[75] Nelly Bekus, *Struggle Over Identity: The official and the Alternative Belarusianness* (Central European University Press, 2010), 19

Middle East but also shift the balance of powers in the region.[76] However for the realization of this perspective the Kurds need to overcome some differences which they have due to several factors, mentioned above.

Hence, as Martin Van Bruinessen mentions, Kurdish people of the four states have neither common origin nor common culture, which immediately weakens the existence of pan-Kurdish nationalism. On the other hand there is a general scientific agreement that cultural unity or diversity is not a decisive factor, since the first European nation-states were not culturally homogeneous. In the case of Kurds, it was a long before the age of nationalism, that there was a sense of common identity among tribes. However, the remarkable diversity relates to Kurdish language and religion. In the case of language, there are different dialect groups, which are usually not understood by the native Kurdish speakers. That is why Kurds of different states prefer sometimes to communicate in the native languages of the countries they inhabit.[77] While the other weakness is their Confessional differences, since, according to many scientists, it divides rather than unites the Kurds. Majority are Sunni Muslims of the Shafi'i school (madhhab), but large parts of Kurds living in southern and south-eastern Kurdistan are Twelver Shi'i Muslims similar to the majority of population in southern Iraq and Iran. Alevi Kurds on the north-western Kurdistan have quite different religious rituals unlike Sunnis and Shiites. They are minority group among Alevis of Turkey, who feel closer to Turkish speaking co-religionists rather than Sunni Kurds. Besides, one part of the Kurds possesses Ahl-i Haqq and Yesidis, which are entirely separate religions.[78] Besides, the other point is that the Kurdish people have no ability or desire unable to unite for their common goal, common good. Moreover, intertribal rivalries have always been more important mission

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[76] Izzettin Sumer "The future of rising Kurdish nationalism in the Middle East", 7
[77] Bruinessen, *Kurdish Nationalism and Competing Ethnic Loyalties*, 5-7
[78] Ibid, 7

than combining to defeat the non-Kurd. Therefore, there have been prominent Kurdish leaders and rulers, but never anything that could lead to a national state.[79]

Currently most Kurdish nationalists in the Diaspora dream of a united and independent Kurdistan, however Iranian and Iraqi Kurds have always been seeking to gain self-determination, political autonomy and cultural rights within the states they live. In this case it is senseless to speak about Pan-Kurdish nationalism, when Kurdish people have different demands and dreams. On the other hand Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), the only large, strong and effective party surviving among Turkey's Kurds, sees the independence of all Kurdistan as its ultimate goal, which is now vague taking into account the absence of desire and action of Kurdish people and their leaders in Iran, Syria and Iraq.[80]

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[79] Turner ,*Kurdish Nationalism*, 383
[80] Bruinessen, *Kurdish Nationalism and Competing Ethnic Loyalties*, 10-11

The model of Iraqi Kurdistan

Historical Background

The end of the First World War and dissolution of Ottoman Empire provided wide opportunities for Allied powers to provide their own solutions to the issues of the Middle East. Thus, by the end of the First World War British Army occupied the former Ottoman districts, Baghdad and Basra, which are nowadays central and southern part of Iraq. After the agreement between Allied powers and the Sultan's Turkey, in 1918 Britain occupied also Mosul, which is now in northern Iraq.[81] Mosul was important for Great Britain because of its vast oil reserves. Thus, Britain could incorporate it into Iraq during the Sykes-Picot agreement in 1916. Britain took the mandate over Iraq, by the San Remo Conference in 1920, and considering the protests of Iraqi Arabs, Britain declared its intention to form an independent Arab country under British mandate. The leader of Arab revolt, Amir Faisal was appointed a king of Iraq at the same time raising the anger of Sulaymaniyya and Kirkuk inhabited by Kurdish population. Hence, an influential Kurdish religious person, Shaikh Mahmud was selected as a Governor of Sulaymaniyya, who proclaimed himself a king and declared the creation of Kurdish state in Iraq. Therefore, Britain used the threat of possible formation of Kurdish state in northern Iraq in order to strengthen its position and control over the country's vast oil resources, mainly in Mosul. The British aimed to form one or several semiautonomous Kurdish provinces in Mosul, which had a large Kurdish population. On the other hand, the vilayet of Mosul was important for Iraq, since Basra and Baghdad alone "could never be economic and strategic reasons for building a state".[82]

At that time Woodrow Wilson created a new stage for the principle of self-determination, since his declaration for world peace became a sacred document for the Kurds. Thus, their

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[81] Dahlman, "The political geography of Kurdistan", 285

[82] Edmund Ghareeb, *The Kurdish question in Iraq*, (Syracuse University Press, 1981), 29-30

dreamed independence was delivered in the French city of Sevres in 1920.[83] The latter was signed between the Allies and defeated Ottoman Turkey. Section 3 of the Treaty was entitled Kurdistan, where articles 62, 63 and 64 called for the creation of an independent Kurdish state, which would be set up under the mandate of League of Nations. This new state was to include most of the old Ottoman Kurdistan (now Turkish, Iraqi and Syrian). In the article 64 it is stated: "Kurds living in that part of Kurdistan which has till now been included in the vilayet of Mosul should be given the option of joining this independent Kurdish state."[84] However, the Treaty of Sevres was never confirmed and was substituted by the Treaty of Lausanne on July 24, 1923, which was favorable to Turkey, since there was no mention of Kurdistan.[85] According to the Treaty signed by Britain, France, Italy, Japan, Greece, Romania the Serb-Croat-Slovene state and Turkey gave international recognition to the Turkish state and divided the territories of Kurds into four parts. The Treaty did not provide any guarantee for the Kurdish rights and put the major part of Kurdish areas in the new established republican Turkey. Moreover the Treaty made no mention of Kurds and granted them no national rights. Ankara accepted a few articles concerning the respect of linguistic and national rights of Turkey's non-Turkish minorities, which were never implemented. Thus, the Section 3, Articles 37-44 specified some stipulations concerning "protection of minorities". Hence Ankara's nationalist authorities refused to include Kurds among minorities protected by certain stipulations claiming that Kurds and Turks are equal partners in the government of Turkey.[86] With this position Turkey took the initiative to solve the Kurdish issue the way he wanted, which gave Ankara sufficient leverages. Hence, the Treaty of Lausanne did not resolve the dispute over Mosul and other Kurdish areas and the responsibility of resolving the conflict was put under the mandate of League of Nations. The

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[83] Quil Lawrence, *Invisible Nation*, 13
[84] Chaliand, *A people without a country*, 145-146
[85] Turner, *Kurdish Nationalism*, 389-390
[86] Chaliand, *A people without a country*, 49-51

Council of the League made a decision taking into account the recommendations made by the commission visited the vilayet of Mosul. According to the report of the commission the vast majority of the population of Mosul was Kurds, and that the relations between Arabs and the Kurds "seemed shaky", therefore the Council of the League decided to include the province within Iraq; however Iraq should recognize the desire of Kurds to speak their own language and use it in their education; and besides, to appoint Kurdish officials to administer the area. Thus, the Iraqi government agreed to realize the decision of the Council. [87]

In 1930 the Treaty signed between Iraq and Britain put the end of British mandate and recognized the nominal independence of Iraq. The Kurds were not mentioned in the Treaty. These developments led to the immediate protests of the Kurdish population. Moreover, the rebels reminded the League of Nations about their decision and promises, but in 1932 the relevant committee declared:"discussion of the question of the autonomy of certain minorities in Iraq did not fall within its ambit". [88]

Thus, Iraq got its independence in 1932, which inherited the problems as a result of the rise of nationalist demands among Kurds because again social and economic issues, external pressures and interventions. [89] Furthermore, on July 8, 1937, the Saadabad Treaty signed among Turkey, Iran and Iraq in its Article 7 declared that the document was against "the formation and activity of associations, organizations, or armed bands seeking to overthrow established institution". Therefore this agreement was completely directed against Kurdish nationalist movement.[90] Hence, the new Kurdish nationalist movement led by religious-tribal Leaders, such as Shaikh Ahmad and his brother Mulla Mustafa al-Barzani developed and could take control of the Kurdish areas and refused to recognize the central government. [91]

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[87] Chaliand, *A people without a country*,147-148
[88] Ibid, 149
[89] Ghareeb, *The Kurdish question in Iraq*, 1-2
[90]Chaliand, *A people without a country*, 149
[91]Ghareeb, *The Kurdish question in Iraq*, 34

Barzani's activity as a leader in 1943 and 1945 revolts made him famous in Iran, where with the help of Soviet authorities, Kurdish government was formed in Mahabad. There Barzani was appointed a general of the army. However Mahabad republic had a short life, since the Soviet Union under pressure of the US and Britain allowed Iranian Government to act against it. [92] With the collapse of Mahabad, Barzani with his army left for the Soviet Union, where he remained 11 years.[93]

On July 14, 1958, the famous coup d'état was organized, which was followed by the collapse of Monarchy and declaration of the republic of Iraq by Gen Qassem. And after this revolution Qassem invited Barzani in Iraq in order to help him in his policies.[94] In return Qassem promised to fulfill the Kurdish demands in northern Iraq. However Barzani's growing power diminished any hope for normalization Arab-Kurdish relations. Thus, another revolt of Kurds started with the attack of Qassem in 1961 and lasted till 1963, when Qassem was killed and the Ba'thist party assumed power in Iraq. On the other hand, Ba'thists showed their suspicious attitude towards Kurdish loyalties and Communist party members and started their military campaign against them throughout 1963. [95]

During the next seven years the fighting resumed till the agreement signed in 1970 between the parties. Hence, on March 11, 1970, an autonomy agreement was reached between KDP and Saddam Hussein Government. This deal gave Kurds everything they wanted: Kurdish, as an official language, positions at Iraqi government, land redistribution and the return of Kurds displaced during the war. However, sooner the Kurds would learn that "treaties with Saddam were not worth a paper".[96] Thus, after several assassination attempts against Barzani and his family the KDP leader started to negotiate with Saddam's enemies, Iran and Israel.

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[92] Ghareeb, *The Kurdish question in Iraq*, 34
[93] Dahlman, "The political geography of Kurdistan", 285
[94] Shakro Mghoi, The Problem of National Autonomy of Kurdish Nation in the Republic of Iraq(1958-1970), (Yerevan: Academy of Sciences, 1977),102
[95] Dahlman, "The political geography of Kurdistan", 286
[96]Quil Lawrence, *Invisible Nation*, 22

On the other hand Barzani did not trust also Iran and, furthermore during his interview to the Washington Post in 1973, he claimed that the only state he believed was the United States.

The established peace collapsed in 1974, and the fighting restarted on March 1974. And, with the mediation of Algerian President, Iran and Iraq came to an agreement in 1975, Algiers Pact. This left the Kurds alone without supplies, which created no place of maneuver for Kurds. Thus, Barzani left for Iran with his supporters, and the Iraqi government put its control over the northern part.[97] Following the death of Barzani, his son, Massoud Barzani became a new leader of the KDP, while Jalal Talibani established his Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) on June 1, 1975. The KDP and PUK being divided by geography, philosophy, dialect, ambitions, had always been in conflict, which weakened the Kurdish struggle immensely.[98] In addition, the Arabization program was launched by the Iraqi Government and a large number of Arabs was settled in the areas of Kurdistan's oil fields, especially around Kirkuk. These measures led to military conflict between Iraqi army and Kurdish rebels in 1977, 1978 and 1979, and as a result 600 Kurdish villages were destroyed by fire and nearly 200.000 Kurds were extradited to other places of Iraq.

Anti-Kurdish policies were implemented also during Iran-Iraq War (1980-88), which included the assassination of thousands of Kurds with the use of chemical weapons. The first wave of attacks was implemented in 1982, when 8000 Barzanis were captured, while the second one was a process of systematic genocide against the Kurds including the Arabization of Kirkuk.[99] This included also the terrible oppression, such as genocidal Anfal campaigns during 1987-88 organized by Saddam Hussein and the chemical attack on the city of Halabja in 1988, March 16.[100]

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[97] Jacques Neriah, "The future of Kurdistan: Between Turkey, the Iraqi war and the Syrian revolt", (Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 2012), 10

[98] Michael Gunter, "The Kurdish question in perspective", World Affairs, vol. 166(2004): 202

[99] Neriah, "The future of Kurdistan", 10

[100] Gunter, "The Kurdish question in perspective", 202

The Kurdish demand finally captured the international attention in 1991 following the years of the Gulf War. Hence, after the oppression of the Kurdish revolt of March in 1991, which took place after Saddam Hussein's defeat by the US, Iraqi army recaptured the major part of the Kurdish areas making 1,5 million Kurds leave their homes and flee to the Turkish and Iranian borders. Thus, U.N Security Council Resolution 688 demanded that Iraq immediately to end its repression in the Kurdish populated areas and to allow access for the International humanitarian aid. This was the first International document that Kurds received such an official mention since the League of Nation's declaration about Mosul in 1925. Besides, the US established a no-fly zone above the 36th line of latitude, which cuts across Kurdistan. [101]

On May, 1992 the Kurds had their first parliamentary elections and created the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). Though official boundary has been set between KRG and Iraqi Government there are till now disputes over some territories including the city of Kirkuk. [102]

Autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan

In 1992 Iraqi Kurdistan Front, which was an alliance of different political forces of Kurdistan Region, adopted the Law Nos. 1 and 2: the Law of Iraqi Kurdistan National Assembly and the Leader of Kurdistan Liberation Movement. These laws were not constitutional, but were considered rules for governing relationship between different political and administrative bodies. The documents determined the main characteristics and political directions of the de facto state. Thus, law no. 1, signed on May 8, 1992, was the first law in the history of Iraq enacted by a de facto Kurdish authority, which described the principles and procedures of

[101] Neriah, "The future of Kurdistan", 10
[102] Ibid, 10

KNA. Therefore, the resolution to hold general elections in Iraqi Kurdistan was the statement of this law. [103]

On May 19, 1992, the elections of Kurdistan National Assembly were held establishing parliamentary democracy in Iraqi Kurdistan. The condition of candidature was based on the experience of existing liberal democracies. [104]The regional Assembly had 111 seats, where, as a result of popular vote, the most powerful Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and Barzani's Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) won equal shares. [105]

According to law no. 2, executive power of the Kurdistan region would be headed by the leader of the Kurdistan Liberation Movement. A presidential style system was planned by the IKF, which stated that both president and the assembly would be elected, where the assembly would appoint the Government, while the president would have the right to veto.[106]

On July, 1992 the coalition government, Kurdistan Regional Government was formed. One of the most important documents accepted on 4 December, 1992 was the decision on the resolution of Kurdish issue on the basis of federative structure within the Republic of Iraq. Thus this was a memorial document, since it was a typical model that the Kurdish political forces were seeking at the time of political crisis of the country.[107]

The three northern governorates (provinces) of Dahuk, Arbil and Sulaymaniyya were established under the control of Kurdistan Regional Government. In fact there were two KRG structures dominated by two main parties: one was in Arbil (KDP) and the other in Sulaymaniyya (PUK). Hence, northern Iraq was divided between Northwestern part governed by KDP and southeastern part governed by PUK, as like it was during the early years of the Iran-Iraq War. Thus, the strategic linking points with Iran and Turkey have been controlled

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[103] Gareth Stansfield, *Iraqi Kurdistan: Political development and emergent democracy*, (RoutledgeCurzon, 2003),124-125
[104] Ibid, 126
[105] Stanislav Ivanov, *Iraqi Kurdistan at this stage (1991-2011 years)*, (Moscow, IMEMO RAS, 2011), 8
[106] Stansfield, *Iraqi Kurdistan*, 127
[107] Ivanov, *Iraqi Kurdistan at this stage*, 8

by the KDP. [108] Therefore the political life was dominated by enduring fighting between these forces rather than discussion and cooperation. Thus, by 1993, the de facto state was on the verge of being torn apart though attempted compromise between two parties brought to the strategic agreement over the establishment of Presidential Council on December 30 of the same year.[109] However in 1994 the military struggle over a land dispute broke out between two parties and continued for four years though there were short periods for peaceful negotiations between Talabani and Barzani mediated by United States, France and Turkish and Iranian Governments. Hence, Paris meeting on 16-20, 1994, which was held at the presence of French Government, representatives of the Kurdish Institute and observers from US and British Embassies, touched upon the necessity of creation of constitution for Kurdistan. However a planned agreement was not signed because of Turkey's opposition. In 1996 after durable fighting the other round of negotiations was held in Ankara leading to the peace agreement between KDP and PUK. According to this agreement the two parties agreed to cooperate on the spheres of ideology, military-political and foreign affairs, as well as for the development of legal, financial-economic fields of Iraqi Kurdistan.[110] Moreover, on September 17, 1998 the parties met in Washington, where they came with a political declaration, according to which they decided to form an interim administration in Erbil, followed by multi-party elections to unify KRG and KNA. Besides, they claimed that they would cooperate against any anti-Turkish activity of PKK in the territory of Iraqi Kurdistan and would prevent further arm conflicts among Kurds. The Washington agreement was an important one, since it touched upon the federative structure of Iraq, which was the main demand of the Kurds. Thus, the parties emphasized their adherence towards the territorial

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[108] Dahlman, "The political geography of Kurdistan", 290
[109] Stansfield, *Iraqi Kurdistan*, 97
[110] Ivanov, *Iraqi Kurdistan at this stage*, 11-12

integrity of Iraq, where Kurdish people would have human and political rights protected in the basis of federation. [111]

The Second Gulf War created challenges for the Kurdish nationalist movement in Iraq. Iraqi Kurdistan's leaders supported the idea of removing Saddam Hussein; however they feared that the US plan would allow Turkish army to enter Iraqi Kurdistan during the war. While Turkey, at the same time refused to use its territory for attacking Hussein fearing that Iraqi Kurds could create a dangerous model for Kurds in Turkey. Therefore, the US relied on the Iraqi Kurds to maintain the control in the north. The US invasion in Iraq was considered liberation for Iraqi Kurds. [112]On the other hand they recognized the negative outcomes of the war on the political structure of Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan. Besides it would bring instability in all the spheres of the new emerging Kurdish nationhood. Thus the political structure of Iraqi Kurdistan was discussed during the session of unified Parliament in Erbil in 2002. Starting from this period the negotiations on the separate Constitution of Iraqi Kurdistan have started. The main decision was made about the city Kirkuk, which was considered a part of Iraqi Kurdistan and about the priority of Kurdistan's constitution over Iraqi Kurdistan, which in fact meant that Iraq would be not federal but confederative republic.[113] However the final version has not adopted yet, therefore it still remains Draft Constitution.

After the second Gulf war and the death of Saddam Hussein the leaders of Iraqi Kurdistan were stressing the necessity of adoption of Constitution of Iraq, which would give the Kurdistan a legitimate status. Moreover Kurdish nationalists were demanding wide privileges for Iraqi Kurdistan as a federative subject, even claiming the possibility of creation of the independent state. In addition they were planning to expand the territories of the region by including Mosul, Kirkuk, Sinjar and Hanekin. Thus, on March 8, 2004, 25-page Interim

[111] Ivanov, *Iraqi Kurdistan at this stage*, 11-12
[112] Barkey, *Preventing conflict over Kurdistan*, 7
[113] Ivanov, *Iraqi Kurdistan at this stage*, 26

Constitution of Iraq was adopted declaring the establishment of republican, federative, democratic, pluralistic system of Iraq. Kurdish regional Government was recognized as an official regional government within the Republic of Iraq. The document stated the intention to hold provincial and Kurdistan National Assembly elections with those of National Assembly of Iraq simultaneously by 31 January, 2005.[114]

The 1546 Resolution of the Security Council of UN adopted on June 8, 2004 was decisive for the future of Iraqi Kurdistan. This document, which did not recognize the rights of Kurds to self-determination and the legitimacy of existence of regional government in Iraqi Kurdistan, raised the anger of Kurdish sentiments. Thus, some political Kurdish activists sent a letter to G. Bush claiming the Security Council Resolution ignored the Law of Transitional Administration of Iraq. Moreover some activists were demanding to declare independence of Kurdistan; however Barzani and Talabani expressed their willingness to continue the dialogue with the new forming Government of Iraq in order to escape armed confrontation and to come to an agreement on the existing disputes.[115]

The adoption of Iraq Constitution of 15 October, 2005 eventually included the region of Kurdistan in the Federal State of Iraq. This constitution was welcomed by the Kurds, since it satisfied the major demands of Iraqi Kurds. Thus, the article 4 states that the official languages of Iraq are Kurdish and Arabic.[116] What is important, that Kurdish militia, peshmerga, is allowed to operate and has policy power over the Kurdistan region. Thus, according to the Article 110 Kurdistan's Federal government has rights formulate and implement national security policy including creation and management of armed forces to guarantee Iraq's security.[117] Therefore it the peshmerga cannot be used against the Central government. Besides, the Constitution in the same article states that the region has rights to

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[114] Ivanov, *Iraqi Kurdistan at this stage*, 38-39
[115] Ibid, 42
[116] Constitution of Iraq, article 4, section 1
[117] Constitution of Iraq, article 110, section 4

establish diplomatic missions abroad and have its own social and cultural policies.[118] Moreover Kurdish National Assembly is the only subject of the Federal Republic of Iraq which has drafted its own Constitution on November, 2002. [119]Thus, According to Barzani it was the best option of constitution that the Kurds could achieve within Iraq.[120]

On 7 May, 2006 the unification of Kurdish Regional Government was a historical event for the Kurds, since it was a step forward to the development of Iraqi Kurdistan. Thus, this put the end to an enduring conflict between KDP and PUK, which was an obstacle for fighting against the anti-Kurdish policy of Ba'th regime. Therefore, the new constitution and the 2006 extraordinary session of National Assembly strengthened the incentives for further developments of Iraqi Kurdistan on the basis of law, peace, security and stability. Hence in this historical stage the unification of Kurds on the search of model of self-determination highly limited the attempts of both internal and foreign anti-Kurdish forces to meddle in internal politics of Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan.[121] On the other hand there are still serious disputes between KRG and Baghdad. Thus the major issues include ownership of natural resources and control of revenues from them, the role and functions of KRG army or peshmerga, the final status of Kirkuk and other territories such as Sinjar and Makhmur and also Mosul.[122] The main tensions are connected with Kirkuk, which, according to some observes, is an indicator that whether the Kurds could get independence. The reason of this thinking is that Kirkuk is famous for its oil reserves and, therefore it would grant the Kurds financial resources to secede. On the other hand the Kurds claimed that they would even agree on any Constitutional requirement, according to which Kirkuk oilfields should be under the control of Baghdad. Thus Kirkuk is considered a "heart" of Kurdistan for the Kurds;

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[118] Constitution of Iraq, article 110, section 4

[119] Valentina Scotti, "Four countries, one people: legal issues on Kurdish issue", (Paper presented at SHUR Conference, LUISS "Guido Carli " , 4-6 June, 2009), 9

[120] Ivanov, *Iraqi Kurdistan at this stage*, 51

[121] Ibid, 53

[122] Michael Gunter, The Kurds Ascending: The evolving solution to the Kurdish issue in Iraq and Turkey, (New York, 2008), 55

therefore it has more historical and cultural meaning for them. Moreover they consider Kirkuk to be Kurdish "Jerusalem". [123] According to Iraqi Constitution the Kirkuk status referendum was planned to be passed not later than December, 31, 2007, which would decide whether it would be in the territory of KRG or not, but it has not been held yet. [124]

After the military withdrawal of US from Iraq in 2011 the conflict between Sunni vice-president and Shia Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has deteriorated Erbil- Baghdad relations. Thus backed by Turkey KRG is seeking to overthrow al-Maliki, which has not shown any success. Hence, during his speech to Washington Institute on 12 April, 2012 Massoud Barzani has stated that violation of Iraqi Constitution has become natural for al-Maliki, thus he holds the positions of Prime Minister and at the same time commander-in-chief of the armed forces, minister of defense , head of intelligence and minister of interior affairs. Barzani claims that the present status of Iraqi Kurdistan cannot last long and there is a need for referendum to determine the future status of KRG taking into account the abuse of power in Baghdad. [125]

At the core of this friction is the issue of Kurdistan's possible independence, since al Maliki fears that Iraqi Kurdistan attracting many foreign investment, thus gaining economical independence, will seek to separation and independence from Iraq. Hence, Baghdad sees Erbil as a threat to Iraqi sovereignty by realizing independent oil contracts (Exxon, Total, Chevron, Gazprom, etc), by using peshmerga units to gain influence in disputed areas and recently even agreed with the Turkish foreign minister about his visit to Kirkuk without any prior agreement with Baghdad. Whereas on 3 September Iraq's council of Ministers declared that foreign officials cannot enter Iraqi cities without Baghdad's consent. In its turn, Erbil sees Maliki regime as an authoritarian rule, which does not respect the constitution or the

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[123] Gareth Stansfield et al., "The Kurdish policy Imperative", (Briefing paper presenting in Chatham House, Middle East Programme, December, 2007), 5
[124] Constitution of Iraq, article 140, section 6
[125] Neriah, "The future of Kurdistan", 14

2010 Erbil Agreement and also the 140 Article of Constitution, according to which the referendum should be held to determine the status of Kirkuk.[126]

Furthermore the Syrian revolt and developments of Syrian Kurds has their impact on the deterioration of Erbil-Baghdad relations. Thus, Barzani has been supporting Syrian Kurds, while al-Maliki backed by Iran, has been prone to maintain the Assad regime. This conflict has brought even military tensions between KRG and Baghdad in late July at the Syrian border, where al-Maliki's government decided to send the Iraqi army to the territory linking Iraqi Kurdistan with the Kurdish areas of Syria. With this initiative the Central government wanted to block the KRG supplies to the Syrian Kurds. To respond this Barzani started to hold the Kurdish Peshmerga units there. [127]

Neighbors

The autonomy of Iraqi Kurdistan invigorated the sense of Kurdish nationhood. Previously building their national narrative on the tragedy on Anfal, currently Kurds could emphasize more "positive" event such as autonomy and establishment of political institutions. The dominated mood among Kurds became the notion of "Kurdayeti" (Kurdishness), Kurdish nationalism and the right of Kurds to possess their nationhood. [128] Thus, there was a fear among neighboring countries that the autonomous region and the rise of Kurdish nationalism could have its impact on the Kurdish issue within their states. In this respect KRG meets major difficulties in the way it handles two-level strategic relationships: with those regional states who possess Kurdish minorities and with these Kurdish minorities separately. [129] Thus,

[126] Renad Mansour, "Iraqi Kurdistan and the Syrian-Kurd Pursuit of Autonomy", 24 September, 2012, Aljazeera Center for Studies, accessed 3 May, 2013
http://studies.aljazeera.net/en/reports/2012/09/201291910402907471.htm
[127] Neriah, "The future of Kurdistan", 14
[128] Gareth Stansfield et al., "The Kurdish policy Imperative", (Briefing paper presenting in Chatham House, Middle East Programme, December, 2007)
[129] Pamela Urrutia and Ana Villellas, "Reopening the Kurdish question: states, communities and proxies in a time of turmoil", (Norwegian Peace building Resource Center, September 2012,)6

the formation of Iraqi Kurdistan increased the fear of Ankara and Tehran; therefore they started to cooperate in several ways in order to prevent the emergence of Kurdish nationhood in Iraq. Moreover, in 1993 two states signed an agreement to stop the illegal border crossings. On the other hand Iran and Turkey continued supporting respectively PUK and KDP during the civil war in the autonomous region.[130] However, after the establishment of autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan the positions of Turkey and Iran have changed. Ankara-Erbil-Tehran triangle elations are based mainly on economic cooperation. For instance, Ankara is the core strategic partner of oil export for Iraqi Kurdistan. On the other hand the factor of Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) should not be ignored. Besides, with the emergence of Shia-Sunni split in Iraq, Iraqi Kurds have started to cooperate with Ankara for protection and for contra- balancing Iranian influence in the country. While in the case of Iran major economic and trade relations should be considered. Thus Iran is the major trade partner of Erbil and in its turn Iran, affected by International sanctions, increases its cooperation with Iraqi Kurdistan. And while the establishment of autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan has led to the high level of political and national consciousness among Iranian Kurds, while developing cooperation between Iraqi Kurdistan and Iran has prevented the armed struggle of Iranian Kurds against Tehran. On the other hand Kurds in Iran see the establishment of KRG as a possible model.

Syrian Kurds, unlike other Kurdish communities have always been highly affected by the Kurdish and Kurdish-state relations in the Middle East. Thus they have always been influenced by strong Kurdish organizations, PKK in Turkey and Iraqi Kurds. Therefore the creation of autonomous Kurdish region in Iraq has become an inspiration for Syrian Kurds.[131] However it was only during the Syrian revolt, when they decided to realize their dream by

[130] Aylin Unver Noi, **"**The Arab spring, its effects on the Kurds, and the approaches of Turkey, Iran, Syria, and Iraq on the Kurdish issue", Middle East Review of International Affairs, Vol. 16, no. 2 (2012): 21-22
[131] Stansfield et al., "The Kurdish policy Imperative", 6

creating a system similar to Iraqi federalism with the unprecedented Kurdish autonomy. On the other hand currently the demands of Syrian Kurds are modest, since they demand only decentralized Syria, where the minorities will have equal right. [132]

In other words, these events have created more difficulties for regional states to approach Kurdish issue at the national level without considering Kurdish communities in other countries. On the other hand, as history shows the Kurdish people always advance the interests of their community at the expense of the pan- Kurdish demands. Thus this statement becomes clear when we look at the policy of KRG, which is trying to balance its relations with regional countries and Pan-Kurdish sentiments. Though being an inspiration for Kurdish minorities in Turkey, Iran and Syria, the model of Iraqi Kurdistan has shown many weaknesses during the recent years. Thus, the strong secessionist feelings of Kurds in the complicated federal arrangement bring high degree hostility between center and the region. Therefore, the center-region tensions can lead to an enduring conflict not only in Iraq but also in the countries where Kurdish minorities have strong nationalist sentiments.

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[132] Mansour, "Iraqi Kurdistan and the Syrian-Kurd Pursuit of Autonomy"

Emerging paradigms of Kurdish nationhood in Syria, Iran and Turkey

Turkey

The Kurdish issue in Turkey is the most problematic of all. The question has been with Turkey since the end of the First World War with the treaties of Sevres in 1920 and Lausanne in 1923. The Kurdish nationalism in Turkey has experienced several stages since the 1920-30s. The first phase has experienced a number of revolts soon after the foundation of modern Turkey: The Shaikh Said revolt in 1925, the Ararat revolt in 1928, Dersim revolt in 1937-38. On the other hand, these rebellions were far away from being nationalist, since they had mainly Islamic and tribal allegiance.[133] However in order to oppress these revolts, Turkish government on one hand displaced the Kurdish people over Turkish territories in this way trying to break their tribal traditional unity and on the other hand reduced ethno-cultural cohesion with the Kurdish communities settled over the border in order to limit their cultural rights. Besides under the article 2 of 1924 Constitution Ankara prevented to use other languages but Turkish; thus Kurdish was prohibited with 3 March decree no. 430 about the educational system, which emphasized the right of education only in Turkish. Moreover on June 10, 1925 law no. 1097 launched the Southern Eastern Anatolia Project (GAP) began the expulsion of Kurds from the Kurdish territories and distributed to the Turkish territories in order "to limit their presence under the 5 % of the population of the villages they inhabited".[134]

After passive activity during 1940-50s Kurdish nationalist movement entered the third stage in the 1960-70s, which was characterized by an emergence of a large number of political

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[133] Konrad Hischler, "Defining the Nation: Kurdish historiography in Turkey in 1990s", Middle Eastern Studies 37(2001): 146

[134] Scotti, "Four countries, one people", 5

organizations, which became more radical during the 1970s.[135] Thus with the creation of

PKK (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan-Kurdistan's Workers Party) in 1978 led by Abdullah

Ocalan the political situation in Turkey has become strained. Moreover, many states and

organizations, such as the United States, NATO, UN and European Union define it as a

terrorist organization. Hence, the fourth phase starting from 1984, when PKK launched a

military campaign, Ankara has witnessed the longest military campaign in the history of the

Turkish Republic. [136]

PKK emerged as an organization with a Marxist ideology, which sought an independent

socialist Kurdistan out of Turkey, which would unite all Kurdish territories of Iran, Iraq,

Syria and Turkey in one single state. In other words the philosophy of PKK was based on

Pan-Kurdish nationalism. On the other hand this approach had not found wide support not

only among Kurds living outside of the Turkish border, but also Kurds living in Turkey.[137]

Therefore this initial goal of independence has changed in 1990s especially with the

formation of autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan.

Since the capture of Ocalan in 1999 and the emergence of AKP (Justice and Development

Party) to power in 2002, the shift in Kurdish issue in Turkey became visible. Thus, on

February 1999 Turkish Intelligence arrested Ocalan in Nairobi and put him in prison on the

island of Imrali. This created "trauma period" for the PKK, which brought a decline in

Kurdish nationalism and lasted till 2005, when Kurdish violent disturbances began in several

cities in the southeastern part of Turkey in 2006. All these events showed Ankara that

Kurdish issue cannot be ignored and their rights should be addressed.[138]

During the first years of its government AKP did not enjoy sufficient power to deal with the

Kurdish question in the country, since there were other challenging issues that Ankara was

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135 Hischler, "Defining the Nation",146
136 Neriah, "The future of Kurdistan", 15
137 Defne Ezgi "Making Secession Possible: Federalism as a capacity building instrument"(PhD diss., New York University,2009), 13
138 Ezgi "Making Secession Possible",16-17

facing. However when Recep Tayyip Erdogan won his second election as a Prime-Minister in 2007, he took the initiative to address the question. Thus he believes that there is no solution to Kurdish issue and PKK war but negotiations, also by rebuilding the state and relationship with the people legally, politically and constitutionally. [139] Consequently, the conditions of Turkish Kurds have been improved with Erdogan's conservative Justice and Development Party. Moreover, he is the first Turkish leader, who accepts their "mistakes" in handling the Kurdish issue. In this regard, the recognition of the existence of Kurdish problem in Turkey which has denied it for a century was a step forward for a peaceful solution.

On July 29, 2009 Turkish Government started "Kurdish opening", which refers to the democratic reforms in Turkey. Turkish Interior Minister Besir Atalay called all political and societal parties to be engaged in searching peaceful solution the Kurdish issue, which is an indisputable part of democratic path of Turkish state. On the other hand "Kurdish opening" was initiated also in the beginning of 1990s, though the term was not common at that time.[140] Hence, Turgut Ozal was the first government official who understood the seriousness of the issue. He suggested decentralization and more liberal policy towards Kurds, otherwise, as he claimed the Kurdish nationalist movement would create "social earthquake" in Turkey.[141] He went further suggesting formation of Turkish-Kurdish federation as a possible conflict solution.[142] And the crucial contribution was made in 1991, when certain laws were adopted allowing the use of the Kurdish language in informal speech and music not for political and educational purposes, as well as in the media.[143] This "opening" came to its end in 1993 with

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[139] "Amending Turkish Constitution for Kurdish Question", (Position Paper presented at Al Jazeera Center for Studies, March 3, 2013), 4

[140] Halil Karaveli, "Reconciling statism with freedom: Turkey's Kurdish opening", (Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program, 2010),7-8

[141] Ezgi "Making Secession Possible", 17-18

[142] Karaveli, "Reconciling statism with freedom", 8

[143]Ezgi "Making Secession Possible", 17-18

the decision of Constitutional Court to ban Kurdish People's Labor Party, which was the representative of Kurdish movement in the parliament.[144]

Current stage of "opening" has a contradictory nature, since with some concessions such as recognition of Kurdish reality, daily broadcasting in Kurdish, acceptance of multiculturalism instead of assimilation policy, Ankara has continued mass arrests and military actions against PKK. [145] Besides, with slow reforms AK leader has started to ease restrictions on the Kurdish language, transferred financial aid to Kurdish ruined region and initiated secret talks with Ocalan. [146] On the other hand, the exact context and timetable of the "opening" has never been raised, which according to some politicians (Umit Boyner, Ozdem Sanberk) make the process weak and difficult to insure.[147] Thus, there was a widespread opinion that "Kurdish opening" was deadlocked, however Syrian crisis, Turkey's aspiration to become a model in the Muslim world, also EU accession problems and rapid regionalization of Kurdish issue brought new phase of "Kurdish opening" in Turkey, which was noticed already in the progressive negotiations with Ocalan.

It is believed that secret talks with Ocalan have started since 2010 and since 2012 July it became noticeable, that Ocalan's dialogue with Fidan, who is the head of Turkish Intelligence, has led to peace negotiations. On 21 February 2013 Ocalan gave the Turkish government a draft road map, according to which the Kurdish issue would be solved. At the same time Erdogan was giving a tour in the southern villages presenting a peace plan. On 22 February the government introduced the fourth judicial amendment, which would allow releasing thousands of prisoners of Union of Kurdish Communities (KCK), which is affiliated to the PKK. However, even if with these reforms it will be impossible to handle Kurdish issue in Turkey without changing the constitutional structure of the country.

[144] Karaveli, "Reconciling statism with freedom", 8
[145] Ibid, 7-8
[146] Neriah, "The future of Kurdistan", 16
[147] Karaveli, "Reconciling statism with freedom", 16-17

Therefore, the Commission of Constitutional Agreement was created by the government during October and November, 2011 in order to draft a new constitution, however Constitution drafting has not finished though the deadline is on May, 2013.[148]

Erdogan needs this Constitution to be ready till autumn 2014 in order to change the regime of the state from parliamentary to presidential democracy. His goal is to win the next presidential elections and have a more power to solve the Kurdish issue as he wants. Since being in his last term as a prime minister he will not be able to become an executive president without a change in the state structure, Therefore, without modifying state structure and also the definition of nationhood and citizenship Erdogan will not be able to bring comprehensive and long-lasting solution to the Kurdish question.[149]

This is a new period for Kurdish Nationalist movement, since the Ocalan's agreement with the Turkish Government brings new features to the Turkish Kurds' perceptions of nationhood. Thus the most important demand of Kurds is identity and cultural based. Since the 1990s they are claiming for establishment of democratic autonomy which will give them "autonomous administration" of their cities. They want to govern themselves, to be represented with their flag, assemblies and own language in Turkey. This autonomy does not include border issues, since it is social and economic autonomy. [150]On the other hand currently, being close to peaceful settlement with Ankara, Kurdish Nationalist movement requires cultural and linguistic rights, an end to discriminatory laws, an increase of political participation and agreed settlement of PKK fighters. [151]

The achievement of these demands is a short-term goal for the Kurdish Nationalist movement, since the decentralized democracy is a prerequisite for reaching higher level of Kurdish nationhood in Turkey. According to Ocalan's views the emergence of independent

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[148] "Amending Turkish Constitution for Kurdish Question", 5
[149] Ibid, 6
[150] Ezgi "Making Secession Possible", 18
[151] Urrutia and Villellas, "Reopening the Kurdish question", 3

Kurdistan is not what the Kurdish nationalist aspirations require, but rather lifting barriers and increasing communication and cooperation between Kurdish groups split between Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. This for now can be considered the long-term goal of Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkey.[152]

Transformation of Turkey's Kurdish policy and current stage of "Kurdish opening" should also be linked to the Syrian civil war. Thus the formation of the second nationhood of Kurds in its borders can bring dangerous consequences for Ankara, since this can inspire Turkish Kurds. In this regard the temporary solution will help Erdogan to gain voices from the Kurdish party (Peace and Democracy Party) members in the parliament in order to make changes in the Constitution and to win during coming presidential elections. Besides, this tranquil atmosphere is again preferable for Turkey in order to escape possible raise of pan-Kurdish sentiments and to continue democratic rhetoric for recovering its major role in the regional and international politics.

Iran

Being twice as many Kurds as in Iraq, the Kurdish nationalist movement has been relatively less successful due to strong nationalist government of Iran. On the other hand Kurds have not benefited from the positive developments of Kurdish struggle in Iraq and Turkey.[153]

The rise of Kurdish nationalism and increased sentiments of nationhood in Iran are connected with the end of the Second World War. Thus the first Kurdish nationhood in forms of autonomy was formed in Iran, with the establishment of the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad on December 15, 1945. On January 22, 1946 a national parliament with thirteen seats was formed and Qazi Mohammed was elected as a president of the new republic. Shortly before the declaration, Qazi Mohammed formed Democratic Party of Kurdistan, which presented all

[152] "Amending Turkish Constitution for Kurdish Question", 6
[153] Gunter, "The Kurdish question in perspective", 203

the demands of Iranian Kurds. The main idea of the manifesto signed by Mohammed and 105 leading Kurds was the right of self-government with the use of Kurdish language in education and in administrative affairs. Thus it was the beginning of existence of the Kurdish autonomy within the Iranian state.[154] However this experience lasted till December, 1946, since the Cold War and especially the withdrawal of Soviet troops, which were protecting the republic put the end to the established tolerance and freedom. Therefore Kurds became again under the power of the Shah, who started to use land reforms in order to annex Kurdish properties and spread his sovereignty in the Kurdish region.[155]

The existence of the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad was a brief realization of Iranian Kurds' dream, which strongly revitalized the cultural idea of Kurdish community. Indeed, during this short period Kurdish was accepted as an official language, while Kurdish traditions and customs started to be used for the national flag and anthem. [156] Thus the existence of the first de facto Kurdish state has become an inspiration for the nationalist Kurds. With the formation of autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan these sentiments increased while again facing the oppression of Iranian government.

Since the collapse of Mahabad republic Iranian Kurds became engaged in a politico-military organization in the Kurdistan Democratic Party-Iran (KDPI) and Komala (Revolutionary Organization of Kurdish Toilers), which briefly consolidated regional Kurdish nationalist movements. Both under the Shah and Islamic Republic Iranian Kurds have suffered from the denial of cultural rights, lack of economic development and political participation. [157] On the other hand after the Islamic revolution in 1979, the Supreme Guide Ayatollah Khomeini tried to achieve the trust of Kurds and gave them a type of self-government taking into account their religious belonging to Sunni Islam, which makes them minority among dominant Shia

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[154] Chaliand, *A people without a country*,127
[155] Scotti, "Four countries, one people", 9
[156] Ibid, 9
[157] Dahlman, "The political geography of Kurdistan", 284-285

majority of the country. However recognition of religious difference is not what Iranian Kurd have been claiming, since it differs from the demand of autonomy based on their ethnical identity and traditions. Thus, the Koran considers and accepts only the idea of community of the believers and ignores the concept of nation; therefore it is difficult to introduce in Iran the goal for independence or autonomy in one part of the state based on ethnicity. Hence facing the rise of demands of autonomy by Iranian Kurds and taking advantage from the Iran-Iraqi war, Khomeini declared *jihad* against Kurds and launched an operation of regular extinctions.[158]

It was after Iran-Iraqi war that the conditions of Iranian Kurds somehow improved. Indeed, there are currently laws in the Constitution of Iran which provide limited rights to Kurds. Thus, the Article 15 of the Constitution allows to use regional and tribal languages in press and mass media and also to teach Kurdish literature in schools.[159] Another controversial Article refers to the political participation. Hence, Kurdish parties are considered anti-revolutionary and consequently the article 8 of 1982 Law prohibits the existence of parties whose activity is under control of specific commission composed of Minister of Internal Affairs, two members of Judiciary, two members of Legislative power.[160]

The increase of Kurdish nationalist sentiments was noticed after the capture of Ocalan in 1999. Thus, Kurdish nationalists started massive protests, which were viewed as a "transnationalization" of Kurdish nationalist movement and were strictly suppressed.[161] Moreover, since traditional political parties were absent among Iranian Kurds in 1990s, they joined PKK activities. Thus, already in 2004 PKK created Party of Free life of Kurdistan, which mainly consists of the young. Hence, PJAK remains the only Kurdish rebel group who

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[158] Scotti, "Four countries, one people", 9-10
[159] Constitution of Islamic Republic of Iran, article 15, chapter 2
[160] Scotti, "Four countries, one people", 10
[161] Neriah, "The future of Kurdistan", 19

organizes several attacks against the state.[162] Moreover, with the establishment of autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan the position of Iranian Kurds who stay in Iraqi Kurdistan has changed. The development of good relations between Iran and KRG would not allow an armed struggle of Iranian Kurds against Iran. Thus, KDPI and Komala are prevented from the military actions against Iranian government.[163]

Iranian Kurds have faced a long years of discrimination in Iran. Thus, since the beginning of the twenty first century "several Kurdish activists, writers and teachers have been arrested for their activities and sentenced to the death penalty". Since 2009 Iran has started the campaign of arresting and executing Kurdish political activists and despite repeated international demands to release political prisoners Iranian Government executes them without prior notice. Moreover they refuse to give their bodies to their relatives. As for 2010, "there were at least sixteen Kurdish political prisoners on death row". [164]

During the reformist presidency of Mohammad Khatami from 1997 to 2005 Iranian Kurds had some cultural and political space in Iran. Thus, inspired by the achievements of the Iraqi Kurds and PKK activities they raised their cultural demands. However with the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as a president of Iran there has started another harsh period for Iranian Kurds. [165]Thus, the Iranian Kurds are facing a threat of homogenization and live with fear in discrimination. These policies of Iran are followed by the strict oppression of any expression of Kurdish nationalism including repression of primary minority and human rights. The fact that most Kurds are Sunni Muslims means that they are facing double discrimination, both on the basis of ethnicity and religion. Indeed, Iranian Kurds are suffering

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[162] Stansfield et al., "The Kurdish policy Imperative", 7
[163] Ibid,6
[164] Neriah, "The future of Kurdistan", 19-20
[165] Stansfield et al., "The Kurdish policy Imperative", 7

from the denial of cultural and linguistic rights, compulsory relocation, expropriation, unemployment, poverty and lack of government investments in the region they are living.[166] The awakening of Kurdish nationalist sentiments in the region, positive developments of Kurdish issue in Turkey and Syria have its direct impact on the rise of nationalist demands of Iranian Kurds. Besides these events also make Tehran cautious in dealing with its Kurdish minorities one hand showing moderate stance towards their demands, on the other hand hindering their free movement and activity outside of Iran.

Syria

Approximately a million Kurds inhabit in Syria, which is much less than in Turkey, Iran and Iraq. Whereas being the largest non-Arab minority group in Syria they live in three non-contiguous territories being less organized and developed than the Kurds in the rest of three states. For a long period the Government of Hafez Assad created an Arab belt between Syrian Kurds and those who live in Turkey and Iraq. This policy brought to the large displacements and deterioration of Kurds' livelihoods.[167] Thus, three different categories of misrecognition are implemented in Syria: *ajanib*, *maktoumeen* and *half-caste*. The first one, ajanib refers to the non-citizen foreigners, who according to Law 93, 1962   have no specific identity documents, without which they cannot vote, own property or have governmental jobs. The second category, *maktoumeen* refers to the unregistered status, which besides the previous limitations also makes it impossible to get treatments in State hospitals and gain marriage certificates. The *half-caste* categories are moreover children "born from mixed marriages", who are excluded from schools because they are considered "not fully Syrian". [168]

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[166] Urrutia and Villellas, "Reopening the Kurdish question", 8-9
[167] Gunter, *The Kurds Ascending,* 135
[168] Scotti, "Four countries, one people", 11

Additionally the Governmental Decree of September, 1992 states that the registration of children with Kurdish names is forbidden.[169]

Official discrimination against Syrian Kurds has been implemented since the 1930s; its peak corresponded to the rise of Arab nationalism in the 1950s and 1960s. The Assad family has carried on the general repression of Kurdish political and cultural activity. Thus many Syrian Kurds had to become assimilated Arabs in order to gain access to elementary rights and services enjoyed by other Syrians. Consequently, Kurds are among the poorest group in Syria, which is highly connected with the denial of Syrian citizenship.[170] In 1980-90s the situation of Kurds was worsened by the adoption of some laws, which were directed against Kurdish cultural and linguistic rights. Thus 1986 decree no. 1012 forbids the use of the Kurdish language during the working time, while no. 7014 issued in 1996 by the Minister for Local Administration of the Governatorate of Al-Hasaka prohibits the use of Kurdish during working times also in private conversations. The restriction over Kurdish cultural right has been completed with the decree no. 1856 adopted in 1988, which forbids songs in Kurdish, which is highly directed against the celebration of Kurdish New Year, the *Nawruz*.[171]

In 2002 the President Bashar Al-Assad recognized Kurds as part of Syrian history and promised an official pardon to the Kurds who had committed political crimes. Besides, in 2006 he promised to solve the issue of citizenship while later declaring that the problem of citizenship and census were "sensible" ones, therefore the solution would take some more time. [172]However these promises remain only on the paper, thus rising Kurdish nationalist sentiments among Syrian Kurds. Moreover Syrian Kurds have always been influenced by their neighboring Iraqi and Turkish Kurds. Since being less numerous and prominent group they have always carried the influence of famous Kurdish Movements. They have constantly

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[169] Gunter, *The Kurds Ascending,* 135
[170] Stansfield et al., "The Kurdish policy Imperative", 6
[171] Scotti, "Four countries, one people", 11-12
[172] Ibid, 12

participated in Iraqi Kurdish struggles and have largely contributed to the PKK against Turkey. Hence post 2003 developments in Iraq, the control over Iraqi Kurdistan by Kurds embodied in the Transitional Administrative Law in 2004 encouraged them and became an inspiration to fight for their rights in Syria. Thus, Impulsive anti-governmental unrests and disturbances by Kurds raised in 2004 leaving 40 Kurds dead and 2000 in jail. The Kurdish nationalists call these demonstrations *Serhildan* (Uprising), which has been a signal for further awakening of Kurdish nationalism in Syria.[173]

Until recent civil war in Syria in 2011, the Kurdish nationalist movement has little visibility in Syria compared with Turkey and Iraq. The repressive policy of Syrian government hinders Kurdish collective organized actions, which become difficult also taking into account the geographical factor. [174]Thus, even majority-Kurdish areas in the north-east are combined with mixed territories comprising Sunni Arabs, Assyrians, Turkomans, Armenians and Yesidis. In fact there is no region, which creates another obstacle for collective actions.[175] On the other hand, the Kurdish approach towards Syrian government has always been less antagonistic with demands only of cultural, civil and political rights, but not for independence. Moreover, calls for autonomy have always been rare, which is connected with the compound sense of identity of some parts of Syrian Kurds, who despite enduring grievances have still maintained their loyalty and a sense of belonging to Syria.[176]

The evolution of Kurdish nationalism in Syria is connected with the experience of Iraqi and Turkish Kurds in their struggle for nationhood and their relations with the Syrian state. Damascus, on the basis of geopolitical reasons regularly supported Kurdish nationalist movements in neighboring countries. Moreover Damascus allowed the operation of Iraqi Kurdish groups, KDP and PUK in Syria, which opened their headquarters in the country, the

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[173] Stansfield et al., "The Kurdish policy Imperative", 6
[174] Urrutia and Villellas, "Reopening the Kurdish question", 7
[175] International Crisis Group, "Syria's Kurds: A struggle within a struggle", Middle East Report, 136 (2013), 1
[176] Urrutia and Villellas, "Reopening the Kurdish question", 7

same as it did with the PKK and its leader, Ocalan until Ankara forced his exclusion from Syria in the late 1990s. Thus, this kind of relationships had its influence on the Syrian Kurds. Thus in 2003 Democratic Union Party (PYD) was created, considered the branch of PKK and one of the most disciplined Kurdish organizations in Syria.[177]

The position and philosophy of Syrian Kurds have changed with the Civil War erupted in Syria in 2011.Thus when Syrians rose up, many young Kurds joined them with anti-regime slogans, while the stance of Kurdish traditional political parties were different. They feared the brutal punishment against Kurds; also they saw more gains by remaining on the sidelines.[178] The position of the PYD has been conditioned by its strategic alliances across the region. Hence, rising tensions between Damascus and Ankara have recovered its Syrian state government's alliance with PKK in a less and tactical manner. However being accused for acting as gendarmes of the regime by oppressing the opposition protests and even the Kurdish activists the PYD rejected these accusations and has started to keep a distance itself from any agreement with the government and begun to follow its own vision. While simultaneously it has forbidden any non-Kurdish rebel group to enter the Kurdish areas taking advantage from the withdrawal of Syrian state forces from the north [179] The PYD's main competitor is the Kurdistan National Council (KNC) consisted of a dozen parties, who are led by Massoud Barzani, the president of the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq and Talabani, the head of PUK. The traditional and conservative KNC has a moderate stance without anti-regime demonstration rising only specific Kurdish demands. They are supporting democratic transition and claiming that autonomy can be the only solution to Kurdish issue in Syria. The PYD, in its turn uses strong Kurdish tone during its rallies using Kurdish symbols and expressing its support for PKK leader Ocalan. The PYD believes that moderate demands will

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[177] Urrutia and Villellas, "Reopening the Kurdish question", 7
[178] International Crisis Group, "Syria's Kurds", 1
[179] Urrutia and Villellas, "Reopening the Kurdish question", 8

allow the Kurds to gain some concessions of the government. Indeed, Syrian civil war, creating security and political vacuum, has intensified the competition between these groups. Moreover these fractions are competing not only with each other but also with non-Kurdish opposition, while currently preferring neither fighting nor supporting the Assad regime. [180]

The possible emergence of Kurdish nationhood is directly connected with the policy of neighboring states and their Kurdish communities. Thus, the leadership of Iraqi Kurdistan with Turkey's support trained Kurdish refugees of Syria who would then return Syria and fight against Assad regime. Taking into account the PKK's influence on PYD, Ankara believes that Barzani would organize KNC against PYD; however the further events show Barzani's interest in creation of Syrian Kurdistan. Hence, on 11 July, 2012 Barzani brokered the unity agreement between PYD and KNC, which should be the basis for future autonomy.[181] The Erbil agreement reduced the prospects of escalation between the PYD and KNC, but did not eliminate them totally. On the other hand their ongoing conflict reminds the model of enduring disputes between KDP and PUK in Iraqi Kurdistan; thus the unification for the common goal remains possible also in the case of Syrian Kurds. According to the agreement the parties will implement the joint government of Syrian Kurdish areas during the transitional stage through a new Supreme Kurdish Committee (SKC), which consists of ten members, five from each group, and three subcommittees responsible for security, foreign relations and other services. [182]

In fact, PYD and KNC and its member parties (mainly KDP and PUK) have no common vision for the Kurds' role in a post-Assad Syria. The only similarity is that none of these factions has demanded an independent Kurdish entity. The KNC's Barzani –led sector encourages the vision of federal arrangement based on Iraqi Kurdistan's model. According to

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[180] International Crisis Group, "Syria's Kurds", 11
[181] Mansour, "Iraqi Kurdistan and the Syrian-Kurd Pursuit of Autonomy"
[182] International Crisis Group, "Syria's Kurds", 25

this view Kurdish region should be part of federal Syria, where the central government should share powers with the Kurdish government. While pro-Talabani faction suggests the establishment of democratic Syria based on citizenship with the right of self-administration in Kurd-inhabited areas. The PYD, following Ocalan's position, is claiming for "democratic autonomy" or "democratic self-administration" of Kurdish territories in Syria. [183] Though there is no final vision of Kurdish nationhood in the Supreme Kurdish Committee the decentralized democracy still remains the minimum demand of Syrian Kurds. On the other hand the delay of formation of Kurdish nationhood can leave the Syrian Kurds with their minimum demand. Thus, in this decision the influence of PKK and Iraqi Kurds should be taken into account.

Current political dynamics in Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey highly affect the rise of Kurdish nationalism and emerging Kurdish nationhood in the four states. Though the scale and goals of these movements are different they threaten not only these states, but also increase collaboration among various Kurdish groups. Therefore the rise of Kurdish national consciousness can raise Pan-Kurdish sentiments creating huge challenges for the whole Middle East.

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[183] International Crisis Group, "Syria's Kurds", 26-27

Conclusions

The emergence of Iraqi Kurdistan as an autonomous region has become an inspiration for the rise of Kurdish nationalism in Iran, Syria and Turkey. Thus, the model of Iraqi Kurdistan is considered a highest achievement for Kurds. Formation of Kurdish nationhood has changed not only inter- state relations in the Middle East but also relations with Kurdish communities in these countries. The realization of Kurdish demands in one country has its domino effect on Kurds of the other countries leading to enduring uprisings, revolts and rising intolerance in case of violation of their rights. Moreover, the creation of autonomous region has awakened pan-Kurdish sentiments among Kurds living in the Diaspora.

The federalism which the Iraqi Kurds demanded and reached in 1992, which was confirmed in the Constitution of Iraq in 2005, has formed a political autonomy in the northern part of Iraq. Kurds have rights to run their affairs, practice their authority, provide security in the region, participate in the decision making not only in the region, but also at the level of federal state. However being based on ethnic federalism the system cannot guarantee stability and agreement between federal unit and the central government. Moreover, accompanied by ethnic nationalism Iraqi Kurds do not tolerate any subordination to central authorities, which is actually the essence of the system. Thus, contradictions, hatred, violence increase the Kurdish nationalist sentiments raising their desire of creation of Kurdish statehood. On the other hand this perspective, being currently a long term goal for Iraqi Kurds will always meet oppression of both regional and global players.

Kurdish nationalism previously being built on tragedies Kurds have suffered currently emphasizes positive events, such as establishment of Kurdish nationhood and creation of political autonomy. Thus, since the formation Iraqi Kurdistan has faced enormous difficulties in handling relations with the neighboring states and with the Kurdish communities

separately. In this regard both positive and negative role of Iraqi Kurds should be emphasized while discussing the impact of Iraqi Kurdistan on emerging Kurdish nationhood in any of these states. Thus, the creation of autonomous region has its role on the shift of the ideology of Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) from pan-Kurdish nationalism to the demand for formation of decentralized democracy in Turkey. Moreover, from the early years of creation the relations between Erbil and PKK have been accompanied by tensions, accusations and hostility. This is connected also with Erbil's strategic partnership with Ankara in the sphere of oil trade. On the other hand realization of Iraqi Kurds' dream has become a motivation for Turkish Kurds to increase their claims and to present more modest demands to the central government. Similarly the emergence of the Kurdish political entity has raised political and national consciousness among Iranian Kurds, while their demands are limited in identity recognition and acceptance of cultural rights in Iran. On the other hand developing economic ties between Tehran and Erbil hinder the active operations of Iranian Kurds against the central government. At the same time Iraqi Kurds have always been supportive to the demands of Kurdish community in Syria. Thus, Syrian Kurds have carried the influence of both PKK and Iraqi Kurdistan (PUK and KDP separately). On the other hand the nationalist sentiments of Syrian Kurds have been the most invisible among the Kurdish communities.

In Turkey the Kurdish issue is one of the major problems of the country. Emerging as a serious challenge Kurdish nationalism in Turkey has been suppressed with the denial of the existence of Kurdish issue in the country. However Kurdish issue has become a real troublesome for Ankara with the creation of PKK and the launch of an enduring military campaign against the central government. Being an organization with Marxist ideology, PKK sought to create Greater Kurdistan, which would include Kurdish populated areas in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. However with the creation of autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan and

limited support from the Kurds in and outside of Turkey, PKK has started to present modest demands. Till now the short-term goal of Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkey is linguistic and cultural autonomy. Thus, with the AKP government and its declaration of "Kurdish opening", a new space for Kurdish nationhood has emerged in Turkey. Thus, currently the dream of Turkish Kurds, is the formation of nationhood based on cultural rather than political autonomy.

After the collapse of the first Kurdish nationhood in Mahabad, the formation of political entity within the borders of Iran has been the major goal of Iranian Kurds. At the same time the creation of Kurdish autonomous region in Iraq has become another impetus for reaching political nationhood. However since the Iranian revolution and, moreover with the emergence of the government of Ahmadinejad any kind of expression of self-determination has met strict oppression from the central authorities. Therefore, having in mind the formation of political entity based on the model of Iraqi Kurdistan, they are striving for identity recognition and cultural autonomy as a short term goal.

The Syrian Kurds, being long an oppressed minority, have always been the most tolerant Kurdish community in the region. Throughout the history of denial, discrimination and Arabization policies Kurds of Syria have not considered and raised the demand for formation of their own nationhood within the borders of the state they inhabit, as it has been the case of Kurds in the other three countries. Therefore the nationalist sentiments of Syrian Kurds have not been visible until the recent civil war erupted in Syria. Having humanitarian and military support of Kurdistan Regional Government they have started the formation of political nationhood within the borders of Syria. On the other hand a vivid division of Syrian Kurds between the Democratic Union Party (branch of PKK) and Kurdistan National Council (led by Iraqi Kurdistan) makes the creation of political autonomy unfeasible. Thus, taking into

account the absent of common ideology the short-term solution of Kurdish awakening in Syria will be the emergence of Kurdish cultural autonomy within Syria.

Currently the rapid regionalization of Kurdish issue leads to the increase of nationalist sentiments in the Middle East. In Iraqi Kurdistan these sentiments lead to destabilization and violence connected with the rise of succession claims among Iraqi Kurds. While in Turkey short-period stabilization is guaranteed in case of acceptance of Kurdish identity and cultural, linguistic rights embodied in the new Constitution of Turkey. In Iran the possible emergence of nationhood is unreal at the current stage; however the raise of Kurdish nationalism forces Iranian government to make some concessions in order to keep the stability in the country. In case of Syria, the formation of de facto autonomous region promises new developments in terms of formation of political or cultural nationhood within the state.

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